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## Editorial 5: Staying Calm

Since the September 11th terrorist attacks on the United States the message from government, which has been repeated again and again, has been to stay calm and, as much as possible, to go about business as usual. We are to avoid over-reaction and panic. It is a credit to Canadians that this has generally been the case, particularly as the Canadian government has been busily stumbling about, proclaiming the imminent collapse of the sky.

Two weeks ago, Health Canada, in the absence of a single instance of anthrax poisoning in Canada, and without any evidence of future attacks, ordered \$1.5 million of the drug ciprofloxacin, a drug which is used to treat exposure to Anthrax. In ordering the drug from Apotex, a company which does not hold the patent for the drug in question, the government, including Alan Rock, former legal counsel to Apotex ("no conflict," quoth he), broke the law. The government quickly began the usual backpedalling, claiming that they simply wanted the drug as quickly as possible and re-using the mysteriously unnamed and errant aide excuse which has been so popular in the past. At the end of the process, the government will end up buying ciprofloxacin from Bayer, who holds the patent, but will end up paying Apotex as well. One wonders how the government's ham-handed rush to stockpile ciprofloxacin fits into the message of calm being preached.

The proposed Canadian anti-terrorist legislation is much more disturbing. In addition to reducing restrictions on electronic surveillance and increasing sentences for those involved in terrorist activities, changes which will likely meet little disapproval, the anti-terrorist bill will allow police the power to arrest and detain without a warrant, if terrorist activity is suspected.

The combination of suspect logic and fancy footwork involved in

the idea, invoked often of late, that personal freedom must be sacrificed in order to preserve personal freedom, is one which would make both Anselm and Astaire envious. Even if one can make the logical leap and accept that, in order to fight for democracy and freedom, our democratic rights and freedoms must be abridged, implicit in this questionable equation is the idea that once the fight is over and democracy reigns triumphant, the rights removed to fight terrorism will be restored. In Canada this appears not be the case.

The equivalent American anti-terrorist bill has sections which will expire in four years, unless extended for a final two years by the President. The sections involving increased police powers are being given a time limit expressly so these additional powers are not abused and used for reasons beyond for what they were intended: to fight terrorism.

The Canadian Bill has no such time limitation. The bill is slated for parliamentary review in three years, but this is merely a review, any recommendations or findings are not binding. The introduction of the ability to arrest and detain without evidence, no matter the intent, is an extremely dangerous precedent. While the current and most popular enemy of the people is terrorism, there will obviously be other threats to democracy and security in the future. With the power of arrest without warrant already on the books in the case of terrorism, it becomes that much easier to further limit democratic freedoms of individuals suspected of other criminal activity (drug offences, organized crime in general). This has very serious implications for the assumption of innocence upon which the legal system based. Unlike Americans who, though subject to equally ugly turns of law, will have the new restrictions on their rights removed, Canadians will be stuck with a loss of rights and freedoms which may well be permanent.