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Why devote so much effort to the past, when tonight, in this city, there are 4 to 5,000 homeless, 1,000 of them children, half of them families with children.

Perhaps the answer lies in our reaction to these numbers: a little shudder of horror or surprise and then they roll off our back. The next time we hear them, well, we've already heard them. What else is new? And they remain, stubbornly, numbers, not people with lives.

So I add, what is the past when set against the 30,000 who will experience homelessness over the next 12 months in Toronto, remembering that only 17 percent of them are chronically homeless. The vast majority, therefore, are caught on the precarious ledge of poverty for dozens of reasons, and from time to time are shoved off or slip off and then desperately crawl back up again. How many are on the ledge? Some 80,000 in this city. Do you feel those numbers, aggressing you, crashing up against your sense of well-being, and then rolling off, down to the floor? Tomorrow there will be more numbers from different sources on different subjects - An export number, up or down; A dollar number, up or down; inflation, unemployment, waiting times in emergency wards, a tax statistic, a student debt calculation.

Each will cause a sensation, positive, negative, a small catharsis, of the headline or police drama sort. These numbers have become our modern form of gossip; they are the People Magazine of public policy. Somehow, the lives which lie behind the drama cannot be integrated into our consciousness in a long-term way. Instead there is a sense of immobility. 'That's the way things are'. 'There isn't the money'. It is as if, seen from within the complexity of our systems, it is impossible to identify the relationship between responsibility and action.

Curiously enough, these same surging waves of numbers also create an impression of urgency - almost a mental state of siege. And yet this is an unusual urgency because it is not attached to any practical sense of the obligation to deal with the cause. It is as if we are addicted to the emotion of urgency for its own sake, and so rush on, from fast emotion to fast emotion, in a directionless manner.

Which brings me back to the false, Manichean question: if today is filled with an urgent reality, wouldn't time spent in the past be self-indulgent?

But the past is not the past. It is the context. The past - memory - is one of the most powerful, practical tools available to a civilized democracy. There is a phrase which has been used over the centuries by various writers in various countries - History is an unbroken line from the past through the present into the future. It reminds us of our successes and failures, of their context; it warns us, encourages us. Without memory we are a society suffering from advanced Alzheimer's, tackling each day like a baby with its finger stuck out before the flames.

Each time I hear one of those speeches which invoke Canada, the new country, I am reminded of our self-imposed Alzheimer's. New? It is more than four centuries since the aboriginals, francophones and anglophones began their complex intercourse in this place. We are one of the oldest democracies in the world - 152 years without civil war or coup d'état. Look around at our allies. Compare.

Each of us, through birth or immigration brings something new to this experience. We add. We change. But for better and for worse, we do not erase. Only ideological dictatorships erase.

With the past we can see trajectories through into the future - both catastrophic and creative projections. The central trajectory of the modern, Canadian democratic society has its foundations in the great reform alliance of Louis LaFontaine and Robert Baldwin; and indeed in that of Joseph Howe, which brought democracy to Nova Scotia a month before LaFontaine formed his Responsible Government on March 11th, 152 years ago.

The words 'responsible government' so underplay the importance of the event that we miss its real meaning: the responsibility is that of the government to the people's representatives; 1848 was the moment when the very legitimacy of our society was switched from the colonial elites to the citizens.

Of course it was a flawed democracy. Women without the vote. Not even all men. But in the context of that time the suffrage was large compared to other countries. The high levels of land ownership - you needed land to survive - meant that the electorate which

chose Howe, LaFontaine, Baldwin was dominated by poor, largely illiterate farmers. They had a sophisticated idea of their own ambitions and responsibilities.

What gives meaning to the arrival of democracy is not the event itself; not the abstract action of voting; certainly not the power oriented idea of majorities. What made this the key to our past, present and future was the context which surrounded the event.

The reformers sought democracy because they imagined a certain kind of society. Ils avaient un projet de société. If you take today's apparently abstract 'situation' of poverty - of child poverty, for example - and place it in the context of the intent of 1848, it takes on real meaning. Meaning as to what the concept of democracy is intended to include in this society.

> Joseph Howe:
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> "The only questions I ask myself are, What is right? What is just? What is for the public good?"
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> "I would press any ministry of which I was a member to take the initiative ... in every noble enterprise, to be in advance of the social, political and industrial energies which we have undertaken to lead."

Robert Baldwin, warning of "the consequences of that reckless disregard of the first principles of ©democracy and justiceª which, if left unchecked, can lead but to widespread social disorganization with all its fearful consequences."

And from Louis LaFontaine, in what for me is the cornerstone document of modern Canada - his Address to the Electors of Terrebonne in 1840 - these words which cannot be repeated enough:

> "Pour nous empêcher d'en jouir, il faudrait détruire l'égalité sociale qui forme le caractère distinctif tant de la population du Haut-Canada que de celle du Bas-Canada. Car cette égalité sociale doit nécessairement amener notre liberté politique. ... Il ne peut exister au Canada aucune caste privilégiée en dehors et au-dessus de la masse de ses habitants."
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> "The only way in which the authorities can prevent us from succeeding is by destroying the social equality which is the distinctive characteristic as much of the populations of Upper Canada as of Lower Canada. This social equality must necessarily bring our political liberty. ... No privileged caste can exist in Canada beyond and above the mass of its inhabitants."

Is this romanticism? Of course LaFontaine knew there would always be richer and poorer. But he - they - were inventing the idea of a profoundly middle class society, in which that middle class would be as inclusive as possible.

And they were centering it not on the European idea of the self-interested bourgeoisie, but on a rather peculiar, new idea of what Baldwin called "the happy conduct of public affairs." Happy - in that still 18th century sense - meaning the fulfilment of the common weal.

What sounds romantic today was to many infuriating. For almost eight years they refused the blandishments of power. Or rather they wouldn't trade their principles for power. By today's standards of *real politik* they were stubborn and weak. They lacked ego and ambition. They stuck to their principles.

We often say that compromise is a Canadian virtue; that compromise has got us through the difficult situation of our complex population, complex internal geography and complex foreign relations.

It was the reform leadership of 150 years ago which developed that compromise. But their idea had nothing to do with our contemporary use of the word to describe self-interested negotiations through which each of the stake holders gets a piece of the pie. Nothing to do with shared selfishness bought at the expense of the public weal.

Their compromise was based upon confidence in the people and an understanding of the principles at stake. Baldwin spoke of " ... that forbearance, moderation and firmness on the part of the people which, so long as it compromises no great principle, affords the best assurance of the possession of fitness for the exercise of political power."

And so, when the citizens did give them power, it was based upon the solid foundations of a shared understanding of the operating principles of the society. Over the next three years they changed, reformed, revolutionized in every direction.

This hall is surrounded by Robert Baldwin's University on at least three sides. It was consciously designed by him to remove higher education from the hands of the colonial elites - that is, the religious, financial and social elites. The intent was to create a broadly based, disinterested public education and it became the model for much of Canada's higher learning.

It's just worth remembering, today, when the very ideal of the independent public university is in question, that Baldwin's reform faced violent attacks. There were, as there still are, those who thought a less public system would permit opportunities for personal profit and influence. Among them, Bishop Strachan, whose Trinity College lies

behind that wall, argued that such a university would: "place all forms of error on an equality with truth, by patronizing equally ... an unlimited number of sects, whose doctrines are absolutely irreconcilable ... ©Sª uch a fatal departure from all that is good is without a parallel in the history of the world."

The beginning of a fully funded, universal public school system was also put in place. They understood that this was - and this remains - the key to our functioning democracy. They extended the principles of democracy, out into the towns, villages and townships; a great decentralization of power and of responsibility; a second democratic revolution which was meant to bring legitimacy so close to the people that no authority could remove it. They reorganized the judicial system, including key legislation on trial by jury. Both here and in Nova Scotia they opened up the railway system, beginning our transportation revolution. They put through our equivalent of an anti-rotten borough bill. They removed primogeniture, a self inflicted blow given Baldwin's own interests as a man of property. It was a government in the best tradition of the Republic of Dubrovnik, which had lasted a 1000 years. Over the door of that city state's Great Council were the words "Forget your business and attend to the public one."

There were dozens of other basic changes which even today decide the shape of our society. But let me come back to a key point: the real meaning of that word 'compromise'. Not trade-offs, but moderation in the light of basic principles. When the Chateau Clique and their allies came out into the streets of Montreal on the night on April 25th 1849 and burnt down the Parliament of Canada, the government responded with moderation. Everywhere else in the West, governments automatically responded to such situations with rifles and cannon. The Executive Council - the cabinet - met on the 27th in the midst of the ongoing disorder and ratified a report which would explain their policy. It stated that "the proper mode of preserving order is by strengthening the Civil Authorities." And that the "Council deprecate the employment of the Military to suppress such disturbances..."

It was one of those perfectly existential moments. Here was a fragile half colony/half country, which already has two languages, as well as many ethnic groups and religions - without even taking into account the aboriginal role as a founding pillar of the society. In 19th century terms it was a powder keg. The government's response would cause this place either to slip down the European/American road towards impossible oppositions, outright violence and a centralized monolithic model. Or the ministers would have to discover another way.

Somehow, LaFontaine and Baldwin reached down into their own ethics and imaginations and decided upon an original and much criticized response. The Imperial

government in London, for example, was furious that the streets had not been cleared with volleys of rifle fire. The great western historian W.L. Morton put it that the reformers had decided "not to answer defiance with defiance, but to have moderate conduct shame arrogant violence."

It was the nuanced sophistication of their response which made possible today's complex society. They clarified the direction of our trajectory.

Now, many people here tonight could rise to point out the violence in our history, the lack of ethical behaviour, the non-respect for minorities. And I would agree. Have there been failures? Yes. Great injustices ignored? Absolutely. Betrayals? Unfortunately yes. Waves of hypocrisy ? Waves of it. After all, what I am describing is a real society, not a nationalistic publicity stunt. And the point of memory is also to remember the failures. And to judge these against the main trajectory of society. Each time we do not respond with "moderate conduct" to justified or unjustified provocation, we inflict a new suppurating wound on ourselves and it alters our memory. Most societies are destroyed by the accumulated weight of their self-inflicted wounds. It could be argued that by the standards of Western civilization our wounds are infrequent and small. Still, they are there. They are real. And they never disappear.

However the obvious point about the reformers is that they succeeded. The burning of the Parliament buildings was one of our greatest successes - or rather the way it was handled was a great success. And the Lord Durham school of doom and gloom about what these minorities would do to each other was quite simply wrong.

What's more, those who have been given an almost religious status as creators of a country out of dust in 1867 in fact operated with their imaginations dominated not by London or Paris or the neighbours to the south or, indeed, by the failures of Mackenzie and Papineau, but by the successful model which LaFontaine and Baldwin and Howe had created 20 years before. The concern of the Fathers of Confederation - both those who supported Confederation and those who opposed it, including Howe - was that they would fail to live up to that model. Some did. Some didn't. The point I can't help making is that after 133 years of this unusual experiment we have still killed in political strife among us less than a hundred citizens - most of them on a single day at Batoche.

Even one is, of course, one too many. But compared to any other Western democracy it is almost a miracle. You may consider this an odd reflection, but I think the first measure of any citizen-based culture must be, not its rhetoric or myths or leaders or laws, but how few of its own citizens it kills.

19th Century statesmen read a good deal of Greek literature. When I wonder exactly how LaFontaine and Baldwin found the right way to respond, that night as Montreal exploded, I like to think that one of them had been reading Euripide's - The Bacchae - and had noted the solid advice of Teiresias:

> ©Pª ay heed to my words. You rely
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> on force; but it is not force that governs human affairs.
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> Do not mistake for wisdom that opinion which
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> may rise from a sick mind ...
>
> ©Iª n all matters, self-control
>
> resides in our own natures."

At this point you might think that I've taken us quite a way away from those 4 to 5,000 people who are without homes close around us in this city tonight. Not at all. I've been talking about the foundations of your society and mine; foundations built upon a conscious intellectual concept of, and therefore dependent upon, ethics and principle. These principles assume moderation, inclusion and citizen based legitimacy.

I therefore feel comfortable saying that, on the basis of such a foundation, it is not possible to imagine that such a state of poverty - of exclusion- as 4 to 5000 homeless a night in one city, is normal or part of the way things have to be.

To which someone might reply that, 'things have changed, conditions have changed, technology, global markets, interdependency. We can no longer be held responsible for our past engagements?' I won't go on. You know the line. In reply I could, without trying to avoid our failures, nevertheless trace the LaFontaine - Baldwin trajectory event by event, over the last 152 years.

There is the prairie farmer reform movement of the early 20th century which took up the inclusive ideal of the early reformers and redefined it for the 20th Century, for all of Canada, introducing everything from votes for women to transfer payments to medicare. I could even argue that Le modèle québécois is in large part the result of the prairie farmer's model - and that is a compliment to both parties.

And out of that prairie movement I could trace the evolution of Clifford Sifton, the great newspaper baron, capitalist and politician who organized the settlement of the West under Laurier. You would hear him speaking out in the late 1920's about our drift away from this society's real trajectory; about "frenzied finance ... the purpose of which is to

inflate the capital of corporations serving the public, and to load onto the public the subsequent necessity of paying dividends on inflated capital." Along the way he clarified the role of the press. "It is no part of a newspaper's function to defend a corporation; a corporation is always well able to defend itself."

And out of that I could trace the career of the greatest philosopher and economist Canada has yet produced - Harold Innis - of Robert Baldwin's university - saying in a multitude of ways "[M] aterialism is the auxiliary doctrine of every tyranny."

And parallel to that the remarkable Monseigneur Charbonneau, Archevêque de Montréal, standing up in his Cathedral on May 1st 1949, during the Asbestos strike and preaching before a hostile Premier and establishment that "Nous nous attachons plus à l'homme qu'au capital ... [Q] ue l'on cesse d'accorder plus d'attention aux intérêts d'argent qu'à l'élément humain."

Of course, that is still fifty years ago and the counter argument would still be that since then things have changed. "Things have changed" is the standard answer to any suggestion that memory is important.

Let me deal, therefore, with this idea that something called progress or change can wipe out something called memory or the trajectory of a society. The underlying idea seems to be that for the first time in two thousand five hundred years of western civilization things have changed so drastically that the public good must automatically give way before technology and self interest. This argument reminds me of what Robert Baldwin called the struggle of "the might of public opinion against fashion and corruption".

Of course, things have changed. They have always changed. Sometimes more, sometimes less. But nothing has happened over the last quarter century which has had an unredeemable, inevitable searing effect on our link to our past. On our ability to enforce our ethical standards. Or on the power of citizens to engage in responsible individualism. It is an insult to our intelligence and to the redeeming value of positive change to suggest that we are its passive victim, that it must dehumanize us and separate us from the reality of our ethics.

Let me give you three examples of the deforming nature which change can have when it is treated as a great avenging god. The phenomenon which I call corporatism has affected the ability of every sector of society to act. Indeed, we have all become used to acting out our specialist dramas within our specialist relationships. In that way, whether in Europe or Australia or North America, society has truly been divided into interest groups - some of them against the public good, some indifferent, some in favour; but all acting outside of the inclusive mechanisms of democracy.

Think of areas such as social work or environmentalism. The subjects they deal with fill the air waves, fill the newspapers. We have the impression that we have learnt a great deal about the problems these movements deal with - from the homeless to pollution. In Sydney, in Paris, here, in Berlin, we sense a certain agreement for action within the society. And yet that action, when it does come, rarely matches the strength of the movement or the public support for it. But, and this is my point, if we turn to our elected assemblies - at all levels and indeed in almost all countries - we discover that there are very few elected social workers or environmentalists.

In the late 19th century parliaments, such as the French Assembly, the Canadian House, the American Senate, were filled with lawyers because we were busy putting in place the necessary legal infrastructures. Today, in most assemblies, lawyers represent only some 15%, of the elected representatives; managers of various sorts have increased to 15%; business people another 15%. But, for example, in Ottawa, only 2 MP's identify themselves as environmentalists. And I'm sure that they won't mind my pointing out that they belong to the first wave of environmentalists. The latter generations are not in the democratic process. They are caught up in their parallel work in NGO's, as are the social workers.

Now, NGO work is fascinating. It is good work. But the structures being used are corporatist. And we live, throughout the West, in democracies; that is, in places in which changes are made through the democratic process. In a curious way the very success of those NGO's most devoted to the public good actually undermines the democratic process - the actual guarantor of the public good - because they don't feed into it.

I'm not suggesting that elected houses be reduced to collections of interest groups. I'm saying that reform tends to come when the reformers integrate themselves into the democratic process. If they stay outside they reduce themselves to lobbyists - and a lobbyist is a lobbyist is a lobbyist whether the cause is good or bad. The problem is that the courtier-like features required to be an effective lobbyist are usually better suited to causes which undermine the public good than to those which support it.

So long as a good cause is outside the political process it will be subject to the argument that there isn't the money, or there are other priorities or, inevitably, that things have changed.

Let me put this argument a different way. So long as an NGO - which could also be defined as a corporation of social reformers - remains outside the democratic system, it has no real political levers. Its activists are not there, in the people's Chamber, to clarify the cause. And there is no practical link between the problem they are devoted to and the real action required to deal with it. PR victories - which NGOs so often win - cannot

be converted automatically into law. Nor should they be. Again, we live in democracies. But the result is that there are no direct practical links between the public debate and government action. The public therefore becomes discouraged about the effectiveness of politics because politics appear to be unresponsive to the public debate. And because of their disconnection from the formal political process, the corporations of social reformers themselves begin to look naive. All of this results in what René-Daniel Dubois calls "la perte d'une culture partagée." - a fractured culture or a fractured society.

Before you know it, poverty has been intellectually reconfigured into a condition of society - an inevitability - while at a human level it is treated as a personal failure. Suddenly society seems unable to respond with nuanced sophistication to what actually is natural and inevitable about human beings - that is, differences in personality, in ambition, in mental aptitude, in opportunities.

In other words, so long as a good cause remains on the outside, it may actually give comfort to those who oppose it. A cause really only makes ethical, utilitarian and social sense when it and its proponents are integrated into the democratic process.

This withdrawal of the social reformers from that democratic process is certainly a change in our society, but I don't think it was inevitable or is eternal. It is merely a side effect of corporatism.

Once we realize that and realize that both democracy and the causes of reform are suffering, well, a realignment will begin.

A second example: fashion throughout the West has it that we must move away from over-arching all inclusive public programs in favour of targeted programs. But the targeting of need - which is what it comes down to - takes us back to the old top down, judgmental and eventually moralizing approach towards those citizens who have problems. In fact, this is false efficiency because it removes the simplicity of inclusion and replaces it with an outdated, highly charged, labour intensive managerial approach.

I'm not suggesting that our current systems don't have problems. But these have nothing to do with 'universality' or ethical inclusiveness. They have to do with the weakness of rational linear management.

The point of targeted programs is that they bring back not only judgmental administration, they bring back plain old charity. This is now presented as citizens taking on more responsibility for others. But if they can afford that responsibility, they can

afford the taxes which would ensure that we do not slip into a society of noblesse oblige in which those with get to chose who and how to help those without.

As Strindberg put it in his blunt and accurate way - "All charity is humiliating." Perhaps it isn't surprising that charity was one of the weapons used by the opponents of Canadian democracy in the 1840s. Sir Charles Metcalfe, the autocratic Governor, was famous for his largesse as he attempted to buy support. He was lauded by the anti-democratic elites as "a fortune spender in public charity."

Ethics are quite different. They don't require the gratitude of the recipient; i.e. the humiliation of the recipient. The ego of the donor is not stroked. There is no warm, self-indulgent feeling of having done good. Ethics are a much cooler business than charity. That is why the concept of 'arms length' goes with the public good. Ethics is about citizens being treated equally. And in that sense, it is all important that we concentrate on the difference between the role of the citizen and that of the state. The citizen owns the state and receives from it neither charity nor the generosity of noblesse oblige. What the citizen receives is meant to be, as Baldwin put it, appropriate to "the happy conduct of public affairs."

I'm not suggesting for a moment that there is no room for charity. Or that the line between charity and obligation is ever clear. But charity cannot replace, in an inclusive democracy, the organization of the public good. And if it does, well then it excludes citizens from their role as citizens because they are dependent on another. Citizenship is about obligation, not about choosing to be generous.

But then things have changed. We are told that because of globalization we can no longer count on the obligation of the citizen; for example, on nation states being able to raise taxes in a competitive world economy. And so increasingly we must hope that generous individuals will give as best they can. In fact our ability to apply the idea of obligation to all citizens is fatally weakened because, we are told, the nation state itself is finished. Has been severely weakened. Is probably on its way out.

It is very curious. I have noticed that the people who talk most triumphantly of the victory of democracy over various ideologies, are the same people who talk about the nation-state being dead, powerless, or words to that effect. They often manage their triumphalism and their dirge in the same paragraph.

But the thing is this. Democracy was and is entirely constructed inside the structure of the nation state. Democracy is an emanation of the nation-state. And now that most of the unpleasant nationalist, racial, imperial characteristics of our nations have been

eliminated, democracy, citizenship, obligation and the public good remain as its greatest glory.

The other curious thing is that those who announce the death of the nation state usually do so with a little self-satisfied smile.

Well, if it is dead, so is democracy. Then it is not the state which has passed away, but the power of the citizen. And passed away in favour of what? Of the transnational? Nobody could take such an argument seriously unless their income depended in some way on believing that the nation-state was finished.

I don't think for one moment that this chronicle of a death foretold is accurate. And not because I believe in the force or virtues of nationalism. Rather, I believe in the aggressive intelligence of the citizenry, as against the ultimatly self-destructive nature of corporatism and the passive, inefficient, top heavy, directionlessness of the transnational. Individuals have not struggled centuries to establish an idea of responsibility and a sense of the concrete, inclusive public good in order to give it all away simply because some transient technology and heavy handed interest groups have been declared by mysterious, unknown forces to be in charge.

In any case, what is presented today as globalization, is merely a particular version of globalization. There are dozens of other possible versions. There is nothing brilliant or inevitable about this particular model. If anything, it resembles the unsophisticated approach of the late 19th century.

Frankly, it doesn't even meet its own standards. It is declared to be a victory for the market place, yet it is rushing towards monopolies and oligopolies in sector after sector. Anyone who is in favour of capitalism and competition must be against these old monopolistic forms. We know that, among other things, private sector monopolies make up for their ineffectiveness by limiting progress in order to create an illusion of stability.

In any case we can already see the nation states reacting. On the negative side, there is the return of false populism. Austria is just the latest example, and this phenomenon is in part a protest against the citizen's sense of powerlessness.

But on the positive side, a great deal more is happening. There are early but widespread moves underway to regulate the international money markets. Australia has balked at engaging in a number of the recent economic fashions. New Zealand, the fairy tale of the economic determinists, is reversing directions. One senses the leadership of the G7 growing nervous over the power of the unregulated transnationals. Even the OECD is calling for controls. I'm not suggesting that we are headed back to 1960. Nor that we should. I am saying that the force at the core of our trajectory - and that of many

other countries - is the citizenry. And they have been presented with an unrealistic picture in which economics have been internationalised through dozens of complex binding treaties, while democracy, social policy, most of justice, work conditions and taxation powers have been left, hobbled, at the national level.

The citizens will either require changes to the international economic arrangements which will permit for example, sufficient levels of national taxation and regulation. Or they will require international agreements in all of those other areas. Or some combination of the two.

Too late, some will say. No turning back now. Things have changed. Globalization is inevitable.

Well, for better and for worse, nothing is inevitable. Only ideologues believe in determinism. And economic fashions usually last no more than 25 years. Besides, the moment something is declared to be inevitable, you know you are approaching a major swing around, often in the opposite direction.

And now, a third and final portrait of fashion pretending to be revolutionary change. It goes like this. The world is one small place, therefore everything in it must be big. Big companies and big government departments. Everything must be merged to meet the challenge of smallness. The logic is hazy. The theory, however, is that these continual mergers and the rapid emergence of monopolies and oligopolies is a logical outcome of the international market place. This is nonsense from a business point of view. The best way to progress, function, make profits in such a large single market is to be small or medium sized; that is, to be fast and flexible. The worst is to be a slow, directionless technocratic haven. Even as these mergers go crashing on, you can sense a more intelligent undercurrent in the market place which would favour the opposite.

The truth is that gigantism - which is what we are now experiencing - is a managerial ideal. It has nothing to do with the market. It has to do with the standard, late 19th century, technocratic technique in which power = control and more power = a need for control over a larger structure. Gigantism is pure form over content, to say nothing of personal self-indulgence for a few individuals. It is also a fashion which will probably last less than a decade.

In any case, it is expansion in the absence of ideas. A few months ago in Australia I came across a large advertisement on the hoarding around a building site for a department store chain.

DAVID JONES

Bringing you an exciting

Shopping experience

for the

New Millennium

I suppose if you haven't got anything else to do for the next thousand years, why not. But the point is that neither very large corporations nor very large government departments can work. They cannot be given direction. And public policy only works when it is driven by ideas. When it is driven by form and management, it collapses.

I'd like to close tonight with the possibility of a real change; one which relates to the trajectory of our society. It is as relevant to our past as to our future - both to the citizen's role - whether homeless or comfortable - and to making sense of globalization.

The brief description I gave a little while ago of LaFontaine and Baldwin's three year government was that of a massive consolidation of all the ideas which had been in the air for years. I spoke after that of the key role lawyers played in our 19th century parliaments. They were shaping a society in desperate need of legal shape. But already, in his resignation speech in September 1851, Louis LaFontaine was talking about the need for law reform.

"Le danger aujourd'hui, c'est la facilité avec laquelle on fait des lois. Si l'on continue, notre code sera bientôt un labyrinthe dans lequel personne ne pourra se retrouver."

Joseph Howe was a little funnier on the same subject. "Every law could be reduced to half its size and made twice as effective. A reward should be offered for the best and smallest act on any subject."

I'll give you a contemporary example of this. As a writer I really ought to understand the libel laws. I don't. Neither do most lawyers. But how can you have effective freedom of speech if nobody can understand its legal limits?

But what I am talking about is much more than law reform. For a half a century we have been busy putting in place, on an ad hoc basis, structures and programs which have successfully produced a reasonably just society, at least in comparison to what came before. This ad hoc method is normal in a democracy. Each small advance is the result of debate and then of legislation.

Our accomplishments, however, now resemble a large mound filled with legal and administrative details. For most people, whether citizens on the outside or working on

the inside, it is an impenetrable mass. There is never a view of the whole or even of an entire single logic within the whole.

The more complex this has become, the more it has encouraged the worst in our managerial societies. By that I mean a narrow corporatist approach; a world of consultants and of specialist dialects, of stakeholders and of confused, frustrated citizens. And more and more ad hoc changes.

Not surprisingly, as the mound builds up, the managerial solutions tend to deal increasingly with narrow issues, one at a time, and in the short term. That is how we have slipped back into need based programs.

What I am describing is a curiosity of democratic societies. We start out with a long view and a desire to create inclusive programs. Democracy, rightfully, requires that we create them in an ad hoc manner. Over the short term this is fine. But if we leave them in an ad hoc form, they gradually become the opposite of what we originally intended.

Perhaps the most important job to be done over the last 20 years was to take this enormous mound of law and regulation and administrative detail and to consolidate it; to clarify, boil down, rediscover the shape of. This was not done. The result would have been, could still be, to reunite the citizenry with their state.

At first a project like this doesn't sound too exciting. But the obscurity of the mound is one of the key elements preventing citizens from participating as citizens. And consolidation was the logical second step to be taken after the initial chaotic rush to reform. Most of these programs still work surprisingly well, especially considering their structure. But those who believe in the original reforms have made the mistake over the last few years of defending the ad hoc jumble of their form rather than the underlying principles. As a result most reforms undertaken over the last twenty years in the name of efficiency have actually resulted in less delivery of programs and more cost. Why? Because they are an attempt to micro manage large complex subjects.

These contemporary reformers should have been in the forefront of the battle for consolidation, flying the flag of ideas, intent and ethics. Instead they have defended structure and so have found themselves marginalised by those who do not believe and who use the now unnecessary complexity of the mound as an excuse to undo the actual accomplishments of the reforms.

There was a desperate need twenty years ago - now even more desperate - to take that leap into consolidation. If it were successful it would prepare the way for a whole new wave of creative reforms.

And I believe that those reforms would take the shape of clear, over-arching and determinedly inclusive policies. Fewer, but all-inclusive programs, would be far cheaper and far more effective.

I'm not suggesting for a moment that four to five thousand people in Toronto will have to wait for those changes in order to see their situation improve. But I am certain that we would see this whole problem quite differently if we saw it in the light of clear, simple, inclusive policies. One of the hardest things to do in public policy is to marry ethics with effective programs. The cool arms length approach of ethics combined with simple, clear, all inclusive policies can make that happen. And that would be an honest reflection of the trajectory which Louis LaFontaine and Robert Baldwin sent our way.