

Augie Fleras and Jean L. Elliott. *The Nations Within: Aboriginal-State Relations in Canada, the United States, and New Zealand*. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1992.

Aboriginal-state relations have entered an exciting and dynamic if somewhat unsettled phase. There is, of course, no illusion that the restructuring of relations between a people, an administrative structure that governs them and the larger collectivity that the government represents is ever a smooth process. Any redefinition of the relationship between an administered and regulated people and the mechanisms or means of their administration clearly involves important changes in values and world view. Given that social structures are seldom in harmony with the value system(s) that are their ideological underpinning and foundation anyway, there nevertheless comes a time when the discrepancy between structure and values is so great that the integrity of the entire social order is undermined and the well-being of its citizens greatly diminished — none more so than those who are marginalized to begin with. In fact, as political, economic and social circumstances change, as they inevitably do, so must the rationale for and the means of administration and regulation as the basis of mature statehood be seriously reconsidered and redefined. The marginalized position of Aboriginal peoples can no longer be tolerated; the values and perspectives of a “new world order” demand more enlightened approaches to nation-building and state-craft.

Canadian, American as well as New Zealand Aboriginal-state relations are clearly at a crossroads, as Fleras and Elliott point out in their book. Of course, there is no guarantee that a redefined set of relations will be satisfactory to all because the process of nation-building is necessarily a perpetual, “organic” and evolving one. But perhaps the most important thing is the process and not the outcome. Also important is that a colonized and marginalized people can become involved in redefining the social order in which they see themselves as actors and in which they are acknowledged stake-holders. In fact, it is the act of self-definition and recognition on the part of Aboriginal people and the acknowledgment that they are true participants in the ongoing process of nation-building that would define a healthy and revitalized democratic state. At the same time, there should be no expectation that there be unanimity in regards to the process, even among the colonized and disenfranchised; this, too, is to be expected in a healthy democratic state.

What is problematic are the structural and other conditions that can either constrain or enable the self-consciousness, self-definition and thus self-determination of Aboriginal people.

The Nations Within goes a long way towards explaining what is involved in the process to end the internal colonization of Aboriginal peoples in Canada and elsewhere, and towards outlining the initiatives Aboriginal peoples have taken "to reverse the theft" of their history. The book combines an ever-useful historical review and analysis of past policy, ideology and bureaucracy of American and Canadian Indian, Métis, Inuit and Maori administration that would be familiar to most readers (Chapters 1-4, 6, 10-11), with an exploration of the fundamental value assumptions that are the bases for a "paradigm shift" in Aboriginal-government relations (Chapters 5-9, 12). The purpose of the book is to describe several closely related concepts, to show how they are nested in one another, and how they relate to the *Realpolitik* of Aboriginal affairs in three countries. The key concepts ("first principles") include the principle of aboriginality, self-determination, self-government, sovereignty and nationhood. The authors state:

Aboriginality provides the "theory" for redefining aboriginal-state relations; *self-government* is the practical expression of this "theory." Self-government implies *self-determination* with regard to relevant agendas. . . . The principle of aboriginality legitimizes the restoration of this *sovereignty* over internal affairs. [p. 30, emphasis added]

Understanding what these concepts mean is critical if we are to appreciate the idea of a "new order" or a paradigm shift in Aboriginal-state relations. Clarifying and sorting out some of the terms is in order, however. Fundamental to any theory of aboriginality, to the exercising of sovereignty and to the practice of self-government is, in fact, the notion of self-determination. It refers to the *inherent* human will to autonomy of action, and to the acknowledgement that all people (as individuals and as collectivities) intrinsically strive to realize their potentialities and develop their talents and capabilities. The notion of self-determination has its counterpart in humanistic psychology, human rights law as well as in economics. An idea born during the French Revolution, the right to self-determination was one of the earliest fundamental human rights to later gain universal recognition (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948). The exercise of this basic right extends to decision-making in all spheres of life: home and family, work, school, church and even choice of lifestyle. Beyond these, the right extends to political power and full participation in the political process – if the right of decision-making and

participation is denied, then this constitutes oppression.

Thus, Aboriginal sovereignty is rooted in a universally recognized humanistic-philosophical principle. The idea of sovereignty is interpreted as the fundamental ability and authority of individuals or a collectivity to exercise their rights without being subservient to any outside authority. The right of decision-making and full participation necessarily extends to the (re)creation of political and other institutions that reflect the Aboriginal people's will to autonomy of action. Aboriginal sovereignty is therefore a term that describes the totality of powers and responsibilities necessary to maintain Aboriginal identity, social organization and forms of community. The principle of aboriginality, in turn, constitutes a set of claims directed against outside authority with respect to the redistribution of power and control; the principle furthermore rejects the validity of non-Aboriginal social, cultural and political values as relevant for Aboriginal needs and aspirations. The principle of aboriginality, moreover, combines collective rights and identity, and institutional autonomy, with the idea of sovereignty over a territorial base. Aboriginal peoples constitute a collectivity whose rights are now guaranteed on the basis of their status as original occupants of a territory; their collective rights are enshrined in the Canadian Constitution. What remains problematic is of course title, ownership and access to a land base and resources. Hence the importance of land claims and the comprehensive and specific claims process (the latter for those whose title has been extinguished).

The idea of an *inherent* right to self-government is likewise derived from the humanistic-philosophical principle of self-determination (in humanistic terms, making the inherent will to autonomy of human action contingent would be repugnant; therefore, the right to self-government cannot be contingent). Self-government, regardless of the forms it may take, is the primary means by which Aboriginal identity, social organization and community are maintained and sustained. There are several key elements relevant to Aboriginal thinking on self-government that are crucial with respect to identity- and community-formation; namely, protection and retention of Aboriginal languages and culture, promotion of social and economic development (including education and health), and the preservation and stewardship of a territorial base and its resources. These elements are derived from the unique socio-cultural characteristics of Aboriginal people, which include cultural attachment to place, a fundamental and unique ecological view, a unique system of economy and exchange, an extended kinship system and dependence on a co-operative system of enterprise.

With self-government defined this way, all the pieces are in place for

a definition of *nationhood*. Fleras and Elliott define a "nation" as a sovereign people with the right to self-government; indeed, the theme of their study "is the process of loss and retrieval of nationhood" (p. xi). A nation may also be defined as a community of people whose members are bound together by a sense of solidarity, a common culture or a shared consciousness. Beyond the ideational criteria, however, the existence of a distinct population, a territorial base, a form of government and a capacity to enter into relations with other nations serve as more practical and important criteria. In fact, it appears that the struggle of retrieving nationhood by First Nations might be best described as the strategic and methodical satisfaction of each element (as a kind of building block) of the latter definition, as is implied by Fleras and Elliott's analyses throughout the book. Conversely, one cannot help but wonder if the intent of state Aboriginal policy and administration has been to actively hinder and interfere with this process (Chapter 4, esp. pp. 49 ff, 80-83, 224-27). In that regard, the history and current policy of Aboriginal-state relations in Canada seems relatively more progressive than that in the United States or New Zealand (Chapters 10 and 11).

Recognition of Aboriginal status, as original occupants of this land, as well as recognition of collective rights fulfils the criteria of "population." The existence of reservations, dispute over Aboriginal title and comprehensive land claims where title has never been extinguished fulfils the criteria of "territory" – or at least demonstrate that Aboriginal people indeed have a recognized and proven historical and cultural attachment to place. Land is therefore important for symbolic reasons, beyond its economic meaning. Fulfilling the criteria of "government" is a little more problematic, since it is best fulfilled in practice. It is noteworthy, however, that the 28 August 1992 Charlottetown constitutional accord did have within it a provision recognizing the inherent right to Aboriginal self-government. Notwithstanding the accord's rejection by Canadians and opposition to the accord by some Aboriginal peoples themselves, opinion polls revealed that the concept of Aboriginal self-government was strongly supported by a majority of Canadians (*Globe and Mail*, 17/Oct./92, 27/Oct./92). This acknowledges that Aboriginal people do not only have an inherent right to govern themselves, but have the cultural capacity to do so. Finally, the Royal Proclamation of 1763, the Pakeha/Aotearoa [New Zealand]-Maori Treaty of Waitangi (1840) and the treaties Aboriginal peoples signed or verbally agreed to are generally considered proof of their "capacity to enter into relations with other nations," in that they were indeed dealt with as nations at the time the treaties were entered into.

No other peoples living within the confines of the nation-states of Canada, the United States or New Zealand can satisfy these criteria. It is therefore tempting to conclude that Aboriginal peoples possess nationhood status. Unfortunately, this status remains to be truly institutionalized; reforms have been largely symbolic. The so-called building blocks (the elements of the definition of nationhood) are not all equally "in place" for all Aboriginal peoples; nor, for that matter, does each building block or element mean qualitatively the same thing for each Aboriginal nation.

On one hand, disputes over title, unsettled claims, unmet treaty obligations, the reality of the *Indian Act* in Canada and narrowly interpreted/permitted models of self-government reflect the persistent "old" paradigm with its emphasis on legalism, control, assimilation and the desire to maintain the status quo. True accommodation and power-sharing remains stubbornly outside the reach of the majority of Aboriginal peoples. On the other hand, choices and solutions selected by some First Nations (in Canada) are not acceptable to others: the Sechelt arrangement and the Cree-Naskapi experiment are not attractive models for everyone. The 1990 Alberta-Métis Settlements Accord (not discussed by Fleras and Elliott in the chapter on Métis and Inuit nationalism) with its attendant legislation (*the Métis Settlements Land Protection Act*; *the Métis Settlements Act*) has been hailed as a landmark of Aboriginal-state relations by some, and as a sell-out of Aboriginal interests by others. The 12 November 1992 final signing of the Nunavut land deal by the Inuit represents the largest land claim in Canada's history, and gives the Inuit de facto self-government over Canada's third territory without constitutional entrenchment (*Globe and Mail*, 13/Nov./92). The creation of Nunavut, which has been anticipated for a number of years (Fleras and Elliott, pp. 113-16), is scheduled for 1999. Nunavut may be unique, however, given that the Inuit make up the vast majority of the Eastern Arctic's residents.

Fleras and Elliott note that "no one can predict where recent developments in Aboriginal-government relations will lead" (p. 125). In Canada, as elsewhere, policy responses to Aboriginal demands have been ambiguous. Indeed, advances in Métis- and Inuit-government relations are at odds with the way the Mohawk, Lubicon, Innu and Gitksan-Wet'suwet'en (among others) have fared in recent months. First Nations peoples are themselves not united over certain issues, such as leadership and representation. Importantly, they are united in their politicized demands for the restructuring of society along the lines of a "nations within" framework. Parallel struggles by Aboriginal peoples in other countries serve to highlight this recurrent theme, as Fleras and Elliott have documented. The acknowledgement and

institutionalization of the principle of aboriginality and its attendant values as a basis for nation-building would certainly be a measure of the vitality and maturity of the liberal-democratic state. A mature statehood is imperative as we enter the next millennium.

René R. Gadacz

George Wenzel. *Animal Rights, Human Rights: Ecology, Economy and Ideology in the Canadian Arctic*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991.

George Wenzel describes *Animal Rights, Human Rights* as advocacy anthropology, an effort to intercede on the side of Indigenous groups. However, where other advocacy anthropologists might rail against the pernicious efforts of national governments and industrial interests, Wenzel seeks to defend the Inuit against the misplaced efforts of the animal rights movement. The essence of Wenzel's argument is that the animal rights movement, by portraying the sole motivation of Inuit sealers as monetary profit, has denied the Inuit not only the material basis of their daily sustenance, but their cultural heritage as well.

Wenzel does not make the error of presenting Inuit culture as a static and unchanging relic of the past despite the title of his first chapter, "Traditional People in the Modern World." He is able to avoid that error by arguing that Inuit culture has been and continues to be based on adaptation to a changing natural environment. For Wenzel, the Inuit continuation as hunters in the modern world represents a further adaptation, but this time an adaptation to a human intrusion into their world.

Wenzel recounts the recent history of the Inuit, examining the effects of fur-trade dependence, disease and institutional interference from churches and trading companies. Through it all, argues Wenzel, the Inuit maintained a pattern of customary subsistence. The fifteen years following World War II, however, were the most disruptive. The fox-pelt market collapsed, disease continued to ravage the Inuit, and most importantly for Wenzel's argument, the Canadian government relocated nearly all Inuit from their home villages to planned settlements.

In their struggle to continue the process of adaptation to the new reality, the Inuit turned to the artifacts of southern civilization. The greater distances to the hunting areas created by resettlement required the use of the snowmobile and the increased use of guns and ammunition. These, in turn, had to be paid for with cash, and greater participation in the cash economy was possible only through the sale of sealskins.