

miss the best fare while paying to please someone else's palate. Similarly, regionally-oriented ministers are likely to continue to advance their particular claims for costly public goods for fear that, if they do not, other ministers will do so. More to the point, a minister's popular support, which is largely based on efforts to serve the interests of a specific region, would be jeopardized, if he or she were reluctant to do so.

Savoie's thesis is as disturbing as it is convincing. With the hindsight of the 1990s, his thesis is especially distressing because it raises a question and, concomitantly, a dire warning about the consequences of uncontrolled and uncontrollable public expenditure in Canada, a question and warning similar to those raised some twenty years ago by an equally perceptive scholar but dismissed then as an exercise in hyperbole.

During the early 1970s, Richard M. Bird presented a dramatic and, self-admitted, alarmist calculation to the effect that public spending in Canada could reach 100 percent of GNP well before Canada celebrated its bicentennial (Bird, 1970:18). Bird was quick to note that, due to the suppositions on which the calculation was based, the projection was more cause for doubt than for alarm. Nevertheless, he claimed that his example, however "absurd," raised a question of immense concern: is there an upper threshold for public expenditure?

The question might not be of such concern, if it could be confidently assumed that federal monies are well-spent. Be that as it may, Donald Savoie's thoroughly engaging account of the growth and management of public spending in Ottawa inevitably leads the reader to pose the same question. Despite the passage of two decades, the reader is left with as much alarm as doubt about Ottawa's ability to identify an upper threshold for public expenditure. The figures instill doubt on their own. Bird endeavoured to explain growth which had culminated in about \$21 billion in total government expenditure in 1969-1970, a sum equal to 20 percent of GNP at that time. In comparison to the size of the public purse today, a sum of some \$21 billion seems meagre. Indeed, Savoie points out that the federal government alone currently spends \$122.5 billion or 23 percent of GNP (1987-1988) and has accumulated a deficit of \$265 billion, a sum which, as a proportion of GNP, is almost twice as large as it was in 1970.

More importantly, Savoie sounds an alarm by claiming that the size of the federal government's expenditure budget, combined with its accumulated deficit, has left "precious little room to manoeuvre to stimulate the economy in the event of an economic downturn" (319). As if to neutralize uneasiness, he

adds that "the alarm bells over the growth in spending have been ringing for years" (319).

This is hardly comforting. Economic pundits have revealed that Canada has been tottering on the precipice of a recession since the decade began. If Ottawa is hard-pressed to apply Keynesian prescriptions in the event of an economic downturn, as Savoie suggests, then it is high time to gather the political will to lower the decibel level of the alarm bells. Savoie, and others of similar analytic capabilities, should be encouraged to suggest means to infuse the necessary will in a manner compatible with the common good.

Reference

- Bird, Richard M.
1970 *The Growth of Public Spending in Canada*. Toronto: Canadian Tax Foundation

Des communautés actives

Par J.B. Robichaud, et C. Quiviger C. Conseil canadien de développement social. Moncton, N.B., Michel Henry Éditeur, 1990, 235 p.

Recension par Robert Mayer
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Dans sa préface, J. Gagné souligne, avec raison, que "les titres et l'expérience professionnelle des deux chercheurs" leur confèrent d'emblée une légitimité certaine pour traiter des centres communautaires de services sociaux et de services de santé à l'oeuvre d'un océan à l'autre. En effet, ils sont tous deux fort bien connus et très appréciés dans les divers milieux de l'intervention communautaire (tant au Québec que dans les autres provinces canadiennes). Bref, on ne pouvait mieux choisir pour effectuer une telle recherche (cf. la notice biographique à l'endos du livre).

Cette recherche se présente "comme une étude exploratoire et descriptive d'un certain nombre de centres (368 au total) qui offrent des services de santé et/ou des services sociaux selon une approche qualifiée de communautaire et ce, dans les dix provinces du Canada" (1990:13). Avant de tracer ce bilan à l'échelle nationale sur l'état de santé de ces centres, les auteurs s'attaquent d'abord, dans le premier chapitre, à clarifier certains concepts de base relatifs à l'objet d'étude: communauté, intervention communautaire, centre communautaire, etc., pour finalement aboutir à proposer, à titre d'hypothèse, un modèle de centre communautaire. À la suite des