

**NOTES FOR REMARKS BY THE RIGHT HONOURABLE JOE CLARK TO THE  
APEX LEADERSHIP SYMPOSIUM**

OTTAWA, MAY 29, 2019.

I am privileged to have this opportunity, but confess it feels a little presumptuous that I should come here -- from 40 years ago-- to advise the brightest and best public servants in the land about leadership and governance. I imagine more of you are more engaged in reflecting on governance in rapidly changing times than was the case with any preceding generation of Canada's excellent public service.

They were part of a system which, with all its limitations, seemed to work, and to be accepted by most citizens. So their principal focus could be on specific substantive issues – health care, trade, making our complex federation and economy work. They could take the system of governance for granted, because, by and large, their publics did.

En revanche, vous travaillez dans un climat où la confiance du public à l'égard de la gouvernance démocratique s'effrite presque partout. Des systèmes autrefois fiables semblent s'effondrer – pas seulement les structures de la gouvernance, mais aussi les habitudes de civilité, d'enquête véritable, de bénéfice du doute, et l'acceptation que de graves décisions doivent être prises après mûre réflexion.

Les gouvernements ne sont pas les seules institutions que nous connaissons qui sont bousculées aujourd'hui par ces changements de ton ou de tolérance. Les familles le sont aussi, ainsi que les entreprises, les religions institutionnelles, les charités, et les organisations non gouvernementales.

Les liens de confiance qui nous sont familiers se rompent, pas d'une manière qui nous paralyse aussi rapidement qu'un cyclone ou un tsunami, mais d'une manière peut-être plus dangereuse parce qu'elle est moins visible. Les perturbations graduelles et accélérées ne menacent pas seulement les pays qui font la manchette --comme le Royaume-uni, les Etats-unis et la France avec ses gilets jaunes – des régimes qui étaient depuis toujours les modèles présumés de la gouvernance démocratique –, mais un nombre grandissant de démocraties auparavant stables ou en devenir :

- en Europe
- dans les Amériques

- en Afrique contemporaine, où un nombre croissant de Présidents qui avaient accepté de « limiter leur mandat » reviennent sur leur engagement;
- et en Asie, où lors des élections au Sénat philippin ce mois-ci, et je cite Al Jazeera, « l'opposition a été exclue... par un... [Président] accusé de violations massives des droits de la personne ».

We underestimate the catalytic impact of modern communication on huge populations in the developing world, who have never had the opportunities we enjoy but, before the internet, simply did not know that life was so much better for others elsewhere.

Now they know – or at least the large and mobile majority of those who are young know – and that new knowledge is already a driving force for emigration, from and within Africa and the Americas, and is a source of serious domestic tensions within both receiving and sending societies.

The United Nations projects Africa's share of global population will grow from 16% in 2015 to 25% in 2050 and 39% by 2100. Asia's proportion will fall but still be more than half the world in 2050 and 44% in 2100.

The injunction I most admire from Sir John A. Macdonald was “Look a little ahead, my friends”. All of us in public life face daunting and serious challenges – many of them new and untraditional. But our capacity to address those challenges depends at least as much on trust in governance, as it does on will or skill. To succeed at everything else, we simply have to give priority to earning back a public trust our calling once enjoyed, taking full account of how much the world is changing.

In 1989, two huge walls came down. The famous fall was of the Berlin wall. the other fall was of a wall which no-one knew was there, until the barriers were breached by the insurgent internet, powering a new age in which information moved instantly and everywhere. Nothing since has been “business as usual”.

Yet so much of our thinking was shaped in a time that has now gone – among other things, a time of deference to, and faith in, attitudes and institutions and authorities which are much deeper in our memory than in our contemporary experience.

That is a particular challenge for a professional Public service. In an age of change, you are expected to be reliably stable and highly innovative --simultaneously. The

private sector has only half that challenge. Some of the darlings of the Stock market are proud specialists in disruption. Many of the most prized C.E.Os are those who know how to abandon a product line. Imagine how public trust would plunge if those were your hallmarks.

Careful eyes-open analysis is essential to understand how governance can face these challenges.

- How real a threat is this apparently ubiquitous insurgency? Is it an “Arab spring” which will flourish briefly, then fail, or be diluted or postponed? Or is it more durable, widespread and urgent?
- How real is it to Canada?
- How do we respond – not just to threats – but to the opportunities open to a society with our relative stability and standing?

I’ll offer three specific, limited, but considered observations, from my reflections.

The first relates directly to building trust to get agreement, and concerns the ever-relevant Charlottetown Accord which was one of my most informative and important experiences in public life.

One clear reality today is that serious interests which feel excluded have more power now – both a power to object persuasively when shunned – but also a capacity to come to significant agreement, if given respect and a chance.

Bob Rae and I – despite one notorious difference -- were partners in Charlottetown, including notably with four major and representative Indigenous leaders and groups, in discussions which led to unanimous agreement – all provinces, territories, Canada, indigenous leaders – on fundamental and difficult changes regarding indigenous status and rights.

The four indigenous groups were not invitees, but equals, in that arduous negotiating process – equals at the table, and behind the scenes. That experience of working together as equals built a mutual confidence which allowed all sides to give ground as well as gain it, and to achieve an agreement which – but for a pesky referendum – would have been historic and substantive.

The cemetery headstone of Charlottetown is that the referendum failed to carry. The more salient fact is that the negotiation succeeded -- with unanimous agreement – on the widest range of issues. That is the lesson, for a society acutely conscious of its particular interests, and often suspicious or ignorant of others.

Inclusion inspired mutual respect, which led to compromise, and then agreement. We didn't assume trust. We didn't start with it. We built it. We earned it. Not in the country, I acknowledge. But around the table, which is the place to start.

The indigenous challenge in Canada is unique. But that lesson, of earning trust by respect and genuine inclusion, applies to other serious interests – regional, rural, or other – who feel excluded now.

A second observation -- we should reflect more upon the distinguishing features of Canada – a federation, a parliamentary system, a diverse community, a huge geography -- and deliberately consider innovations which might respect and elaborate those Canadian distinctions in this self-interested age.

We're a very lucky country, and appear to face no fatal threats of division right now; but Canada is not inevitable. We always have to prove our worth to our parts.

Members of the nation's Parliament -- on both sides of the House - have the potential to contribute much more to keeping this diverse country connected.

A feature of Parliament is that its members go home a lot and, even in a twitter age, deal directly face-to-face with local constituents. Often public servants would benefit from what those parliamentarians learn or know – and vice versa. But, with some exceptions, parliamentarians and public servants still seem to follow different furrows, to mutual disadvantage. As Party discipline increases, and Party ideology, there is the risk that parliamentarians will become more members of Party than members of Parliament.

My experience as Foreign minister – on the contentious issues of apartheid, development assistance, Central America, trade and many others -- proved to me that close co-operation can bring real benefit to Canadian parliamentarians, public servants and public policy.

My third observation is intended to be neither nostalgic, nor critical of the professional public service. It is about Royal Commissions, a device which has renewed relevance in this period of

- doubt about the breadth and open-ness of established institutions,
- a public appetite for genuine and evident consultation, and

- a need for imagination and considered innovation.

In Canada's history, some Royal Commissions have not succeeded; others have stimulated invaluable initiatives and reforms – which likely would not have come from normal processes -- equalization, the Canada council, health care, the status of women, free trade, and the list goes on. But that list could go much further, with an authority broader than a mere government, and as an instrument of both innovation and inclusion.

Thank you for your invitation and attention. You are, of course, free to dismiss these observations as casually as many governments did when I sat a sword's length away in the House of Commons.