

Government advertising and the creation of national myths: The Canadian case

Jonathan Rose

Department of Political Studies, Queen's University, Kingston, ON K7K 1C6, Canada;
Tel: +1 613 533 6225; Fax: +1 613 533 6848; e-mail: rosej@qsilver.queensu.ca

Received (in revised form): 20th January, 2003

Jonathan Rose is Associate Professor of Political Studies at Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario where he teaches courses on Canadian politics and political communication. He has written a book and several articles on the role of government advertising in Canada. His current research project is an examination of how government advertising is used by liberal democratic states in the creation of consent and he is co-author of a book, with David Taras, entitled 'The New Newsmakers'.

ABSTRACT

Government advertising in Canada has a long history and has been an important adjunct in fostering values of national unity. This paper examines several significant campaigns: early 20th century immigration advertising, patriation of the Canadian constitution in the 1980s and, more recently, Olympic advertising in 1998. It attempts to demonstrate that the use of state advertising in Canada is unique in helping foster a view of Canadian citizenship and the development of national myths. Moreover, advertising in Canada has been a way to respond to the claims of a vocal sub-minority.

INTRODUCTION

There is a growing literature on the role that marketing increasingly plays in political life.' Most of this literature is American

or European and examines the role of political parties during elections. With few exceptions² those engaged in this area are interested in the activity of political parties and with good reasons. They are the engine of government, the primary source of political participation and election campaigns are the most significant site of political competition. The period between elections, however, offers a view of political marketing by other actors, most notably government. Government marketing has been an area much less mined. Even less so has been the systematic study of advertising as a form of government marketing. Why do governments use such a vehicle to persuade mass publics and what implications does it raise for the practice of democracy?

This paper examines the Canadian case of government advertising. It argues that marketing by the Canadian state is unique in several respects and has had an important legacy in developing and fostering citizenship in Canada. What makes Canada unique is the way in which advertising is employed by the government. First, government advertising is used to create and develop national symbols and myths. Given the government's looming presence in advertising it has been an important component of legitimacy creation and citizenship development. The second reason that

warrants the study of Canadian government advertising centres around the existence of sub-national minorities. Canada is not unique in having active and vocal sub-national minorities. The Scottish in the United Kingdom, the Basques in Spain or Moslems in India to varying degrees are similar to the Quebecois in Canada. What is unique to Canada is the use of advertising by the federal government in responding to the periodic threats of secession. Finally, advertising has become so pervasive in Canadian politics that issues requiring popular support are more than likely to be brought to the public directly through advertising campaigns. This paper examines three advertising campaigns, all of which were ostensibly about different policy issues but upon closer reading are about the creation of citizenship, nationalism and a strong and united Canada.

POLITICAL MARKETING AND THE CREATION OF NATIONAL MYTHS

Myths are an integral component of any nation-state. According to Northrop Frye³ myth refers to a story that includes characters and events. All nations have great stories that are passed down from one generation to the next. They serve important functions in creating community and binding citizens. These myths are not judged on their veracity but rather their metaphorical and symbolic meaning. Jerome Bruner argues that humans construct meaning by using symbolic systems that are 'already in place, already "there", deeply entrenched in culture and language'.⁴ Once understood and developed, these symbolic systems make the user a reflection of the community; having the grammar of participation, citizens become integrated in the *res publica*.

There are a number of kinds of myths: literary, religious, spiritual, but what will

concern this paper are the myths of the state. Plato argued that the myths of the state were 'noble lies' designed to legitimate existing power arrangements. Murray Edelman suggests that they are designed to create powerlessness:

'Stories evoking the high status of officials, their intricate negotiations with one another, their unique access to intelligence, and the privileges their offices confer on them are at the same time narratives about the exclusion of the rest of the population from that special world. In this respect the political spectacle evokes something like the awe and sense of personal powerlessness characteristic of a religious posture. Like religious myths about great events in a time and place outside everyday experience, these ... build an intensified appeal and an acquiescent response.'⁵

In Canada, national mythologies are created not only from civil society but also from its institutions, public policies and government. Throughout Canada's history the national government has used advertising to advance and inculcate the values of what it means to be Canadian. While many governments have used advertising to sell the nation to tourists, to help stamp out smoking or to encourage healthy eating, the Canadian Government has gone beyond these non-contentious issues, the goals of which much of the public agrees. Advertising by the state has primed and shaped public conversation about citizenship, sometimes overtly, at other times in a subtle and sophisticated manner.

Peter Van Harn has written that state branding is a new phenomenon, combining the state's desire for image-making with its need for competitive advantage.⁶ Writing of the experience of

the European Union (EU), Van Ham suggests that states have needed product-differentiation in the homogenising world of the EU. They have turned to creating brands for themselves in the same way that products try to stake out a niche in a brand-crowded marketplace. According to him, 'the "brand state" comprises the outside world's ideas about a particular country'.⁷ Van Ham is correct when he writes that the EU represents a new experience in political marketing for European states but is wrong to suggest that state branding merely has an economic function. The Canadian case suggests that it does much more.

The Canadian Government has used advertising to develop and encourage a particular lund of Canadian citizenship. The three cases examined here are: first, immigration in the 19th century; secondly, a federal government constitutional package; and the third examines the federal government efforts at advertising during the 1998 Olympics in Nagano. All are noteworthy because the arguments found in them are about the creation of a national mythology. In the first this national mythology was nascent and poorly formed. In the latter two cases, evidence can be seen of a very subtle and sophisticated use of symbols and images to prime and shape public opinion and attitudes towards what it means to be Canadian. These advertising campaigns are not isolated or atypical. Rather, their pervasiveness suggests that the federal government in Canada has used advertising as an important tool of marketing and that its use is an important means of fostering national mythologies.

IMMIGRATION ADVERTISING AND CREATION OF THE IDEAL

After Canada's confederation in 1867, the Canadian Federal Government embarked

on a vigorous and ambitious marketing campaign designed to attract what Clifford Sifton, the Minister of the Interior, called 'desirable immigrants'. Sifton was fully aware of the need for governments to market themselves and from accounts of the time, so was their target audience. One travel writer described the incredible marketing efforts of the Wilfrid Laurier government this way:

'Maps, pamphlets, diagrams, reports, books, photographs, swish around him like a tornado. They are handed to him on the railway car; they are by his porridge bowl at breakfast in the morning. You go into a drugstore to buy a cigar, and the eye is fascinated by a brochure ... You read and you learn and are amazed at your own stupendous ignorance.'⁸

Sifton was rather sanguine of his own marketing efforts. For him it was a necessary component of 'selling' Canada to immigrants by marketing it as an ideal country to the ideal citizen. In the House of Commons Sifton defended his government's marketing by saying, 'In my judgement and the judgement of my officers the immigration work has to be carried on in the same manner as the sale of any commodity; just as soon as you stop advertising and missionary work the movement is going to stop!'. The marketing campaign bore all the similarities of today's modern campaigns. They were tested on party members, slogans were developed that created a fit between the needs of the customers (potential immigrants) and the unique appeal of the product (Canada) and diverse media were used. Of the multimedia aspect Berton writes that

'tens of thousands of pamphlets and exhibits at state fairs, 200,000 pamphlets distributed at the St. Louis

world exposition in 1904 alone: one thousand lantern-slide lectures in England in a single year; one thousand inquiries a month at the High Commissioner's office in London; and a thirty-five thousand dollar arch at the coronation of Edward VII, trumpeting the advantages of immigration.¹⁰

In addition to marketing was the placement of advertisements in strategic newspapers. Two of these examples are seen in Figures 1 and 2. The federal government's gift of 160 acres to all settlers gave Sifton a ready-made slogan. American newspapers and others throughout the world carried the government ads under the slogan of 'Free Land Clubs'. In 'Free Farms for the Million' (Figure 1) language was carefully parsed to ensure that the correct tone was used. Climate was euphemistically described as 'the healthiest in the world'. 'Snow' was never mentioned and in a stretch that would make even Madison Avenue today do a double take, 'cold' was replaced with 'invigorating' and 'bracing'. This ad strikes a fine balance between the allure of wide open spaces and the need for organised community. Canada was literally placed in the centre of the world, apparently accessible and within reach of all. This theme was developed in other ads such as 'Western Canada, the New Eldorado' (Figure 2) where the concerns of potential immigrants were anticipated: Western Canada is 'easy to reach', there's 'nothing to fear' and perhaps responding to concerns that the west was too wild, families would be 'protected by government'. The juxtaposition of the horse-drawn carriage on the left with the expansive farm house on the right makes a visual argument about claims of material prosperity that await new immigrants. Completing the argument is the warrant (or reason) for immigrating to Canada:

'This is your opportunity Why not embrace it?' beckons the ad.

The appeals in these ads would later form some of the core myths of Canada and Canadian citizenship. It is not suggested that these early immigration ads developed these myths — although that is certainly a possibility. It is clear, however, that the government was marketing citizenship and values in ways that seem to challenge Van Ham's claim that state branding is a new phenomenon. These ads reflect the liberal democratic ethos of the time: they encourage individualism and they reward initiative. As early as the 19th century the Canadian state was using advertising to transform itself from political entity to brand name.

SELLING A CONSTITUTION

Nowhere are the myths of the state more clearly articulated than in a nation's constitution. For Americans, the second amendment entrenches the right to bear arms, which in turn has become a dominant symbol of its freedom. Another cherished element of its national mythology, 'Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness', has become the slogan of the Lockean America. Constitutions thus provide a good vantage point from which to view the myths and symbols of a nation. As Alan Cairns writes 'constitutional politics is the supreme vehicle by which we define ourselves as a people, decide which of our present identities we should foster and which ignore, and rearrange the rights and duties of citizenship membership'.¹¹ In Canada, these myths do not percolate downwards through civic associations and finally seep into the body politic but have been carefully funnelled through advertising which has acted as a conduit for their creation. Canada is unique in that, arguably, the constitutional myths are in part a product of state

FREE FARMS FOR THE MILLION

DOMINION OF CANADA

RED RIVER VALLEY
 The Great Fertile Plains
 and British Columbia

MINERAL RESOURCES
 Immense Coal Fields

CLIMATE THE HEALTHIEST IN THE WORLD.

5 Experimental Farms

FREE FARMS OF 160 ACRES
 IN MANITOBA, CANADIAN NORTH WEST AND BRITISH COLUMBIA

LAND AND COAL FIELDS AT CONVENIENT DISTANCES
 FARMS FROM 100 TO 250 ACRES ARE OFFERED IN OTHER PARTS OF CANADA

Figure 1
 Government ad

marketing and official propaganda.

When the federal government was patrating the constitution in 1981 from Bntain it embarked on an elaborate and sophisticated publicity campaign that overtly sold citizenship as an adjunct to a new constitution.¹² Like the immigration campaign that preceded it, the constitu-

tional advertising campaign was no different from many commercial campaigns of the time: it was focus-group tested, it had key messages to different target audiences, it used a variety of media — paid placement in the mass media as well as promotional material distributed through the mail. In addition, like

Spokesperson: Equalisation

VIDEO

OPEN ON ELDERLY GENTLEMAN
HOLDING CONSTITUTION

BROCHURE. SUPEK:

Donald Kerr, Edmonton

'CANADA' WOKDMARK AND SUPER:

Brought to you by the Government of Canada.

Multiculturalism

AUDIO

OPEN AND HOLD ON SHOT DOWN
COUNTRY ROAD AS MENNONITE
FAMILY IN BUGGY COMES TOWARD
CAMERA.

'CANADA' WORDMARK AND SUPER:

Brought to you by the Government of Canada

Women's Rights

VIDEO

OPEN AND HOLD ON SHOT OF
WOMAN RISING ON ESCALATOR. IT
REVEALS THAT SHE IS AN EXECUTIVE
AND CARRIES A BRIEFCASE.

'CANADA' WORDMARK AND SUPER:

Brought to you by the Government of Canada

AUDIO

MAN: You know, we've always believed in this country that the more fortunate provinces have a responsibility to help those less fortunate. It's a tradition, right? But that's all it is; any province could withdraw that responsibility today.

But a constitution guarantees all those things we believe in will be protected permanently. And so the Canadian Constitution will guarantee that the tradition of sharing will endure.

The Canadian Constitution. It's everyone's guarantee.

VIDEO

ANNCR: In Canada today, a government could pass a law discriminating, for example, against Mormons, Mennonites, or Baptists ... because of their way of life — or religion.

A Constitution is the *only* guarantee that the rights and freedoms we take for granted today will be permanently protected.

And so the Canadian Constitution will guarantee equality to all — without discrimination based on cultural, racial, or religious grounds.

The Canadian Constitution. It stands on guard ... for thee.

AUDIO

ANNCR: Today in Canada, any government could pass a law that says, for example, that women will have to work for the minimum wage.

Yes, we have law. But laws can be changed

A Constitution is the *only* guarantee that the rights and freedoms we take for granted will be permanently protected. And so the Canadian Constitution will guarantee that all women must be treated as equal and receive equal opportunity.

The Canadian Constitution. It stands on guard ... for thee.

These three ads each appeal to different demographics and tap into core national myths. The first ad, 'Spokesperson: Equalisation', appeals to a core Canadian value: the principle of equality between regions. It is marketed to Westerners who were among the lowest supporters for the government's constitutional initiative. The fact that it is an 'elderly gentleman' further adds to its authenticity. The second ad, 'Multiculturalism', uses the well-worn advertising technique of transference. Juxtaposing the simple allure of Mennonites with the complexities of multiculturalism may mute the contention of the ad. Rather than portraying multiculturalism through visible minorities, or traditions and practices that might be threatening to some, this ad distills a controversial policy to a morsel that is easily digestible. Gillian Dyer writes that 'ads continually move between systems of meaning ... transferring from one meaning we are already aware of to create a new meaning'.¹⁴ According to Alan Cairns 'pressure for recognition of diversity contributes to the enhanced symbolic role of the constitution. ... The written constitution ... has become a powerful symbolic statement of inclusion and exclusion'.¹⁵ This ad, in conjunction with other advertising, may have helped encourage the inclusion of minorities in Canadian citizenship as well as stem the opposition to increased immigration in the 1980s and 1990s. The third ad, 'Women's Rights', is the richest in terms of symbolism and imagery. The visual of a 'woman rising on [an] escalator' connotes success and a sense of arrival. This tells us that women's equality has arrived. The ad works because it is aimed at a clear demographic (women) and creates values which would not challenge anyone; from vigorous and active feminists on the left to traditional, anti-feminist women on the right. It also creates a feel-good and positive link

between the product (the constitution) and an attribute of it (permanence of rights). The ad implies that women's rights under a constitution cannot be changed. It does not say that explicitly because it is false, but rather, as with any good advertising strategy, it invites the reader to make that inference.

Advertising was an important component of the government's efforts to promote and sell the constitutional initiative but it was not the only method. Brochures, pamphlets and other leaflets were designed to keep this initiative in the forefront of everyone's mind. According to the government's own communications strategy, one such document was 'a high quality, annotated "Canadians' Guide to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms" [which was] more than simply a layman's guide, but also contained useful information'.¹⁶ Other titles were described as 'an existing set of leaflets in an attractive package', and 'handsome copies' of the Governor General's letter to the Queen.¹⁷ The advertising campaign, supplemented by the marketing, was clearly designed to package the policy in much the same way as products were sold. The effect of this was not only to generate support for the initiative — and there is some question whether the advertising was effective — but also to create an environment for which a new kind of citizenship would be accepted under a Charter of Rights. Through design or serendipity, the marketing of the constitution amounted to an effort to construct citizenship. At the time it was the most significant effort at social engineering ever undertaken by the federal government in Canada.

SELLING A UNITED CANADA THROUGH SPORT

'Canada's athletes, the pride of a nation' proclaim the advertisements for the 1998

Winter Olympics in Nagano, Japan. Unlike the other two campaigns examined here, this one was overtly about selling citizenship. There was no obvious purpose for a federal government to advertise its Olympic athletes other than to promote pride in being Canadian. Yet the federal government spent over \$5m on a lavish campaign that used athletes' own words to discuss how proud they were to be Canadian. Perhaps more than any other, this campaign represents the ultimate commodification of citizenship: it uses the same codes and symbols as corporations did in their ads. Governments in all nation states have an identifiable role to play in cultivating certain attributes of a democratic citizen. This can be done implicitly by creating the material conditions necessary for citizenship or explicitly through the development of symbols and myths. In Canada advertising by the state plays an important part in that function.

'Red, White, Dynamite' shows the Canadian women's hockey team discussing their experiences training for the Olympics. Over a hard-driving rock sound-track a member of the team can be heard to say 'Our whole team gets along so well, even though we are so different'. Another intones that they are from 'different cultures, different ages, [and] different backgrounds' as the visual shows the names of various players: 'Sundhara', 'Dupuis', and 'Wickenheiser'. The ad closes with a woman saying 'we are really strong together' as the slogan, 'Canada's athletes, the pride of a nation' appears on screen. In a second ad, 'Reaching for the Stars', French Canadian speedskater, Nathalie Lambert draws a comparison between her setback of breaking her ankle before the games with Apollo 13. 'They were so close to their dreams and had to turn back. Just like me, I guess: she says ruefully. The ad closes on an optimistic note, with a visual of a full moon and

Lambert saying 'But I will always believe in myself because when you believe in yourself there's no telling how far you can go. Even to the moon.' Like the other ads in this campaign, it closes with 'Canada's athletes, the pride of a nation'.

Both of these ads are typical of the Olympic advertising but atypical of government advertising. First, they used athletes using their own voices to tell their own story. There was no narrator or voiceover to give the ads a greater air of authenticity. Secondly, usually government ads mix information with persuasion; the former provides justification for the latter. What makes these unique is that unlike virtually all government advertising there is no element of information. They could not be justified on the grounds of ensuring compliance with a policy (such as anti-drinking and driving ads) or providing information about a new policy (such as the immigration or constitutional ads). They were overt attempts to reconstruct citizenship and in the case of 'Reaching for the Stars' make the implicit claim that francophones have a place in the pantheon of Canadian sporting heroes. These ads create a harmonious community where one may not exist; they paper over regional and linguistic differences to construct a hollow nationalism that reduces citizenship to slogans. As advertisements, they preclude different, counter-hegemonic readings. The Olympics are not seen as an elite-driven exercise in patriotism that diverts attention away from material problems but are constructed as a virtuous spectacle of citizenship. As Paul Rutherford writes

'Such ads inadvertently expressed a more fundamental "truth" about the country: that a patriotic Canada existed only as a promotional sign, a floating signifier, an imagined and asserted quantity which served the varied pur-

poses of elites ... whose power and profit required some semblance of community. Much of this propaganda, then, avoided the reality of a divided land'.¹⁸

Rhetorically, visually and in terms of claims made, the Olympic ads were not very different from the ads of Roots, the clothing company that outfitted the Canadian Olympic team. Roots used pride in the Olympic athletes to sell clothing. The government used the same pride to sell its version of nationalism. Though the products were different, the emotional appeals were the same. This campaign represents the apotheosis of the blurring of boundaries between government and corporate appeals in advertising. Bell Canada's 'Dieppe' ad shows a young man who, in his trek through Europe, stops at Dieppe to call his grandfather to thank him for his wartime efforts. Molson's 'I am Canadian' ad uses American stereotypes about Canada to highlight the differences in American and Canadian citizenship and sell beer. The speaker, 'Joe Canadian', rhymes off the differences between Canada and the USA, one of which is, 'I believe in peace keeping not policing, diversity not assimilation'. If not for the product, the federal government could not have written a better script for its citizenship myths.

MARKETING FEDERALISM

Advertisements, like other forms of art, require the appropriate context in which to understand the deeper meanings embedded within them. 'Daisy', one of the earliest and most famous political ads, requires an understanding of Barry Goldwater's nuclear paranoia. This ad, broadcast in 1964 only once because of its incendiary nature, showed a little girl picking petals from a flower as an

ominous voice counted down from ten. It is quickly apparent that he is counting down for a rocket launch. As the voice gets to 'one' the camera zooms into the girl's eye which transforms into a nuclear mushroom cloud. Lyndon Johnson intones, 'These are the stakes. To make a world in which all of God's children can live or to go into the darkness. We must either love each other or we must [sic] die.' The narrator says 'Vote for President Johnson on November third. The stakes are too high for you to stay home.' The ad makes a powerful claim about Johnson's opponent, Barry Goldwater, without ever referring to him by name. It only makes sense because people are aware of the context in which the ad was broadcast. In much the same way, many of the ads created by the Canadian Government do not explicitly make arguments for the benefits of federalism nor do they repudiate Quebec nationalism. Implicitly, however, they can be read as making a strongly pro-federal case.

While not referring to the 'Daisy' ad, Bob Hunter of Greenpeace has referred to the importance of 'mind bombs' which are 'influential, sometimes archetypal images that can cut through the hypnotic drone of the day-to-day babbling to reach people at a deeper emotional level.' The Canadian Government has used these mind bombs to link the emotional resonance of a slogan with political structures. These mind bombs have been the staple of government propaganda directed at staving off the pressure of Quebec succession. Looming in the background of many government ads is an appeal to people from Quebec that federalism is an ideal structure of government. Canada is unique among nations that use advertising in that so much of its state advertising is a vehicle for national unity. While its ostensible purpose may be otherwise, understand-

ing the context in which these ads are broadcast suggests that they contain powerful claims for a united Canada.

In 1992, Canada marked its 125th year with a propaganda campaign that had all of the attributes of the 'Daisy' spot: ads that had a strong argument requiring viewers to fill in the missing pieces and that also were rich in connotative meaning. While this nominally important landmark might justify some government boosting, it did not warrant the flood of marketing undertaken by the government that year all in the name of promoting Canada to Canadians. The subtext of the marketing lay in something else. It was also the year that Canadians would vote in a national referendum on a set of elaborate constitutional proposals that would see everything from the seat distribution change, to Senate reform, to aboriginal self-government.²⁰ Because of the wide-ranging number of changes, opponents had many targets to attack. On 26th October, 54 per cent of Canadians voted to reject the federal government's proposals notwithstanding the sizeable marketing defence mounted by the government.

All of the ads extol the virtues of a united Canada. One ad, called 'UN Ranking' reminded Canadians that the United Nations ranked Canada as the number one place to live as if to taunt separatists and other anti-federalist detractors (such as aboriginal groups and women, both of whom were opponents of other constitutional initiatives). Describing the UN study which ranks education, life expectancy and purchasing power, the voice-over says 'Guess who came in first this year?' as the camera zooms into the Canadian flag. Other government departments also got in on the act with the Secretary of State's campaign called 'For the Love of Canada' while the department of Industry, Trade

and Technology ran with the slogan 'Yes, We Can' which was not only about Canadian competitiveness internationally but 'yes, we can' could also be interpreted as a proxy for the federalist position in the referendum. Comparing Canada to other nations was also a key message of several of the ads. 'I've heard that Canada is beautiful, friendly' a young Spanish woman says waiting to get into the Canadian pavilion at the World's Fair in Seville. The message is followed by shots of Mounties and flag-waving children. In another ad, a young girl sings 'Since I was this tall, I've loved my home, my Canada.' Even the department of defence got in the act. One commercial extolled the Canadian Forces' 'dedication in working through problems and bringing people together'. It concluded with 'It's a part of what it means to be a Canadian. It's in all of us.'²¹

While perhaps verging on the excessive, these ads had the potential of being powerful 'mind bombs' that reached people at an emotional level. They had no informational value and contributed nothing to the public debate, but rather were an effort at subtle but effective arguments about national unity. That they are not atypical for Canadian Government ads suggests something about the role of the federal government in creating, packaging and marketing national myths. Successive governments of a variety of political hues have used advertising to create unity and define citizenship.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF GOVERNMENT MARKETING

The problems facing liberal democratic governments in the 21st century are multifaceted and complex. There appear to be several conflicting demands on governments: citizens are on the one hand urging governments to get their fiscal house in

order, yet on the other demanding the same or greater levels of service; the pressure for devolution and decentralisation of power in federations is ~new with the concomitant demand for larger trading blocs; polls show a decline in citizens' knowledge about government even as communication efforts are redoubled; and governments' need to communicate with their public must be balanced by the demands of the mass media which favour entertainment over substance. Addressing these problems requires an articulate and informed public discourse that cannot be achieved through government advertising. Yet advertising provides a 'quick hit' to citizens whose media attention spans are shrinking and whose patience with the complexities of modern politics is growing thinner.

There are several consequences of a government that uses advertising to communicate the complexities of citizenship. The most obvious claim is that government propaganda is a waste of money. It is a waste of money because it does not work, because citizens are too media-aware to be taken in by such propaganda and also that creating national myths is not the sort of thing on which governments should be spending tax payers' money. A second claim made about the consequences of government advertising is that the ads are a proxy for political ads. They blur the boundaries between the platform of parties and that of government. In some cases the government's advertising is a not-so-thinly veiled argument for the party in power. Prior to a provincial election the government of Ontario's tourism department ran ads that said 'Life is good Ontario. Preserve it, conserve it.' This was widely seen as an intentional malapropism for the governing Progressive Conservatives. A third claim is that government ads marginalise Parliament as the locus of decision making. Issues that

should be discussed in Parliament are increasingly being taken to the public through advertising. While the decline of Parliament may be rued, if this is the reason, then government ads could be a way of bringing the citizens back into public debate. Unfortunately, the reality is that government advertising further marginalises Canadians by speaking at them and not involving them in genuine conversation. It is as much a denigration of Parliament as it is of the precepts that underlie a more direct kind of democracy.

While all of these are a cause for alarm, perhaps the most worrisome tendency of increasing government advertising is that it represents the commodification of citizenship. It does so by employing the codes, grammar and techniques of a mode of communication that is designed to sell products. A 30-second spot is not the proper way in which to engage citizens on the complexities and subtleties faced by a multicultural citizenship. Ads reduce identity to mere slogans and perpetuate the idea that citizenship is like any other product to be consumed in a capitalist society. It furthers the perception that politics are about posturing and hype and that governments are not willing to have serious conversations with citizens.

This paper has attempted to demonstrate that the government of Canada has engaged in marketing throughout its 135-year history. Van Ham's suggestion that state branding is a new phenomenon²² is not borne out by the Canadian case which provides examples of marketing national symbols and myths through advertising throughout its history. Because of Canada's fragile sense of identity as well as the existence of a vocal sub-national minority, advertising has provided an important way to construct national myths. If myths define not only who they are as a people but also

who they might be. Canadians have reasons to worry about the tenability of enduring Canada.

REFERENCES

- (1) See O'Shaughnessy, N. (1990) 'The Phenomenon of Political Marketing', Macmillan, Basingstoke, UK;
- Lees-Marshment, J. (2001) 'Political Marketing and British Political Parties, the Party's Just Begun', Manchester University Press, Manchester;
- Newman, B. (1999) 'The Mass Marketing of Politics, Democracy in an Age of Manufactured Images', Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- (2) Rutherford, P. (2000) 'Endless Propaganda: The Advertising of Public Goods', University of Toronto Press, Toronto;
- Rose, J. (2000) 'Making Pictures in Our Heads' Government Advertising in Canada', Praeger, Westport, CT;
- Rose, J. (2001) 'The Advertising of Politics and the Politics of Advertising' in McKie, C. and Singer, B. (eds), 'Communications in Canadian Society', 5th edn, Thompson Educational Publishing, Toronto.
- (3) Frye, N. (1982) 'The Great Code: the Bible and Literature', Academic Press, Toronto, p. 31.
- (4) Bruner, J. (1990) 'Acts of Meaning', Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, p. 11.
- (5) Edelman, M. (1988) 'Constructing the Political Spectacle', University of Chicago Press, Chicago, p. 98.
- (6) Van Ham, P. (2001) 'The Rise of the Brand State', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 80, No. 5, Sept–Oct.
- (7) See Ref. (6), p. 2.
- (8) Berton, P. (1984) 'The Promised Land: Settling the West 1896–1914', McClelland & Stewart, Toronto, p. 19.
- (9) Debates of the House of Commons, Canada (27 July 1899), cols. 8654–8655.
- (10) See Ref. (8), p. 18.
- (11) Cairns, A. (1995) 'Canadian Citizenship and Constitutional Change', McClelland & Stewart, Toronto, p. 157.
- (12) See Rose (2000), Ref. (2), pp. 125–55.
- (13) National Archives of Canada, RG 137, Acc. 84–85/585, Box 23, File 200–2–3, 'Constitutional Advertising: Summary of Amounts'.
- (14) Dyer, G. (1982) 'Advertising as Communication', Methuen, London, p. 124.
- (15) Cairns, A. (1995) 'Canadian Citizenship and Constitutional Change', McClelland & Stewart, Toronto, p. 179.
- (16) National Archives of Canada, RG 137, Acc. 84–85/585, Box 27, File 'Communications Strategy on the Constitution', p. 4.
- (17) See Ref. (16).
- (18) Rutherford, P. (2000) 'Endless Propaganda: The Advertising of Public Goods', University of Toronto Press, Toronto, p. 146.
- (19) Dale, S. (1996) 'McLuhan's Children: The Greenpeace Message and the Media', *Between the Lines*, Toronto, p. 134.
- (20) For further elaboration see Russell, P. (1993) 'Constitutional Odyssey: Can Canadians Become A Sovereign People?', 2nd edn, University of Toronto Press, Toronto.
- (21) Fulton, E. K. (1992) 'The Television Wars: The Yes Campaign Pulls No Punches', *Maclean's*, 12th October, p. 31.
- (22) See Ref. (6).