T. Courchene, *Celebrating Flexibility: An Interpretive Essay on the Evolution of Canadian Federalism* (Toronto, CD Howe, 1997)

**Overview**

Essay grapples with the implications for the future of Cdn federalism of these pervasive and irreversible changes in the global political and economic order. Critical subtheme of the essay is that Cdn federlism has always been incredibly flexible (well, at least until 1980 when Canada abandoned the creativity emanating from federalism as *process* and embarked on a strategy that implied all of our problems could be solved by reconfiguring federalism as *structure –* through constitutional amendment). Going forward, the ongoing evolution of Cdn federalism will be principally process driven – not structure driven.

**Conclusion**

* Spurred by gbz and telecomputational revolution on one hand, and domestic exigencies relating to the debt/deficit overhang on the other, the evolution of Canada’s federal system is well underway
  + Gbz is inherently decentralizing because it enhances markets that themselves are inherently decentralizing
* Theme of the essay has been that Canada’s federal system is sufficiently flexible and adaptable to accommodate these pervasive forces of change along with the related sub-theme that the sweeping and complex nature of this evolution cannot possibly be *managed* by a set of strategic changes in the formal distribution of power
* Thus, the appropriate route is process evolution
* Focuses some time on GBZ and impact on federalism – eroding the nation state from above. Both shifts of political power upwards, and downwards
* In terms of spelling out the pressing issues of the day, the message of the essay is mixed
  + If Quebecers insist on enshrining their “distinct society” in the Constitution, they may have to wait a bit – however, the good news is that, if Quebecers can be content with a *de facto* distinct society – defined as the ability to influence how they work and play – then their hour is at hand
  + For the ROC, news is more sobering. With the decentralization of key aspects of the social envelope and with the provinces increasingly moving in the direction of becoming “economic nations” – English-speaking Cdns may have to rethink their vision of the federal govt as embodying both “state” and “nation”