REMARKS TO CANADIAN CLUB OF OTTAWA

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Thank you, Mr. Verret. I'm honored to be welcomed into such an august group.

I am somewhat awed at this assemblage of brainpower. It reminds me of a story embellished by Montaigne about a rich nobleman named Megabysus, who visits the studio of the famed painter Apelles--to suffer the kind of insult that only an artist could give. Poor old Megabysus fails to maintain that presumptive look of competence that depends on holding one's tongue. Eventually he can't contain himself and he begins discussing the artist's work, at which Apelles whirls on him and barks:

'Tant que tu as gardé le silence, tu semblais être quelque chose de grand à cause de tes colliers et de ta mise pompeuse, mais maintenant qu'on t'a entendu parler, il n'est personne, même les garçons de mon atelier, qui ne te méprise."

Visitors who aren't smart enough to maintain their silence may betray their ignorance. Nonetheless, on the strength of Mr. Verret's kind invitation, instead of wisely keeping silent, I'm going to stick out my neck.

My topic may make it sound as if, in typical American fashion, I shall now tell you everything you need to know about Canada. I approach you as much less than an expert, but more than a tourist: a longtime admirer of your country; an interested and good-willed observer; a political scientist and university president who believes our countries ought to be talking with each other at every level, and talking as though the future depended on it. Although I live now in the southeastern United States, I've spent considerable time in Canada and have had many lively conversations with my friend Rob Prichard, president of the University of Toronto, on subjects affecting higher education throughout North America.

I'm further emboldened to address you by the fact that Duke University, my home, has America's oldest Canadian Studies program, where we've turned out more Ph.D.s in Canadian Studies in the last few years than at all other American universities combined. Aside from active exchange programs with the University of Toronto, McGill University, and others, we have also demonstrated our interest in things Canadian through our slavish homage to James Naismith, who I gather moved to Springfield, Massachusetts from Almont, Ontario, in 1891, just a few weeks before he invented basketball--a sport which I confess is nearer to our hearts at Duke than hockey (though we do have a hockey club even there where the average daily temperature is 15 degrees Celsius.

Although one tires of all the millennialist rhetoric these days, and it's easy to damn forecasters with hindsight, I have recently found myself lingering over Sir Wilfrid Laurier's remark to this club that "The twentieth century belongs to Canada." It is good to take a long view at times. So I have been thinking about the ways he was right and the ways he was wrong, and asking myself to whom the twenty-first century will belong. I think it will belong to nations able to learn not only from the past but from the present; those with a hunger to find and adopt what business mavens call "best practices"; those who can transcend chauvinism, xenophobia, and party politics to become better world citizens while still looking after their own. "The long view" these days is both global and historical.
It often seems to me that the cultural relationship of Canada to Great Britain has paralleled that of the United States to Great Britain, and more recently that between Canada and the States. After our revolutionary war we spent more than a century trying to prove who we weren't; you know what I mean, because I think you've been there too. In a lecture at the University of Ottawa, Margaret Atwood said with reference to her childhood education:

"The main idea behind the way we were taught Canadian history seemed to be reassurance: as a country, we'd had our little differences, and a few embarrassing moments--the Rebellion of 1837, the hanging of Louis Riel, and so forth--but these had just been unseemly burps in one long gentle after-dinner nap. We were always being told that Canada had come of age. This was even a textbook title: *Canada Comes of Age*. I am not sure what it was supposed to mean--that we could vote and drink and shave and fornicate, perhaps; or that we had come into our inheritance, and could now manage our own affairs."

Why both of our countries have had such a chip on their shoulders is material for another and rather different talk. Although your occasional worry about becoming too Americanized is a reasonable one--not every culture can thrive on gratuitous cinematic violence, after all--we need not deplore our many points of contact merely in order to be good patriots. I would like to suggest that if anything, we need to look at those points more closely and open-mindedly.

For instance, Canada is America's largest trading partner, with a US$27.5B trade surplus with the U.S. this year. You don't hear much complaining about this particular trade deficit in the states, nor should you--since everybody benefits from it. But maybe that's too easy an example.

While I quail at the prospect of lecturing you even about the excellences of your own country, I have to tell you that educated citizens in my own do pay more than casual attention to what goes on up north. I'm willing to tell you as honestly as I can what I think they see, through whatever filters and blinders I myself wear. Gone, I think, are the days of which Edmund O. Wilson could write, "We tended to imagine Canada as a kind of vast hunting preserve convenient to the United States."

Perhaps too often, the United States tries to measure itself against the yardstick of others with which it's not really comparable, particularly Europe and Japan. And although I would by no means minimize the demographic, cultural, and historical differences between Canada and the States, we have a lot to learn from each other's successes and mistakes. Indeed, we even have a lot to learn from those areas of experimentation and ongoing debate in public policy which cannot be said to be either a clear success or a clear failure. Unquestionably we face many common challenges, and although our responses to those challenges sometimes do not dovetail well, nevertheless I hope we can agree that we always have more to learn. To be a sympathetic and critical observer is the very essence of what education entails on both sides of the border.

With that in mind, there are five arenas in which I'd like to suggest we lag behind you. None are without controversy even here, though it seems to me that Canada has, through a combination of good planning and good luck, led the way more often than is generally recognized. You have even illuminated the path for others by the way in which your forward-looking experiments have sometimes gone awry.

Let me begin with universal healthcare. I know you are not universally fond of your Medicare system, but the fact that you have one is cause for envy. It reminds me of Winston Churchill's remark that "democracy is the worst form of government except all those other forms that have been tried." Perhaps the Canadian health care system is the worst imaginable except for all the others that have been tried.

Consider that, according to the latest OECD numbers, the U.S. spends about $4,000 per capita on annual health care, of which $1,700 is public money. Spending the same amount in public money, Canada invests only
US$2,300 in toto. That means America spends 14% of its Gross Domestic Product on health compared to a little over 9% in Canada. Yet somehow we have 43 million people who are not covered by any sort of medical insurance, including almost 11 million under 18 years old; you have no citizens in that boat. Our life expectancies and quality of life are similar.

Further, around 20% of our U.S. health care dollar goes to administration, while in Canada it's around 6%. Say what you will, there's value to centralization. The question is, I suppose, what you have to give up to gain that value. Some people argue that for those with good insurance or enough personal wealth, better care is available in the States, particularly when it comes to advanced, high-tech procedures, and I think that's true. My own Duke University includes a top-notch medical research, teaching, and patient care facility that consistently ranks head and shoulders above most of the competition, so I have some knowledge of this matter. People do come from all over the world, including Canada, to be treated at Duke University Medical Center. Yet consider that here you routinely have complete choice of physicians nationwide, better than any privatized health maintenance organization south of the border--including Duke's. Your Medicare is portable across jobs and cities. If I change jobs and am lucky enough to have insurance at all, I may have to wait a year to cover a pre-existing condition, be it dandruff or cancer. I know there's a general perception here that your health system is deteriorating; I know your government regularly talks about how difficult it is to pay for Medicare; I know that health care companies are vociferously calling for privatization and that your newspapers are full of sometimes shrill stories about What's Going to Happen to Health Care.

I say only this: be careful what you wish for.

I'm not sure whether it's a greater source of pride or of embarrassment to me that your publicly-financed single payer system, which has been around since the 1960's, owes a lot to American precedents and people who came up here after World War II. At the end of the 1930s, as my Duke colleague John Thompson has written, in the wake of President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal the United States was the more advanced welfare state, Canada the backward northern neighbor. . . . In the United States, the success of the New Deal mitigated demands for more radical change; in electoral politics, it incorporated most of the American Left into an amorphous coalition behind Roosevelt and the Democratic party. The bankruptcy of Canadian responses to the depression had the opposite effect and helped to build the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, a third party with a name borrowed from the American populist movement that dedicated itself to social democratic solutions to the problems of industrial capitalism.

In the 1940s, then, the seed of your current plan was sown in Saskatchewan by Canada's social democrats, the New Democratic Party, who worked out a model for universal health insurance with the help of Henry Sigerist of Johns Hopkins University, and of Frederick Mott, who left Washington to spend five years chairing the Saskatchewan Health Services Planning Commission. Mott established a hospital insurance plan that was eventually adopted by the federal government, and laid the groundwork for a plan to cover ordinary physicians' services as well. These men helped you achieve here what they couldn't achieve in the U.S. Indeed, Presidents Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Clinton all had health-care initiatives, too, but all were side-tracked by the Cold War or partisan politics. You raided us at the right moment.

I bring up this relationship between your social democratic initiative and our New Deal social welfare programs neither to boast about American know-how nor to compare unfavorably our Congress to your Parliament, but rather to illustrate my point that our border has often been very permeable, that we have assisted and learned from one another in many informal ways, very much to our mutual benefit. The things that are good about health care in Canada--and there are many--will, I hope, inspire America in the coming decades to step forward more boldly in the direction of universal coverage. I know it may not always be cost-effective, though I think it usually is; but most importantly, I'm quite sure it's humane.

A second area where I think my country can learn from yours is in our approach toward multiculturalism.
Canada has taken some pains to institutionalize respect for the many threads of its heritage, and has done better than we, especially in recent years, at smoothing the way for aliens fleeing poverty, war, and repression in their home countries. Canada gains about 1% of its annual population in legal immigrants; we gain about 0.3%. How many of your best minds were born somewhere else? Immigration is the sincerest form of flattery.

Generous treatment of immigrants is a wise practice; if anything, we make it harder for Canadians to emigrate permanently to America than you have made it for Asians to emigrate to Canada, and I think your policy is the better one.

In the same way, despite the difficulties of implementation, I admire the daring strokes of your Multiculturalism Act of 1988 and the Official Languages Act of 1969, including your federal support for language instruction--French in the generally English-speaking parts of your country, English in the generally French-speaking parts, and the teaching of "heritage languages" throughout the nation. I've appreciated at first hand the lively interplay of Asian and other ethnic groups in Vancouver, and I salute your recent creation of the self-governing territory of Nunavut, where the Inuit people have again come into their own. I learned recently of a neighborhood in Edmonton that sports street signs in English, French, and Cree in recognition of the aboriginal heritage of many residents in that city. Whereas about 0.8% of U.S. citizens are native Americans, about 5% of Canada's people claim native origin. It's a better place to be an indigenous person, where there is a more--shall I say it?--temperate climate.

I believe Toronto is the most multicultural city in the developed world, as well as being an exceptionally pleasant and livable one--"New York run by the Swiss," as Peter Ustinov put it. Further, I note that your 1.5M French-speaking citizens outside Quebec have radio and television in their own language, as well as government services, just as the English speakers in Quebec do.

I realize this largesse, this rich interplay of cultures, can be fraught with difficulty and expense, and in any case I don't mean to imply that it's simple. But your being a safe harbor has enormously positive political and economic effects. On the other side--just to focus on the language question--in my home country fully half of our fifty states have passed English-only laws that lead to bad feelings, insufficient schooling, abuse, and even hate crimes. We continue to struggle with a strong isolationist and xenophobic movement that one can only deplore.

I read recently of a lawsuit filed by Spanish-speaking workers in Chicago who had been fired for failing to sign an agreement forbidding the speaking of anything but English on an assembly line. Last year there were 91 complaints of this sort filed in the states. Even in Quebec at its most intolerant, laws require that French be the predominant language in the workplace, but not the only one. Relying on that kind of thinking, we in the states have public school teachers who cannot speak to their students or the students' parents, and parts of our society have lost much of the bedrock of goodwill that undergirds civil discourse. I prefer your image of a mosaic to our image of the melting pot.

Your commitment to indigenous peoples, to multilingualism, and to smoothing the way for newcomers reflects and underscores your commitment to international peace. As you may have heard, the U.S. cut spending on international affairs by 25% between 1991 and 1998; slashed foreign aid; closed more than 30 embassies; has fallen several years behind in paying its dues to the United Nations; and has resisted contributing U.S. troops to peacekeeping operations--even though publicly available polling data suggest that 80% of Americans are in favor of strengthening the U.N. You were instrumental in creating UNESCO, and continue to serve proudly as a charter member. During modern times, Canada has usually been less willing than the U.S. to move to war as a quick extension of foreign policy, and you have participated in nearly every U.N. peacekeeping operation since 1956; that habit is not only practical, it's moral.
In short, while I'm aware that your multicultural efforts are not uncontested, I stand in awe of your success at integrating many heritages who live in relative harmony, and at doing your utmost for global, regional, and local peace.

Speaking of local peace, the regulation of firearms is a third area in which I think comparisons between our countries redound to your credit. When we want to praise an American city we say, "Why, it's as safe as Canada." Our Federal Bureau of Investigation recently boasted that homicide rates had dropped to their lowest level in 31 years: 6.3 per 100,000 people, down from almost 10 per 100,000 in 1991. Canada's rate has stayed at about 2.7 per 100,000 the whole time. In 1992, our nation's capital had a murder rate of 75.2 per 100,000 residents; Ottawa's rate was 1.4 per 100,000. Adjust for poverty, race, road rage: you've still got us. About 5% of your citizens own a handgun, legal or otherwise; about 28% of our citizens do. And they use them.

So while our overall property crime rates are not too disparate--cars are as likely to be broken into here as there--America's violent crime is much worse. Perhaps a memorable recent benchmark is a pair of tragic school killings: at Columbine High School in Colorado; and in Taber, Alberta. In the former, two boys were able to purchase 30 bombs and 4 guns, including a deadly TEC-DC9, which is designed to fire dozens of rounds in seconds. Fifteen people died. In Alberta, the shooter had been able to get his hands only on his father's hunting rifle, and one person died.

You responded to the 1989 Montréal massacre with compassion, intelligence, and justifiable concern; but even in the wake of Columbine High, the National Rifle Association in our country busily cites the protections of our constitution to organize militias and keep and bear arms, and has successfully blocked progress on virtually all legislative solutions except the building of more and bigger prisons.

Opening my local paper last weekend, I found this headline: "Private School Defends Gun Raffle as Part of Culture." Durham is the only city in the state of North Carolina to require the registration of handguns, but our police chief recently announced that she has no intention of enforcing that rule because it would be too expensive.

In light of that recent FBI announcement about how our murder rate had fallen to only 230% that of Canada, President Clinton announced that we had turned the tide on crime, and said that if we keep working at it, "We can make America the safest big nation in the world." I'm not holding my breath.

Aside from intelligent gun control, foresightful Canadian engagement in matters of urban mass transit has certainly helped make Toronto and Ottawa the lovely cities that they are. As a matter of fact, when I leave here today I'm very much looking forward to using your mass transit system, with its famous busways. As our need for more efficient commuting with less environmental damage becomes more and more urgent, mayors from two cities in the Research Triangle, the part of North Carolina where I live, recently made a pilgrimage here and pronounced Ottawa's "the best bus transit system in North America." We wrestle with transportation issues all the time, even at the university, and as our traffic is on the verge of becoming completely snarled, we're looking hard at new models for public transportation. We've studied a number of our sister cities in America that have failed in this way, but where did our delegation go to see a successful model? Ottawa, of course.

I understand that during your rush hour, buses rolling along at 60 kilometers per hour account for some 70% of the traffic along busy corridors. Like many American metropolitan areas, on our side we enjoy stop and go traffic that forces us to budget an hour to drive the ten miles from Durham to the NorTel facilities nearby--even though the average American metropolitan resident has four times as many freeway lanes. Of course it's not as simple as buying a bus: there's a whole culture of cardom. We own 50% more automobiles per capita than Canadians and are only 40% as likely to use public transit in the first place.
As I hinted earlier, you have several model cities, including also Victoria, BC, where I and my husband Bob spent some lovely time last summer. You've had the courage to make some urban planning decisions that have preserved the quality of life for your people in ways that we Americans have hardly begun to emulate.

I noticed this wistful-sounding headline in the Washington Post the other day: "Not All Commuters Driven Crazy: Many Motorists Say They Like Solitary Time Behind Wheel." The fruits of our fierce independence do not all taste sweet.

I don't know whether this was a cause or effect of your own excellent systems, but I gather that Canadian companies dominate the production and export of rapid transit equipment among the NAFTA countries, with outfits such as Bombardier --which I used to know as a manufacturer of snowmobiles--achieving world-class leadership in building rail transit cars and systems for subways in the United States, Mexico, Europe, and Asia. Again, I salute you.

Lastly, I'd like us to turn our attention to public broadcasting. We could hardly have found a more appropriate venue to discuss the matter: in 1920 the Canadian Marconi Company transmitted its first experimental radio program to Montréal from the Château Laurier; and today I understand the CBC continues to operate from studios on the 7th and 8th floors.

Much as it pains me to say so, most American TV is silly, mindlessly violent, or both, and commercial radio has not fared much better. Susan Douglas, a professor of communication studies at the University of Michigan, says in a recent book,

I, and millions like me, don't have a radio station to listen to anymore. . . . Of course there's NPR, and talk, but in music radio we don't have that realm we can enter where we hear a provocative mix of old and new music, new music by young people that we need to hear, and cultural and musical commentary that is intelligent and iconoclastic without being scatological. . . . With the 1996 Telecommunications Act sanctioning corporate greed and the squelching of localism and diversity, we are probably in for a long esthetic drought in the ether.

Regarding television programs I don't even find it necessary to make a case. But when I look north of the border I see four healthy and publicly supported national television channels--including two 24-hour news services--and four radio services, all with more substance, with drama that is not callow, and with serious public affairs programming. I see a better informed citizenry and an audience share of seven or eight times what our own Public Broadcasting System and National Public Radio have been able to muster, and then only with tedious fundraisers. Were your system not in place, the English language CBC would not be playing on channel six in all the dormitories, hospitals and hotel rooms of Duke University to provide a sane alternative.

Were your system not in place, something tells me I know where all your TV shows would come from. And while I have heard your national networks called a publicly funded farm team for American broadcasters and actors, having shared with us the likes of Morley Safer, Arthur Kent, Peter Jennings, Mark Jones, John Saunders, Martin Short, John Candy, Andrea Martin, and Rick Moranis--I would argue that a better plan than cutting off the free trade of talent and ideas would be to find more effective policies for sharing intellectual capital. It is through more formal cooperation and collaboration, more openness, not through a closing of borders, that we can both best thrive.

I know you will tell me this is a double-edged sword; that you worry your best and brightest may flee to the States for higher-paying jobs. The Globe and Mail and the National Post seem to keep calling for lowering the income tax and spending on social programs in order to keep these people, as though Canada's social programs were not a great part of what makes you uniquely attractive--as though by slashing health care you would instantly win the hearts of the intelligentsia. I fear that when we employ a loaded phrase like "brain drain" to
describe the movement of intellectual capital across borders, we risk ignoring the wider demographic, historical, and economic context of this particular form of free trade, which—as I pointed out earlier—has often benefitted you. I learned from a brochure this week, by the way, that the Château Laurier was in fact the brainchild of the American-born Charles Melville Hays, who as General Manager of the Grand Trunk Railway of Canada commissioned work on the hotel in 1907.

As Prime Minister Chrétien has pointed out, some Canadians have migrated south in every generation, and long before the personal income tax existed; southward emigration today is smaller than it was for all but a few brief periods of our joint history. Can you be sure that when notable Canadians move temporarily or permanently to the States, they are lost forever? Or may they become part of the continent's shared intellectual capital, keeping up their ties with home, making you proud, and returning often? I suspect that tennis fans in Canada are no less fond of Duke University's 1999 cum laude graduate Vanessa Webb than we are at her alma mater. Vanessa, as you may recall, won the 1998 NCAA individual national title before moving back home to Toronto.

No, the way to maximize the value of our human capital is to share it, to optimize it through joint projects such as the OECD, the International Joint Commission, NAFTA and the FTAA negotiations, and exchange programs. Higher education curricula are becoming more internationalized because the world is very much becoming Marshall McLuhan's global village. At Duke, our Fuqua School of Business has had since 1996 a very successful Global Executive MBA (GEMBA) program, which combines distance learning technology with classroom sessions on four continents, serving students from dozens of countries whose companies believe it's worthwhile to help their most promising young executives tap the resources of one of the top business schools in the hemisphere. If I were inclined to brag about anything American today, it would be the way my own university (and others) have systematically set the stage to help create the leaders who will, in a very real sense, save the world.

The free trade in knowledge is no less central to our mutual progress than the free trade of goods and services. Globalization is about minds and ideas, too. I think most Canadian university presidents would agree with me when I say that if a solution to the supposed problem of the flight of educated Canadians is wanted, that solution is investing more in basic research and education, including higher education. I've followed with both dismay and hope the efforts of the Canadian Association of University Teachers to focus attention on the crisis affecting your colleges and universities as a result of government cutbacks. The president of that national faculty organization recently pointed out that, as a share of the economy, federal transfers for post-secondary education have hit a 30-year low. When I read that I thought, "You have fine universities up there; please don't make us take all your best people." Happily, your government reported just last week that it would increase funds for federal research councils by some $250 million to help establish "Twenty-first Century Chairs for Research Excellence." This is surely a big step in the right direction.

I'd like to close by telling a story that nicely sums up a lot of what I've tried to say today; it's said to be the transcript of an actual radio conversation of a U.S. naval ship with Canadian authorities off the coast of Newfoundland in October, 1995.

_Americans:_ Please divert your course 15 degrees to the North to avoid a collision.

_Canadians:_ Recommend you divert YOUR course 15 degrees to the South to avoid a collision.

_Americans:_ This is the Captain of a U.S. Navy ship. I say again, divert your course.

_Canadians:_ No. I say again, you divert your course.

_Americans:_ This is the aircraft carrier USS Lincoln, the second largest ship in the United States'
Atlantic fleet! We are accompanied by three destroyers, three cruisers, and numerous support vessels. I demand that you change your course fifteen degrees north, that's one-five degrees north, or counter-measures will be undertaken to ensure the safety of this ship!

*Canadians:* We are a lighthouse. Your call.