

Yarema Kelebay
McGill University

William Brooks
Lower Canada College (Montreal)

Deconstructing High School Economics

Abstract

When economics was implemented as a compulsory subject in Quebec high schools during the late 1970s, the then reigning demand-side Keynesian assumptions were written into the new curriculum. With the coming of the Austrian School's supply-side revolution in the early 1980s, the government set economics curriculum was ideologically inhospitable to supply-side insights. This has left the current economics curriculum outdated and an obstacle to quality economics education. Curriculum reform is recommended.

Résumé

Lorsque les sciences économiques ont accédé au rang de matière obligatoire dans les écoles secondaires du Québec vers la fin des années 1970, les hypothèses keynésiennes qui prévalaient alors du côté de la demande ont été intégrées dans le nouveau programme. Avec l'avènement de la révolution de l'école autrichienne du côté de l'offre au début des années 1980, le programme de sciences économiques établi par le gouvernement allait idéologiquement à l'encontre des idées relatives à l'offre. Cela explique que l'actuel programme de sciences économiques soit périmé et constitue un obstacle à des enseignements de qualité. Une réforme s'impose donc de toute urgence.

The introduction of economics as a compulsory subject in Canadian high schools has occurred over the past five to ten years and it has happened at a very dynamic and volatile period in the intellectual history of the western world. So before considering what is actually taught in economics classrooms, it might be useful to consider the intellectual trends which have influenced teaching over recent decades.

History of Ideological Trends

In the March 1975 issue of *Commentary* there appeared a significant essay written by Professor Daniel Patrick Moynihan of Harvard University (Moynihan, 1975, pp. 31-44). In that essay, Professor Moynihan argues that in the 1970s, for the first time, the world felt the impact of "what for a lack of a better term," he called the "British Revolution" (p. 31). Moynihan explained,

The British Revolution began in 1947 with the granting by socialist Britain of independence to socialist India. . . With this began the process of decolonization or the liquidation of empire. . . . In slow, then rapid, order the great empires of the world, with the single major exception of the Czarist Russian Empire, broke up into independent states. (p. 31)

Originally, when founded, the United Nations had 51 member states, but by 1975 it had expanded to 138 member states. Eighty-seven new independent states had joined the U. N. However, more than half of these new states (47) had previously been part of the British Empire. Moynihan points out that, although these new nations varied in terms of size of population and resources, they were ideologically uniform. They all fashioned their policies in terms of the general corpus of British socialist thought as it developed in the period roughly from 1890 to 1950.

To quote Moynihan,

The Englishmen and Irishmen, Scotsmen and Welsh, who created this body of doctrine and espoused it with such enterprise - nay, genius - thought they were making a social revolution in Britain. And they were, but the spread of their ideology to the furthest reaches of the globe, with its ascent to dominance in the highest national councils everywhere, gives to the British Revolution the kind of worldwide significance which the American and French, and then the Russian revolutions possessed in earlier times. (p. 32)

Moynihan went on to say that it was the British civil servants who brought the doctrine of British socialism to the colonies; and what the civil service began, British education completed. The colonial elites almost always sent their sons to study in London. Edward Shils noted that "the London School of Economics was often said to be the most important institution of higher education in Asia and Africa" (Cited in Moynihan, 1975, p. 32).

The British Journal *New Statesman* followed Asian and African graduates after they had left Britain and returned home. For example, in her autobiography, Beatrice Webb wrote that she and her husband felt

... assured that with the School (LSE) as the teaching body, the Fabian Society as a propagandist organization, the London County Council as object lesson in electoral success, our books as the only elaborate original work in economic fact and theory, no young man or woman who is anxious to study or work in public affairs can fail to come under our influence. (Cited in Moynihan, 1975, p. 33)

British socialism was part of a movement of opinion which spread in the course of the first half of the 20th century to the whole of the British Empire, a domain which covered one-quarter of the earth's surface and which Moynihan says, "an inspired cartographic convention decreed be colored pink" (p. 33). What was the content of this British socialism? What did British socialists believe in?

- British socialists believed in **fellowship**, which is a society based on brotherhood, participation, and political kindness.
- They were hostile to **private ownership** and for the **public ownership** of property, wealth and means of production.
- They believed in **production for use**, and resentful toward any notion of **profit**.
- They stood for a society based on the principle of **cooperation** and discouraged any form of **competition**.
- They were proponents of a **cultural and ethical revolution** which would change men's **motives**. Motives that had aimed at **individual benefit** would yield to motives aimed at **common benefits**.
- They proposed that all productive industry be under **collective and democratic control**.
- They viewed the role of government as **comprehensive** involving continuous planning and administration of society. (Moynihan, 1975, p. 33)

Professor Moynihan made two general observations about this British doctrine. First, it contained a suspicion of – almost a bias against – economic development and production, which carried over into those parts of the world where British culture held sway. This bias held that there was plenty of wealth in the world. Hence profit was synonymous with exploitation. Therefore, redistribution of wealth, not production, remained central to the ethos of British socialism. Second, the British doctrine was anti-American because America was seen as quintessentially capitalist. Hence the United States was seen to be in a prolonged and profound decline and history to be moving in another direction altogether.

If the new nations absorbed ideas about others from the doctrines of British socialism, they also absorbed ideas about themselves. There were four

such ideas. The master concept was that they all had the right to independence. It was most often the socialists who became the principal political sponsors of independence in the colonies of the British Empire. Two further concepts triangulated and fixed the imported and learned political culture of these new nations: the belief (often justified) that they were subject to exploitation like the working class in socialist theory; and the belief that they were subject to ethnic discrimination corresponding to class distinctions in industrial society. Moynihan wrote,

At root, the ideas of exploitation and discrimination represent a transfer to colonial populations of the fundamental socialist assertions with respect to the condition of the European working class, just as the idea of independence parallels the demand that the working class break out of bondage and rise to power. (p. 33)

The fourth distinctive characteristic of the British doctrine concerns procedure. Wrongs were to be righted by legislation. The movement was fundamentally parliamentarian. British socialists were going to change the world by statute, and government was no longer going to be just a “night-watchman.”

Beginning with India in 1947, for the first time in the history of mankind a vast empire dismantled itself, piece by piece, of its own systematic accord. A third of the nations of the world today owe their existence to a Statute of Westminster. In short, British socialism taught and the colonial elites learned the politics of resentment and reparation, and the economics of envy.

Perhaps the Moynihan thesis about the British Revolution can be fruitfully applied to Canada and Quebec. Very much of the content, opinion, and language of British Fabian Socialism was articulated by the famous British economist John Maynard Keynes. It was imported to North America and became the conventional economic wisdom of our time. Our own universities, schools, press, political, and cultural institutions became numerically dominated by the ideas and preoccupations of the “British Revolution.”

Ideology of Canadian/Quebec economics textbooks

A cursory look at most Canadian social science courses generally confirms that this British Revolution, or what Margaret Thatcher once referred to as the “British disease”, still remains the dominant paradigm among the captains of influence in Canada’s education systems.

The study of economics is no exception. Having said that, it is important to make clear that the point of this article is to recognize and make

explicit the unexamined assumptions in school texts and economics courses. It is not a condemnation of Canadian educators and their activities in economics classrooms across the country. Neither is it an attempt to alarm educators with an inquisition, or to demand intellectual uniformity.

There has been an unfortunate absence of real public discourse over the form and content of Canadian social science curricula. Consequently, the authors undertook to examine six Canadian introductory economics textbooks with a view to generating some discussion; first, about the content and value systems inherent in Canadian economics education; second, about the way in which they affect the organization of economics curricula; and thirdly, how well they prepare students for a productive role in the Canadian economy.

The editions chosen were all published between 1979 and 1985, roughly speaking, the period of time that economics as a formal subject was being introduced in Canadian schools. In chronological order of publication, the texts are *The World of Economics* (1979), by MacDonald, Silk, and Saunders; *Economics, the Science of Common Sense* (1981), by Procnunier and Bowden; *Made in Canada, Economics for Canadians* (1981), by James D. Thexton, and the *Quebec Supplement* (1985), by Nincheri and Montpetit; *Understanding the Canadian Economy* (1983), by W. Trimble, and the *Quebec Supplement* (1985), by Terry Brennan; *Economics Today* (1985), by Miller and Antler; and *Economics, A Problem Solving Approach* (1987), by Elijah M. James.

Most of these texts present a readable approach to currently fashionable economics. Generally, they begin by dealing with the question of what economics is all about. They point out that economics is the study of scarcity and choice or, more practically, the way in which people earn and spend their income.

For example, MacDonald, Silk, and Saunders (1979) begin by saying ". . . it is much easier to say what economics is about than what economics is. . ." (p. 2). They continue to explain that:

In general, economics is about the way people make a living and spend their income. It is about the ups and downs of business. It is about the wealth and poverty of nations. But put more broadly, it is about individual and social behaviour and values. (p. 2)

This latter contention is of central importance to the present reflections.

However, before dealing with the question of values and value systems, it is important to acknowledge that most of the publications examined by the authors do a responsible job of explaining what they think economics is all about. They provide young people with a basic knowledge of current

economic concepts and encourage a command of the vocabulary and skills associated with the discipline. Consequently, there is a common treatment of such topics as: economic systems; market mechanisms; political, social, and financial institutions; types of business organization; the concept of Gross National Product; economic forecasting; monetary and fiscal policy; trade; and the international economy.

So, on the surface, high school economics texts seem to deal with a suitable range of topics. From a cursory look at these books, one might expect Canadian students to be acquiring appropriate intellectual and technical skills. One might hope that such material would lead to the development of citizens who are informed and dispassionate judges of economic reality. In other words, one might hope that young people are being given tools which they can use to measure the consequences of human actions, evaluate conflicting policies and values, and make informed choices that are likely to lead to productive participation in the Canadian economy. However, after a more careful consideration of the values inherent in much of the material, that hope seems to be more than a little uncertain. For, in many ways, where the question of values is concerned, these economics books demonstrate a disturbing degree of unevenness or lack of balance when dealing with the fundamental economic theories and practices of our time. That is to say, there is an almost tiresome allegiance to current orthodoxy that actually prevents students from dealing with some of the most central and intellectually exciting questions about the nature of wealth and poverty.

For example, how do Canadian economics texts deal with the subject of competing systems? Most texts point out that all nations face common economic questions. Generally those questions are: How to produce; what to produce; how to distribute what is produced. They also point out that different nations or blocs of nations have developed different systems through which they attempt to address these basic economic questions.

But at this point, the lines of politics and economics become blurred. As might be expected, most texts deal with a variety of “-isms”, the most common being capitalism, fascism, socialism, and communism. Others also make a more refined distinction between what economists call command and market systems.

Of those books that deal specifically with this subject, some do so in a more even-handed way than others. W. Trimble, in *Understanding the Canadian Economy* (1983), provides a literate and reasonably fair description of the four “-isms” just referred to. Others fall rather blatantly on the side of so-called “mixed economies” or Canadian socialism in the finest tradition of the British Revolution.

If the dedication of space is any indication of preference, it may be revealing to note that MacDonald, Silk, and Saunders (1979) devote no more than nine lines to an explanation of capitalism, followed by fifty-three lines establishing the latter's close association with fascism and Adolf Hitler. Seventy-five rather upbeat lines are then dedicated to socialism and its well established place in the Canadian economy. This is followed by an eleven-line dismissal of communism as the extreme at the other end of the political spectrum. There is no allusion to the many commonalities of communism and fascism.

Procurier and Bowden, in *Economics, The Science of Common Sense* (1981), display similar sentiments. The book devotes forty-six lines to pointing out that pure capitalism, a system in which the basic economic questions are answered predominantly according to the forces of the free market, could not possibly exist, and if it did ". . . the effects would be intolerable" (p. 54). This is followed by a hundred-and-fifty line eulogy to Canada's mixed economy in which they approvingly say that what is being called capitalism and socialism today are really indistinguishable. Communism is dealt with in the next hundred-and-thirty lines. According to them, it is a difficult term to understand because it refers to both a political system and an economic system but, from an economic point of view, it is again characterized as extreme socialism. In studying real world economic systems, students are told not to worry much about utopian communism because it does not exist. The authors were not ready to suggest that pure communism would be intolerable—an opinion they rushed to volunteer regarding the prospect of a society guided solely by the invisible hand of a free market.

What is most disturbing is that few books offer much in the way of facts or judgments about the relative productivity of opposing economic systems. Nor is there any serious consideration of the economic success or failure of the various mixtures that have been encountered in the recent economic history of the western world.

In short, on the subject of economic systems, economics texts seem to be dominated by what has come to be popularly known as the theory of convergence. This is the notion that capitalism and socialism are inevitably blending into a common system that can provide more rational production, more intelligent consumption, security from poverty and want, social justice, democracy, and an equitable distribution of wealth. This can be achieved by simply finding the right point of convergence between the forces of the market and those of the state's planning authorities; in other words, we are heading towards yet another utopia.

It is not wrong to present the theory of convergence, but it may be time to stop putting it forward as a revolutionary new idea or as the only economic

model holding the promise of salvation for the western world. After all, it is an idea that is as old as the twentieth century itself – popularized by Fabians at the turn of the century, experimented with by Keynesian New Dealers during the 1930s, turned into the conventional wisdom by economists like John Kenneth Galbraith in the 1960s, and kept on the front burner by armies of state employees and neo-liberal economists of the 1970s.

Neither is it an economic model that should be put forward as being unquestionable. In fact, its application in Britain, the United States, Canada, and many other market economies has been coincidental with declines in growth and productivity, and the problems of high inflation and growing unemployment. In a number of cases, substantial political majorities have been calling for its roll-back. Brilliant young economists like George Gilder, author of *Wealth and Poverty* (1981), have also pointed out that,

. . . socialism and capitalism are . . . not converging at all in their ability to provide food, shelter and higher living standards for their people or to develop new industry or technology for the future. On the contrary in these vital areas the systems are rapidly diverging. . . . (p. 67)

By the late 1970s, economists like Gilder were becoming known as "supply-siders" for their call to regenerate or liberate the motive to produce and supply. This was to offset what they felt was a debilitating preoccupation with aggregate demand, consumption, and redistribution.

But these real-world issues are either absent or considerably downplayed in the Canadian texts that were examined. In four of the six texts, there is no mention of the supply-side at all. In the two most recent editions dealt with, a few columns are devoted to the subject but supply-siders are given a very cursory treatment as single-issue economists who are interested almost exclusively in the effects of differing tax rates.

This leads to a second fundamental concern regarding the subject matter being dealt with in these books, that is, what appears to be an overpowering preference to study the habits of consumption over the mysteries of production. Supply-side economists often point out that Keynesian economists do not really have a theory for the production of wealth. In fact, Keynesian ideas are the product of a world in which wealth has been man's natural lot, and, since western industrial man seems to have mastered the art of producing wealth in great abundance, any other state of existence seems to be all but unimaginable. As a result, they point out we may be guided, at least in part, by fundamentally flawed assumptions about the basic laws of supply and demand.

As Gilder (1981) has pointed out, the traditional conservative preoccupation with money supply and monetary policy and the liberal obsession

with aggregate demand serves to reinforce the mistaken impression that the means of production is located solely in the material arrangements of the society rather than in the spiritual capital of human freedom and creativity. Our problems, he continues, lie “. . . in a persistent subversion of the psychological means of production, the morale and inspiration of economic man . . . the awareness that one must give in order to get, supply in order to demand . . .” (p. 46). Because there can be no current demand for as yet undeveloped products, preoccupation with demand can only foster stagnation.

Although the supply-side argument has made a great deal of sense to people working in the marketplace, it is still demand, not supply, that leads the way in the pages of these economics textbooks.

Consequently, all of the graphs and equations that are central to the images in Quebec's economics courses seem to assert at least an equal importance to supply and demand, if not the supremacy of the latter. Demand curves illustrating the purely mental reactions of consumers are assigned the same priority and weight as supply curves registering the real efforts and sacrifices of producers. Conceptions of cause and effect are constantly confused.

One example, illustrating the use of the intersection of supply and demand curves from MacDonald, Silk, and Saunders (1979), may give some idea of the questionable impressions about the nature of production that can be passed on to Canadian students. The text offers a hypothetical example involving two high school students, Lisa and Jack, who decide to supplement their incomes by producing graduation rings for their classmates. In the story, the two ring manufacturers begin, not by supplying a product that they hope will attract demand on its own merits, but by conducting a kind of market study among their classmates. This is done in order to arrive at a predetermined demand schedule which will allow them to guarantee their returns and equate the opportunity costs involved. They want to know if it is better to produce rings, work for an hourly wage at the corner store, spend more time on their school work, or just take it easy. In other words, the idea that it is the quantifiable demand for their product that will determine their willingness to supply is solidly reinforced.

Market analysis of this sort is commonly practiced by many established producers of familiar products but new businesses and new products usually forge a place for themselves not because of spontaneous need but because of the energy of men and women who choose to start them and succeed in creating a demand for their products. In most cases, these people had to be willing to invest generous amounts of time and resources without reference to a demand curve that would guarantee the amount of return on their investment.

Textbooks consistently present entrepreneurship as simply another abstract “factor of production” invented by economists to help explain the organization of the producing side of the economy. What does not come across in the books is the fact that it is people, not things, that determine supply. All of the metaphysical capital or the spirit of enterprise, that is the basis of the production of wealth, is either skimmed over or hopelessly lost in a litany of Keynesian concepts, practices, and institutions. Students are inevitably left with the impression that the study of economics is exclusively oriented to the study of things, not people, and it is fundamentally what people want, not what people do, that is important to our economic future.

This disposition has resulted in a great deal of time being devoted to the topic of consumerism and the development of what is, at best, an attitude of indifference – but more often one of suspicion and even hostility – toward the nation’s producers. From this fundamental bias, all economic and social problems that arise in the texts tend to be treated exclusively in terms of this standard Keynesian agenda. For example, if one looks at a third major theme, the international economy, one is invariably directed to the search for an explanation for poverty, primarily in the Third World. Paramount among the reasons given for this unfortunate condition are overpopulation, lack of natural resources, and the legacy of imperialism. All of these reasons have been seriously challenged by supply-side economists like Thomas Sowell and P. T. Bauer, but these contemporary intellectual challenges seem to have no place in the textbooks. The very existence of such economists and others like them is virtually unacknowledged in these texts and other course material.

In fact, one economics teaching kit on *The International Economy or North-South Relations*, published by Oxfam Quebec, actually instructs teachers to appeal to young people’s emotions rather than their intellect in putting forward the current orthodoxy on the subject (Duquette, 1986, p. 9). To increase the student’s awareness of the reality of the world the instructor’s guide declares that we should . . . “appeal to the adolescent emotions and the defiant individualism of youth . . .” (p. 9). The instructions continue:

We know the attitude of young people towards authority and arbitrary rule. Since they do not feel themselves to be masters of their own destiny, they are deeply resentful of adult injustice and cruelty. This sensitivity and way of thinking make adolescents extremely valid interlocutors in the study of a world which is also not master of its own economic forces and in its turn is the victim of economic forces which transcend the human will. It is by appealing to this sensitivity that the instructor has the best chance of awakening the group’s interest. . . . (p. 9)

Apparently, it is not always an appeal to the mind that characterizes the current economics books.

In many respects the intellectual appeal of economics courses has been diminished by the development of what John Kenneth Galbraith once called a "conventional wisdom." Galbraith pointed out that most people feel uncomfortable when confronted with unfamiliar or challenging ideas and that people putting such ideas forward will, in the short run, seem disturbing and aggressive. This is not necessarily because the ideas misrepresent the truth. It is simply because they challenge a vested interest which many of us hold on to with something akin to a religious passion, that is, the vested interest of our own minds. In other words, the vested interest is explanations which we already understand and which present no real threat to the comfortably held perceptions about the nature of the world around us.

Having looked at the content of six widely used texts and a variety of other materials used in economics courses, it may not be surprising to find these same themes dominating the course contents of some provincial economics curricula.

Quebec's seven little economics modules

Consider the economics syllabus published in 1983 by the Ministry of Education of Quebec. The new conventional wisdom becomes immediately apparent. First, there is a new significance ascribed to the study of economics. The syllabus declares that a general education would be incomplete without a basic knowledge of economics and hence it is to be made compulsory for all senior high school students (Gouvernement du Québec, 1983, p. 11). The syllabus also says that an analysis of needs was made to establish the orientation of the course and the learning objectives. This led to a number of considerations regarding pupils, society, and economics (p. 15).

The consideration of pupils concluded they have begun to experience a variety of economic pressures as consumers, workers, and citizens. The consideration of society found that, like all communities, Quebec must define its socio-economic [read collective] objectives and be able to rely on the effective cooperation of its citizens to guide its own evolution and manage its own socio-economic affairs. Lastly, economics is to be considered from the broadest possible perspective. It should enable the pupil to acquire skills and knowledge and adopt a number of attitudes and a whole set of values (p. 15). This point, of course, alerted us to the questions: what values and whose values? It is necessary to look closely at the content of the syllabus to answer that question.

The course outline is divided into seven modules (p. 22). The first deals with economic organization. The basis of economic organization is said to be demand and supply, in that order. Demand and supply determine the price of things. The characteristics of economic organization are dealt with and these are said to be firms, consumers, workers, and government. The

concepts of division of labour, money, and GNP are also mentioned. In other words, students are introduced to a demand-oriented view of economics. Say's Law, the notion that supply can create its own demand, is strategically absent from the introduction.

Module Two on production continues in this vein. The production of wealth is left virtually unexplained in the assumption that it is simply driven by demand. Entrepreneurs are mentioned but the major focus is on resources, administration, marketing, financing, and personnel – in a word, management. The form and size of economic organization is introduced. Private enterprise, cooperatives, and publicly-owned institutions are mentioned. Small businesses, multinationals, and conglomerates are outlined for study; nevertheless two-thirds of the students' attention is given either to public institutions or to the members of *Fortune 500*. The heroic successes of young enterprises that might capture and stimulate the entrepreneurial imagination of young Canadians are given little attention.

Module Three deals with human resources, that is, the labour system, the role of unions, labour contracts, negotiations, collective agreements, the role of the state, labour codes, and the state as employer. No mention is made of the "metaphysical capital" of people and, although Marx's labour theory of value is not explicitly mentioned, it is clearly implied in an agenda that establishes the centrality of labour, its vulnerability to exploitation, and the need for its protection by a state apparatus.

Module Four deals with consumption which is, of course, driven by demand and usually unscrupulous advertising. The topics seem to focus on the gratification of wants rather than their postponement. There is no rational animal or "sovereign consumer" in these lessons. There are only irrational people manipulated by hidden persuaders, constantly seeking credit and going into debt. Hence the need for consumer protection from deceiving producers, sellers, and entrepreneurs.

Module Five deals with financial institutions and money. Banks, credit unions, insurance companies, and trust and loan companies are studied. There is the role of central banks in controlling the money supply, the causes and effects of inflation and anti-inflationary measures, and wage and price controls. Somehow missing in these lessons is the distinction that should be made between money and wealth. The whole idea that money in itself may not be an enduring asset and the whole nature of the commitment, ingenuity, work, and faith that leads to the production of real wealth is left unexplored.

Module Six on government opens the door to an uncritical acceptance of state intervention and a study of redistribution and regulation based on the conviction that what we need most are "limits to growth."

Module Seven addresses the international economy. The first topic is trade and the balance of payments. The rest deals with “developing countries” and their relationship with industrialized nations. The conviction is that poor non-white countries of the Third World have been victims of the West, and proposes a discussion of needed changes to the international economic system. The course ends with a consideration of two principal economic systems: collectivist economies based on nationalized means of production, and mixed economies like Quebec and Canada which have evolved from free enterprise systems. Implied is little more than reluctant applause for capitalism.

An analysis of the syllabus leaves one with the following overall impression. An analysis of needs, itself a questionable proposition, led to a consideration of pupils, society, and economics. This led to the following conclusions: one, adolescents are subject to economic forces and pressures; two, the Quebec State must guide, plan, and manage the economy; and three, students must be inculcated with attitudes and values that are consistent with those of the State. In other words, there is an unmistakable tilt toward Fabian and Keynesian themes in this course of study which is well supported by economics texts and other material which classroom teachers must rely on.

Conclusion

There is something disturbing in the vision of a society in which education in economic principles remained so entirely out of touch with the intellectual developments that were going on all around us. In the summer of 1980 George Gilder completed writing *Wealth and Poverty* which began with an invitation to scholars and teachers to reconsider the reigning conventional wisdom of economics and economics education. To a world in which young people were being taught that pure market economics could not exist, and that government must play a commanding role in regulating production and the distribution of goods and services, Gilder announced:

The most important event in the recent history of ideas is the demise of the socialist dream. Dreams always die when they come true, and fifty years of socialist reality, in every partial and plenary form, leave little room for idealistic reverie. (p. 3)

But the challenge went unheeded and so-called supply-side revolutionaries like George Gilder, Milton Friedman, Thomas Sowell, Charles Murray, P. T. Bauer, Irving Kristol, James Buchanan, Walter Williams, Peter Brimelow, William Watson, and many others remained scrupulously unread by economics teachers and either unknown or unwelcome in the high school economics classroom.

What could have been one of the most exciting intellectual discussions in social studies education since the Scopes trial of the 1920s never saw the light of day in most Canadian classrooms. Contemporary liberal economic fundamentalists did not need the equivalent of a Tennessee state legislature or a William Jennings Bryan to forbid the teaching of supply-side economics by law. They simply relied on, or remained comfortable with, a thoroughly numbing intellectual consensus. What came to be so facilely dismissed as Thatcherism and Reaganomics had no place in the closed-shop of Canadian educational thought.

What a pity that was for Canadian students who face the 1990s so ill equipped to understand the philosophical catalysts for the historic events that are swirling around them. The 1980s were the era when socialist dreams collapsed around the world: in Moscow and Leningrad, Warsaw and Prague, Peking and Tienanmen Square, Berlin and Budapest. How can Canadian young people begin to understand the phenomenon of an unknown Polish-Canadian libertarian (Tyminski) in a run-off election against the hero of Solidarity in a country he left twenty years ago, when they are given to believe that economics simply means recognizing the trade-off between inflation and high interest rates or learning to use a consumer advocate to get their money back for a defective CD player.

For these reasons we are still calling for a fundamental reconsideration of the high school economics curriculum. After all, what high schools (or the Ministry of Education) define as their course of study in economics is what children will learn. It is the foundation of the knowledge, values, and ideas which colleges and universities will build on, or it is the only formal education in economics which most Canadians will ever receive. If our curriculum continues to ignore the whole corpus of economic thought which is leading to a fundamental free-market revolution in the socialist world, how can we claim to be producing students who are equipped to contribute and participate in what promises to become a new and rapidly emerging international disposition toward democratic capitalism?

Finally, it might be noted that the economics curriculum is another glaring example of the drawback to government intervention in schooling and curricula development. Government authored curricula very soon become the dead hand of bureaucracy in the realm of knowledge. State legislated programs are always slow to respond to sudden, innovative, and exciting intellectual developments.

Our view is that Keynesian economics has provided one of the major ideological rationalizations for the construction of modern welfare states and their many self-destructive inner contradictions. If we are correct in seeing economic education in Canada and elsewhere as being dominated by socialist values, then we cannot think we are educating students who will contribute to a productive economy as a result of that education. Ideas have conse-

quences. Economic ideas have economic consequences, and bad economic ideas have bad economic consequences.

REFERENCES

- Brennan, T. (1985). *Quebec supplement*. Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman.
- Duquette, Michael. (1986). *The international economy*. Instructors Guide. Montreal: Oxfam Quebec.
- Gilder, George. (1981). *Wealth and poverty*. New York: Bantam Books.
- Gouvernement du Québec. (1983). *Secondary school curriculum – economics secondary V*. Québec: Ministère de l'éducation.
- James, Elijah M. (1987). *Economics, a problem solving approach*. Scarborough: Prentice-Hall.
- McDonald, A.H., Silk, L.S., & Saunders, P. (1979). *The world of economics*. Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson.
- Miller, R., & Antler, S.D. (1985). *Economics today*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Moynihan, Daniel P. (1975). The United States in opposition. *Commentary*, 59(3), 31-44.
- Nincheri, R., & Monpetit, D. (1985). *Quebec supplement*. Toronto: Oxford University Press.
- Procunier, P.M., & Bowden, E.V. (1981). *Economics: The science of common sense*. Toronto: Gage Publishers.
- Thexton, James D. (1981). *Made in Canada, economics for Canadians*. Toronto: Oxford University Press.
- Trimble, W. (1985). *Understanding the Canadian economy*. Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman.

Yarema Kelebay is an associate professor at the Faculty of Education of McGill University where he teaches economics and history in the Curriculum and Instruction Department, and philosophy in the Religion and Philosophy of Education Department.

Yarema Kelebay est professeur agrégé à la faculté des sciences de l'éducation de l'Université McGill où il enseigne les sciences économiques et l'histoire au département des programmes d'étude ainsi que la philosophie au département d'enseignement de la religion et de philosophie des sciences de l'éducation.

William Brooks is Head of the Social Sciences Department at Lower Canada College in Montreal where he teaches economics, political science, and history.

William Brooks est directeur du département des sciences sociales au Lower Canada College à Montréal où il enseigne les sciences économiques, les sciences politiques, et l'histoire.