

How We Lead: Canada in a Century of Change

By Joe Clark

Toronto, ON: Random House Canada, 2013

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Gambatte: Generations of Perseverance and Politics, A Memoir

By David Tsubouchi

Toronto, ON: ECW Press, 2013

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Review by Don Bourgeois

GIVEN THE ONGOING DEBATES OVER THE APPROPRIATENESS OF CHARITIES engaging in political activities, two recent books shed light on the importance of charities' non-partisan participation in public policy. The books were published in 2013 by two Conservative politicians, one federal and one provincial. Both were important cabinet ministers in their respective governments and one was, of course, Prime Minister of Canada.

The books are divergent in many ways – for example, Mr. Clark's draws on his experience as one of Canada's most successful Ministers of Foreign Affairs to posit an approach for Canada to be influential in international matters while Mr. Tsubouchi writes a memoir that sets out the factors that, for him, assisted in achieving success. Both authors and books, though, articulate an important theme – it is through dialogue and engagement that good public policy is developed and implemented. Both assume, of course, that good public policy is an indicator of success – a stance that in these days of 24/7 media and sharp ideological divides is not as self-evident as it used to be. Both are also “good reads,” providing both enlightenment and entertainment.

How We Lead is more deliberately a “political” book, arguing for a different approach on the part of the government of Canada to the development of public policy. Mr. Clark opens rhetorically: “An essential question for citizens of lucky countries is not simply who we are or what we earn, but what we could be?” He continues ... “But aspiration is a reasonable expectation for Canadians, who are among the most prosperous people in any nation, and who have historically responded successfully to the challenge of making ourselves better citizens of our country and of the world” (p. 2). Mr. Clark continues over the next almost 260 pages to describe that history; what, from his experience and perspective, has gone wrong in recent years; how to get back to this reasonable expectation.

Mr. Tsubouchi's *Gambatte* takes a different approach. It is a very personal and reflective memoir of not only himself but also of his parents, his uncles and aunts, and others in his extended family of relations and friends. He describes the impact of a terrible event in Canadian history when Canada's domestic and foreign policy was neither aspirational nor reasonable, the interment of Canadians of Japanese descent. That story is woven throughout the book, and it is prelude to explaining the more recent past and present of the memoir. What is more important is that the narrative goes beyond the negatives of the past to examine aspirations and public policy successes.

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Mr. Clark's experiences have been primarily national and international. As the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada, and as Prime Minister, his focus was national. He explains how he learned about Canada and its many diversities and grew in his understanding of this through his extensive exposure to people from different walks of life across Canada. He used comparable techniques to address foreign policy issues as Minister of Foreign Affairs under a different prime minister. This led to his presiding over one of the most successful periods of Canadian foreign policy.

Mr. Tsubouchi comes from a different place, one of an outsider who found his political place in municipal politics. He credits a former mayor for helping him understand how to be successful in politics. And success is not marked merely by electoral success – although being elected is important. Rather, success is measured by making things better for those in your community. The lessons of Markham became the driving imperatives of his time as minister in several portfolios involving many policy areas and stakeholders.

How We Lead argues that Canada has, in the past, exercised “soft power” in an effective way, one that met Canadian needs and improved the world and the lives of those who live elsewhere. Mr. Clark focuses on Canada's international potential, drawing on the history of Canadians' contributions in the past. He puts forth a strong roadmap for how Canada can be better off and more respected “in the world that is becoming more turbulent and unsettled” (p. 3). Importantly, he notes that the

we in question is not just governments; it is also, emphatically, Canadian citizens and organizations (‘non-state actors’), and more generally, the example and the reputation of our country. Any consideration of Canada's international role is also a domestic discussion, because what Canada does in the world is intimately related to who we are at home. (p. 3)

An essential element of Canada's ability to exercise influence abroad, though, involves dialogue and a finding of common cause between the government and the “non-state actors,” many who are charitable organizations. A central thesis is that this dialogue, by its nature, is not kowtowing. Rather, it is strong interaction that requires a degree of good faith and trust, but also depends on verification and adequate checks and balances on both sides. There must be national conversations for there to be the twenty-first century alliances that are needed – alliances, not marriages, among government, organizations, the private sector and others. Importantly, these dialogues and alliances also involve the development of public policy – and, indeed, sometimes require the changing of public policy or its nuancing for there to be success.

These alliances are not possible where government merely dictates; rather, there must be engagement and openness, which may mean the government alters its public policy. Mr. Clark notes that finding common ground has long characterized Canadian diplomacy. It is a skill that is much needed in a world in which power is shifting among nation-states, and also from nation-states to NGOs, corporations, and other organizations.

Mr. Clark recognizes very clearly the importance of NGOs to the dialogue and the public policy discussion, even where there are differences of views. These NGOs are of course, by their nature, “charitable organizations” so unduly constraining their ability of

charities to engage in non-partisan political engagement would undermine their work both at home and abroad.

The importance of dialogue and engagement also runs through Mr. Tsubouchi's memoir. While his book is not deliberately a prescription for success, as is Mr. Clark's, he makes clear what his method for being successful was – and, again, success was defined not solely in terms of electoral politics but of public policy success. His memoir is replete with examples of how he and those reporting to him engaged with friends and foes alike to find that common ground. Indeed, Mr. Tsubouchi would probably object to the phrase “friends and foes” because both groups are part of the community, part of the constituency, and part of Ontario. Regardless, those he engaged with around public-policy decisions included charitable organizations.

What does all this mean? First, both *How We Lead* and *Gambatte* are “good reads.” Second, they both, in their own ways, speak to the important ingredients of engagement and dialogue in the development and implementation of public policy. Public policy making is, by its nature, a “political” exercise, more so perhaps in the 21st century than in previous times. But for this engagement and dialogue to occur, it inevitably will involve charitable organizations – whether they are ones involved with foreign policy and foreign activities, or domestic policies and domestic activities. These activities are essential for charitable organizations – but they are also essential, as both Mr. Clark and Mr. Tsubouchi demonstrate in their books, for governments.

While keeping charities out of partisan politics is a given, too often “political activities” that constitute vital participation in the public policy development and implementation are dismissed in the same breath. These activities are essential to good public policy and success in improving the quality of life in Canada and abroad – indeed, it is perhaps not too far off the mark to say they are a concomitant of “peace, order and good government.” The successes of both Mr. Clark and Mr. Tsubouchi also point to the political need for charities' engagement in non-partisan politics.