TO INSPIRE AND BE INSPIRED: REFLECTIONS ON PROFESSIONALISM AND PUBLIC SERVICE

Ryerson University
Department of Politics and Public Administration,
and
Toronto Regional Group of IPAC

May 7, 2009

Kenneth Kernaghan,
Professor Emeritus, Political Science,
Brock University
Oscar Wilde -  “How I wish I had said that!”
James Whistler -  “You will, Oscar, you will.”

(1883 conversation)
“I owe my teachers an awful lot, and some day I intend to pay them back.”

(Stephen Leacock, College Days, 1923)
"We beg to differ! We beg to differ!

(Duke University, 1964)
“There is nothing so practical as a good theory.”

(Kurt Lewin, 1951)
“Your manuscript is both good and original, but the part that is good is not original and the part that is original is not good.”

(often attributed to Samuel Johnson, 1709-1784)
“… So long as we only know ourselves, we know nothing.”

(Woodrow Wilson, “The Study of Administration,” 1887)
Upwardly mobile public servants should “approach the question of political activity in the same manner that the Anglican prayer book prescribes for marriage: it is ‘not to be entered upon … lightly or wantonly; but … discreetly, advisedly, soberly, and in fear of God.’”  

(Arthur Kroeger, 1992)
“The cynics may suggest that this [policy influence] is power without responsibility; I suggest that it is more akin to responsibility without power.”

(AI Johnson, 1961)
MADNESS: EXCESSIVE ACCOUNTABILITIES

“Multiple conceptions and procedures of accountability can lead to the pathology of ‘multiple accountabilities disorder’ – MAD for short.”

(Paul Thomas, 2008)
“Public service values are not the icing on the public service cake; they are the cake itself.”

(Ralph Heintzman, 2007)
The leader of an organization is “primarily an expert in the promotion and protection of values” and “the art of creative leadership is the art of reworking human and technological materials to fashion an organism that embodies new and enduring values.”

(Phillip Selznick, 1957)
"[T]he art of values management for practitioners has already become the leading skill necessary for managers and leaders of public sector organizations."

(Montgomery Van Wart, 1998)
“…most public servants do not function, day-by-day, with a rule-book in their hand. On an everyday basis, they rely on a very general sense of what the rules require: on their experience and common sense, and on their sense of what is right and proper in a public service: that is to say, on their public service values.”

(Ralph Heintzman, 2007)
Public service is a special calling. It is not for everyone. Those who devote themselves to it find meaning and satisfaction that are not to be found elsewhere. But the rewards are not material. They are moral and psychological .... They are the intangible rewards that proceed from the sense of devoting one’s life to the service of the country, to the affairs of state, to public purposes, great or small, and to the public good.

(Task Force on Public Service Values and Ethics, 1996)
Public servants act in the public interest. They commit to the highest ideals of public service and take pride in their work. … [They] play a vital role in sustaining democratic institutions and fostering economic prosperity and social well-being. In their pursuit of the public interest, [they] develop and implement public policy within a framework of public service values. … [These values] define what the public service stands for and what it wants to be.

(Ken Kernaghan - 2009)
“Service delivery in the public sector should be citizen-centred because every act of service is a “moment of truth,” in which Canadians form an impression – positive or negative – about the effectiveness of public institutions and about the potential of democratic government.”

(Brian Marson and Ralph Heintzman, forthcoming)
Reference to the traditional stereotype of the lazy civil servant who “is like the fountains of Trafalgar Square because he [or she] plays from ten until four.”

(J.E. Hodgetts, quoting unknown source, 1955)

Fifty years later, public servants deliver many services 24/7 - and through several delivery channels. Facilitated by information technology, especially the Internet, but also by expansion of service centres and telephone call centres.
Integrated Service Delivery (ISD) involves bringing together and, where desirable and possible, fitting together related government services so that citizens can access them in a single seamless experience based on their wants and needs.
1. Community engagement
2. Inter-jurisdictional collaboration - cross delivery of services
3. Identity management and authentication
4. Virtual service networks
INTEGRATED PUBLIC GOVERNANCE AND COLLABORATION

“COLLABORATE OR DIE!”

(Harvard Business Review advertisement, circa 2005)
Integrated Public Governance is
• the exercise of authority, power and/or influence
• by a broad range of political actors, including citizens and groups
• that involves the joining up of policies, programs, services, structures, processes and systems
• in arrangements that extend across departmental, governmental and/or sectoral boundaries
“The search for a more holistic approach to policy and management” will “be as much a hallmark of public service reform in the early twenty-first century as the changes introduced under the rubric of ‘new public management’ or ‘reinventing government,’ were in the closing decades of the twentieth.”

(Perri 6 et al, 2002)
“It is almost a no-brainer that pride and recognition for public servants’ work is central to creating the environment necessary for successful recruitment, retention and renewal.”

“Politics is a blood sport.”

(Rediscovering Public Service, 2000)
If you blow the whistle and “if you have God, the Law, the Press, and the Facts on your side, then you have a 50-50 chance of winning.”

(Source unknown)
THE NOBILITY OF PUBLIC SERVICE

In the heart of most public servants lies the conviction that service to the public, to the public good, or to the public interest is what makes their profession like no other. It is why they choose it, for the most part; and why they keep at it, with enthusiasm and conviction, despite difficulties and frustrations along the way. Service to the public and to the public interest is the vision of the Public Service, and it is a creative, essential and compelling vision.

(Task Force on Values and Ethics, 1996)
We hope that "the [public] service will soon become attractive to many persons who now seek other avenues of employment, and in general the title of public servant will be an honour to be coveted."

(1891 Royal Commission on the Civil Service)
“There is nothing more noble than public service.”

(Barack Obama, Strasbourg, France, April 2009)