Social Policy and Identity: The Case of Quebec

Friday, February 20, 2004 - Asked what makes Canada distinct from its neighbour to the south, Canadians often cite social achievements like medicare. We have come to see such policies as embodying our shared values, and a facet of our identity.

That phenomenon is even more sharply evident in Quebec, as Family Network Research Associate, Denis Saint-Martin, demonstrates in a recent op-ed piece for the Montreal daily, *La Presse* (8 January 2004).

The Charest Liberals have made "re-engineering government" a priority - dismantling or redesigning many of the institutions of Quebec's welfare state, built up over the past four decades. In the process, the Liberals have unleashed a public reaction that goes well beyond the complaints of those with a direct interest in the social policies and programs under review.

Saint-Martin explains the reaction in terms of the historic link between the development of Quebec's unique social policy regime and the construction of an independent Quebec identity. Any attempt to dismantle the Quebec welfare state, Saint-Martin argues, is seen, rightly or wrongly, as an attack on the Quebeckers.

In Quebec (and perhaps elsewhere), the welfare state is clearly much more than the sum of its parts.

You can access or download a copy of Saint-Martin's article, ***Why So Much Opposition to Social Policy Change in Quebec?*** by clicking here.

See also the following Family Network papers on other aspects of the evolving Quebec social model:

A Law Against Poverty: Quebec's New Approach to Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion, by Alain Noël. Click here.

Articulation travail-famille: Le contre-exemple des pays dits "liberaux"?, by Caroline Beauvais and Pascale Dufour. Click here.

The Social Economy, Citizenship and Identity

Canada's new Prime Minister, Paul Martin, has stressed the importance of the "social economy", or third sector, in building the country's social infrastructure. For a Quebec perspective on the link between the social economy, citizenship and identity, see ***The Citizenship Building Consequences of Quebec's Social Economy***, by Eric Shragge, Peter Graefe and Jean-Marc Fontan. Click here.