

Is Canada Following Suit?

Examining Canadian Correctional Rhetoric, Policy and Practice in a 'Punitive' Climate

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The "New Punitiveness" Argument

- An attempt to explain changes in the use of imprisonment and other crime control strategies
- Transition from penal welfairism to crime control (Garland, 2001)
- Old penologies to new penologies (Feely & Simon, 1992)
- Increasing rates of imprisonment (Webster & Doob, 2007)
- Introduction of increasingly 'harsh' legislation (Tonry, 2007)
 - Canada: Pre-sentence custody credits (from 2:1 to 1:1), Parole eligibility, MMS, and Conditional release
- Increasing number of police (Hamilton, 2013)
- Severe prison conditions (Neapolitan, 2001)
- Amounting human rights violations (van Zyl Smit & Snacken, 2009)
- Movement from professional expertise to penal populism (Loader, 2006)

The 'Canadian Case' (pre 2006)

- Relatively 'stable' imprisonment rates (Doob & Webster, 2006)
- 'Balanced' approach (Meyer & O'Malley, 2005)
- Punishment guised under the 'liberal veil of rehabilitation' (Moore & Hannah-Moffat, 2005)
- Scepticism regarding the effectiveness of criminal sanctions in responding to crime (Doob & Webster, 2006)
- Policy characteristic of a 'culture of restraint' (Webster & Doob, 2012)

Studying "Punitiveness"

Rhetoric

Policy

Practice

Politicization of Crime

- “A process through which politicians use crime as a political issue to increase their electability and popularity” (Fairchild & Webb, 1985: 8)
- Different from penal populism - not granting public expertise, but telling them what to think (Scheingold, 2011)
- Fear of crime – affective (emotive) approaches to law and order policies (Frieberg, 2010)
- “there is nothing quite as bad, as being called soft on crime”
- Change in Canada?

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5

Canadian Political Party Platforms

- Official party platforms
- Trends:
 - Changes?
 - Movements?
 - Points of stability?
- Period:
 - 1993- 2011

**Breakdown of Political Party Platforms
1993 to 2011 Elections**

Year	Parties of Interest
1993	Liberal, PC, Reform, NDP
1997	Liberal, PC, Reform, NDP
2000	Liberal, PC, Alliance, NDP
2004	Liberal, Conservative, NDP
2006	Liberal, Conservative, NDP
2008	Liberal, Conservative, NDP
2011	Liberal, Conservative, NDP

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6

Canada's Federal Political Parties 1993-2011



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Rhetoric Themes

- Overall, notions of balance
- Restraint in the use of prison
- Bifurcation
- Targeting social causes of crime
- Crime prevention
- Support for rehabilitation and treatment
- References to insecurity, fear and safety
- Inclusionary and exclusionary measures related to the public, victims and offenders

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8

Canadian Political Party Platforms Crime and Criminal Justice Issues 1993 & 2011

1993 – Progressive Conservatives

“Justice that Works for All Canadians”

- Violence on streets and on TV
- Need a system of justice to protect citizens
- True safety begins with social assistance
- ‘root cause of crime’ (Victims of childhood violence; Ability of inmates to read)
- “Canadians want their system of justice to reflect them better”
- “The answer does not lie in simply building more prisons and getting more police”

2011 – Conservatives

“Here for Law-Abiding Canadians”

- Protect the vulnerable, hold criminals accountable
- Supporting the rehabilitation of offenders, but the punishment should fit the crime
- Strengthen corrections, help Canadians feel safe
- “Harper’s government has made tackling crime one of our highest priorities. The Ignatieff-led Coalition – true to its soft-on-crime ideology – has resisted and blocked our efforts.”
- Common-sense beliefs of law-abiding citizens

Broader Ramifications

- Is Canada becoming more punitive (crime control rhetoric)?
- Upward trend?
- Shift in cultural values?
- Link between politicization of crime, crime control legislation and operations?

Thank-you!

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