Social Cohesion: An Urban Perspective

Friday, May 2, 2003 – With Canadians divided on a number of major challenges facing our society, not least of them, our response to the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, it seems appropriate to take another look at the notion of social cohesion. This is so because social cohesion is closely related to the way a society handles its differences.

"Social cohesion is not a utopia where all is peace and tranquility," says CPRN President, Judith Maxwell, in a recent discussion of the idea. "Instead, it describes a society that accepts diversity and manages conflicts before they become fights."

In an article prepared for the Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal publication, *Trend Chart* (March 2003), Maxwell looks at social cohesion in an urban context. She examines the growing concentration of poverty in certain neighbourhoods of cities like Toronto and Montreal and the threat it poses to social cohesion. That threat is accentuated when inequality coincides with ethnic or religious distinctions as it often does today in our major urban centres.

Social cohesion depends on addressing the economic inequality in our cities by creating access to social supports, training and jobs. But it also depends on opening up our political institutions and processes to different cultural voices, assuring them of genuine participation in the decisions that affect their community futures.

More on Social Cohesion

The winter edition (Vol 28, #1, Winter 2003) of the ***Canadian Journal of Sociology*** is devoted to the subject of social cohesion in Canada.

This special issue is edited by Paul Bernard and Susan McDaniel and includes an article co-written by the Director of CPRN's Family Network, Jane Jenson, and Family Network Research Associate, Denis Saint-Martin ("*New Routes to Social Cohesion? Citizenship and the Social Investment State*"). There are also articles by, Dick Stanley, Denise Helly, Susan McDaniel and Deena White.

Watch for this issue, soon to be published. For more information, visit the CJS Web site at http://www.arts.ualberta.ca/cjscopy/current.html