

Reason and Passion  
in Public Sector Reform  
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# Introduction      Central Questions and Approach

*Politics and public administration reflect a precarious balance between the need for change versus the need for stability.*  
(Brunsson and Olsen, 1993)

This paper sets out to examine existing research on how public sector reforms are typically conceived and developed. In their refinement and implementation phases, are reforms underpinned and driven by ideology, conviction and inspiration (*passion*); or by deliberate and thoughtful analysis (*reason*)? Is there any evidence in the literature that one approach is more effective than the other? We hope that looking at reform from this particular perspective will enhance understanding about the importance of building upon the now national and international experience about reform, conditions for reform, and about implementation.

Throughout the literature on the subject, the word *reform* is shrouded in ambiguity. For our purposes, it helps to think of three levels of reform:

- instrument settings, *adaptation and fine-tuning of accepted practices*, such as introducing or improving a performance measurement process;
- instruments themselves, *adoption of new instruments or techniques*, such as providing services electronically; and
- comprehensive or fundamental reform, *the hierarchy of goals behind policy and ideas which comprise the framework and guide action*, such as devolution of employment services to another jurisdiction or autonomous agency.

Although we acknowledge that improvements in instrument settings and in the instruments themselves frequently facilitate comprehensive reform, the focus of this paper will be on the third level: comprehensive or fundamental reform.

In looking at the impressive body of material on recent government reform, we found that the data pertaining to results of reforms is limited and inconclusive and that there are no

analyses of the impact of rational versus passionate approaches. This paper is based on examination of secondary sources and discussions with experts. It is very much a work in progress, therefore discussion, comments and constructive criticism are encouraged.

One intriguing element that crept into the analysis is the important role played by ongoing learning. It rightly should be the theme of another paper, however, there is cause to consider how reason and passion combine to construct an approach to reform that either blocks or facilitates organisational learning, or how the systems themselves are predisposed to organisational learning. Before examining what the current literature tells us about the questions central to this discussion paper, we will briefly look at some theoretical underpinnings of rational and passionate approaches to democratic government and organisational transformation. This cursory look at theoretical writing is intended to underscore how thinking about rationality has underpinned many of the foundational theories about political systems, organisations and the nature of leadership. Then, we will review accounts of recent government reforms in nine democratic countries. Finally, some preliminary conclusions will be drawn and comments made about the relevance of the discussion to the Canadian public service.

## Part 1 Reason and Passion in Theory

*There should be a rational response to everything, we thought; it should be possible to make a better world. It hasn't worked. Management and control are breaking down everywhere. We can't make things happen the way we want them to at home, at work, or in government, certainly not in the world as a whole. There are, it is now clear, limits to management.*  
(Charles Handy, 1994)

### Philosophical Theory

Passion and reason, the two extremes on the continuum of approaches to reform, have long and well documented histories stemming from the very roots of western thought. According to Plato, what makes a man healthy is the harmonious functioning of reason, character, and appetite which governs passion. Correspondingly, what makes a healthy state is the harmonious functioning of three classes of people: labourers, protectors and rulers. The classical argument against Plato's thought is that: men differ in their abilities; rulers are selected and carefully groomed; therefore, rulers have the greatest skill in ruling; which leads to the inevitable conclusion that these rulers ought to be given absolute authority to rule and to enact their decisions. This of course leads to something other than democracy. Two millennia later, Kant explored the question of reason and passion arguing that there is a perpetual tension between reason and passion. People indeed make rational choices but they are also moved by passion. However, this tension does not require us to make an *either/or* decision—reason and passion coexist. In this Century, Kuhn convincingly demonstrated that science itself is more than pure reason and coexists with a passionate consensual element. Science goes through the same process as nations in assimilating and establishing new ideas. New scientific theories, like

reform ideas are floated, tested, debated and most often dismissed until one is accepted by a significant number of people. Change in science, like change in systems of government, requires a measure of consent.

Throughout the history of thought, then, there has been a clear recognition that reason alone rings hollow. The most consistent argument against purely rational approaches is an adaptation of the traditional criticism against Plato. It is adhered to by most political theorists and reform scholars who maintain that a necessary condition for democracy is empirical uncertainty combined with a good dose of ambiguity. Freedom can only be maximised between groups if there is some ambiguity about concepts and their meanings in the context of political experience, as absolute clarity and perfect agreement would lead to something other than democracy. In short, there is agreement and freedom to disagree, protection from orthodoxy and the tyranny of the majority. The French Revolution is an example of how orthodoxy and tyranny of the majority resulted in an adherence to a philosophic conception of democracy so rigid that relevant social facts were excluded.

## **Public Policy Making Theory**

Public policy making theory is another useful lens through which we can look at organisational reform. Policy making theories can be divided into several categories along a continuum. On one extreme is the rational policy making school that favours rigorous scientific techniques. It has largely been discredited because of the failure of its approach to account for the complexities of the real world and to accurately predict future states. Somewhere in the middle of the continuum are the incrementalists and the “disjointed incrementalists”. These schools prescribe a *one step at a time* approach. Incrementalists advocate a relatively linear progression, while their disjointed cousins suggest that various stages are often out of sequence and can be linked as we go along. Growing out of the rational model, both these approaches claim to be the most rational of

all because they encourage experimentation and learning. By placing this importance on experience, they are building a bridge toward the other extreme of the continuum where we find a school demonstrating that, in the real world of policy making, major decisions are neither rational nor incremental. They are not irrational either. Rather, they incorporate a great deal of experience, serendipity and often power—they are *extra-rational*.

Belonging to this school of thought, the policy development and organisational behaviour scholar Dror, has demonstrated that classical notions of organisational rationality seldom exist in reality. The traditional rational approach, he argues, could apply only to static organisations in unchanging environments. Based on known characteristics of decision makers, organisations and environmental factors, it is clear that the purely rational model of decision making and policy development simply does not function in a dynamic, open, uncertain world in which intuition, judgement, and a myriad of human values form at least part of the basis of decision making. Dror holds that, although information systematically gathered improves the active-reactive-adaptive process of policy and decision making, room must be made for the extra-rational processes that are so evident in reality. People, societies and organisations act on the basis of commitment to values which, Dror argues, are outside the domain of scientific reasoning (Dror, 1968). His policy making model allows both rational and extra-rational components, thereby enabling the requirement of creativity to exist, as it must, in the realm of limited resources, uncertainty, and knowledge gaps.

Looking through this lens, it appears that reforms based exclusively on reason are doomed to stay at the level of ideas and would rarely be applied in practice as they have little relation with the reality of the system they aim at changing.

*The practical world is the world in which services are produced, in which actual problems arise, and real money is spent. The inhabitants of this world are the local civil servants, whose main assignment is to act. From their point of view, the world of representation [ideas] is similar to television: you can be deeply affected by what you see there, but most of*

*the time you keep it turned off because you have too much else to do*  
(Brunsson and Olsen, 1993).

## Leadership Theory

Virtually every writer on leadership, be it Bennis or Drucker, presents us with the idea that leadership is more than rationality, facts and empirical data. This *something else* consists of nebulous concepts like vision, inspiration, motivation, values, conviction, passion, courage and a seemingly endless list of words symbolising thoughts and aspirations which tend to fall outside the circle of empirically verifiable concepts.

In *Artists, Craftsmen and Technocrats*, Patricia Pitcher has addressed this dichotomy between nebulous notions and scientific approaches in a most helpful way. She argues that there are three basic types of people in organisations: artists, craftsmen and technocrats. Artists stay open to ideas and changes even as they work. Pitcher writes:

*We depend, as a civilisation, on the artist's vision; it is he who forces us, often reluctantly, to change our ways of seeing. His visions stem not from some conscious desire to be rebellious, but from his character. He is peculiarly susceptible to the outer and inner world...he will seem intuitive, imaginative, unpredictable, volatile, emotional; some may believe he lives in a dream-world.*

The craftsman, she continues, is the person who builds the *bridges thrown toward an unseen shore* envisioned by the artist. In sharp contrast, the technocrat is a living machine that does not get hunches, is rarely described as intuitive, is concerned exclusively with facts, rules and the right way to do things—with control. His chief defence mechanism is intellectualisation. Important characteristics of the three types are listed in the following table.

No matter which of the types we relate to or value, Pitcher demonstrates that all three are essential and illustrate the roles of reason and passion in organisations. It is indeed hard to



Technocrat	Craftsman	Artist
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• uncompromising</li> <li>• hard-headed, intense</li> <li>• determined</li> <li>• no-nonsense</li> <li>• meticulous</li> <li>• detail-oriented</li> <li>• methodical</li> <li>• analytical</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• knowledgeable</li> <li>• punctual</li> <li>• thoughtful</li> <li>• steady, predictable</li> <li>• responsible</li> <li>• conventional</li> <li>• well-balanced, stable</li> <li>• realistic, reasonable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• imaginative</li> <li>• emotional, unpredictable</li> <li>• visionary, inspiring</li> <li>• entrepreneurial</li> <li>• easygoing</li> <li>• intuitive</li> <li>• volatile</li> <li>• daring, bold, exciting</li> </ul>

imagine a comprehensive reform being carried out by any one type of person, typifying any one approach. Beside lacking the vision and the ability to see beyond rules, a technocrat would unlikely be able to move far enough away from standard operating procedures to either have or implement the reform idea. On the other hand, not only would the craftsman never have the idea of a comprehensive reform, but he would also find it difficult to lead a reform. As for the artist, she would have the idea, the passion, the courage and the ability to motivate the rank and file, but would be totally unable to implement her rather vague notions and vision. The artist depends on the craftsman to take her vision and to construct new paradigms within which technocrats can do their work. Pritcher's main thesis is that even though the three types of people are necessary, technocrats are dangerous and destructive in leadership positions. It should be pointed out as well that, on occasion, artists, with their heightened charisma and imagination, can be even more perverse leaders than the technocrats she disparages.

## Organisational Theory

Max Weber, a modern proponent of the rational approach for bureaucracy, proposed an *order by rule* view as the most efficient way to organise people. Weber's theory resulted in conceptions of organisations that were closed, somewhat mechanical systems, which contained all the information needed to make decisions and solve management problems. Weber spent a great deal of time studying *authority*, which he defined in terms of obedience to commands. He classified authority into three groups: traditional, rational and charismatic. Traditional authority can be likened to Pritcher's technocrat—rule

bound inflexible orthodoxy. Rational authority—rule by reason—is the essence of the bureaucratic realm. This rational authority, however, does not exclude experimentation and learning. The type of rationality Weber talks about is the type used by Pritcher’s craftsman. In this sense, much of the current criticism against bureaucracy is not that it is too rational, or ruled by reason, but that it is too traditional—a very important distinction. To be rational is to be open to experience and learning. The root of this mistake can be found in Taylorism, where scientific techniques, reason and rationality, become confused with a belief in the *one right answer*. Weber, moreover, did not confine bureaucratic rationality to a slavish adherence to rules as Taylorites seemed to do, and recognised the importance of a third type of authority. Charismatic authority is the principal source of social change and reform and corresponds with the artist’s influence in Pritcher’s analysis. It turns out then that the belief in the one right answer is irrational, unreasonable, and unscientific! On the other hand, passion, conviction, leadership, insight, serendipity, and so forth are not irrational, but rather, extra-rational and defining aspects of human and social existence.

The seeming antithesis of Weber’s view of the importance of reason and rationality in organisations can be found in the work of Tom Peters who claims that the first and most self-evident rule of organisation reform is *to leap before you look*. Making sense of the world, Peters argues, is contingent, not on drawing on past experience, but on following impulses and passion and doing something *now*: *I take delight in trashing faddish ‘organisational learning’*. *The more important issue in a turbulent environment is, I contend, forgetting* (Peters, 1996). To be generous to Peters, his self-professed role is to help people and organisations break out of their inertia and orthodoxy. For this evangelist, forgetting means getting rid of biases, learning how to learn, and overcoming Taylorism.

## **Reform Theory**

In *The Reforming Organization*, Brunsson and Olsen (1993) have examined real life public sector reforms in an attempt to better understand them. They propose a number of helpful definitions and attributes of reform:

- Reforms occur when the gap between an organisation's performance and the expectations attached to it becomes evident.
- The basis of reform is the idea that, by making deliberate goal-directed choices between organisational forms, new forms can be created, which improve operations and lead to better results.
- Reforms take one of three directions:
  - rationalisation (streamlining, downsizing),
  - power shifts (changes in leaders, political parties, ideologies), and
  - democratisation (empowerment, decentralisation, deregulation).
- Reforms have four main effects: reshuffle power, re-legitimise, educate, and benefit certain actors while threatening others.
- There are four common attributes of reforms:
  - ***simple and clear concepts***—reform ideas consist of principles rather than detailed descriptions—theories rather than perceptions—they seem more clear than reality.
  - ***a normative will***—they represent attempts to bring order into a chaotic reality rather than to report upon it.
  - ***one-sidedness***—each reform invokes a single set of consistent values and perceptions of the world—this is in contrast with organisational practices which often have to deal with inconsistent values and perceptions.
  - ***an orientation toward the future***—reform is a process of idea elaboration, persuasion and implementation rather than an immediate action—it promises future benefits.

Reform in organisations is much more common than we generally think. For example, as March and Olsen (1993) pointed out, every American President since the Second World War has launched major administrative reforms, but with modest results and very little public interest in them. We often think of reforms as new because they result from modernisation attempts or administrative shifts and also because of *organisational forgetfulness*: organisations and the people in them tend to quickly forget previous reform experiences. Brunsson and Olsen (1993) propose a typical reform scenario:

*Change begins when somebody has the idea that it would be good to change something. It is not necessary to spot a particular problem: every organisation has plenty of unsolved problems. The will to change might originate in an ideology or, alternatively, may lead straight to decisions*

*and plans for a change, with an ideology or an appropriate label coming later to make it possible to see the change in a context and interpret it. Then comes action: there is a great deal of talk, discussion and negotiation, decisions are made and amended, there are moves and counter-moves. In the midst of the inevitable confusion, someone calls for an evaluation. Sooner or later some external forces are brought in (to give assistance or consultation, or to pose resistance), and the reform goes public. Now that the reform has become difficult to stop, some people abandon their resistance and begin trying to discover what can be gained from it. They may find that it can be redirected, solve some problems, even ones at which it was not originally aimed. The power structure becomes visible, and can therefore be slightly reshuffled. With a little bit of luck everyone (or many people) may achieve a sense of renewal, be given new hope. If this is unsuccessful, chaos and frustration follow, and there is a rapid return to old forms and processes.*

A clinical analysis of government reform such as Brunsson and Olsen's reveals healthy doses of passion, strong conviction and emotion. None of the main attributes of the initial phase of reforms fall within anything like a traditional rational or empirical model. Strong commitment to simplistic ideas, calls to action, a one-sided fundamentalism and the persuasiveness of a vision of the future combine to fuel the passion that leads to reform. However, reason is later called upon to bring a new order into the unavoidable and healthy chaos brought about by fundamental change.

## **Conclusions on Theory**

To conclude our look at reform through a number of theoretical lenses, we find, in both the political/philosophic discourse and the world of policy science, strong criticisms and virtual abandonment of purely rational models, if in fact, they have ever been seriously adhered to. Rather than an *either/or* situation, both reason and passion are needed. An analysis of government reform also shows that, in real life, reforms first go through a "dream-like", visioning phase before entering a "scientific" rational phase. Indeed, reforms are paradoxical in that, although complex, they must be simple, even superficial, to be broadly accepted. In addition, the immense complexity of the real world of practice

to which reforms are applied makes reforms difficult to implement. This urge toward simplicity may be in direct conflict with the increasing complexity of the world and the arrangements needed to function in it. Johan Olsen and Guy Peters (1996) provide an enlightening summary of our discussion so far:

*It is an old dream that the quality and efficiency of public policy and institutional design can be enhanced by the use of objective knowledge, scientific methods, and dispassionate analysis in the name of the common good, without any political pressure and interference. To interpret learning in political life as scientific experiments may be a mistake, however. This is because it means to impose norms, procedures, and criteria of relevance from one institutional sphere—science—on another institutional sphere with quite different characteristics—democratic polities. An overemphasis on a science analogy contradicts basic assumptions of democratic politics about legitimate conflicts, citizens' participation and representation, free public discussions of ends and identities as well as means, and the primacy of popular sovereignty in the event of conflict.*

We also learn that reform, in nations as in science, requires agreement and disagreement.

There is a participatory, consensual element involved. Olsen and Peters continue:

*...[S]cience alone cannot replace the historically accumulated practice of political discourses and struggles. To do so is to transform questions of value and interest into questions of facts and analysis, and thereby, to open the way for technocratic manipulation in the name of rationality...Democratic polities are based on a precarious balance between partly autonomous institutional spheres with different logics and criteria of relevance. Democratic governance is to be judged by, and to be accountable to, public opinion and thereby to changing popular beliefs and attitudes. In the last resort, governance has to attend to what ordinary citizens find just, appropriate, or acceptable...*

Political and administrative theorists are rediscovering what Dror observed decades ago: purely rational models *tend to ignore the capacities of human devotion and human efforts to overcome apparently insurmountable barriers to achieve not only the improbable but the apparently impossible* (Dror, 1968). The anatomy of reform analysed by Brunsson and Olsen (et al), leads us to the conclusion that reforms occur without fully thought out,

rationalised plans and with little search for alternatives. There is no prescriptive model for reforms.

## Part 2 Reason and Passion in Contemporary Reforms

*Dear friend, theory is all grey,  
But the golden tree of actual life is ever green.  
Goethe, Faust Part I*

In their study of reforms in eight democratic nations (United Kingdom, Australia, United States, Japan, Norway, Germany, France, and Switzerland), Olsen and Peters (*Lessons from Experience—Experiential Learning in administrative Reforms in Eight Democracies*, 1996) report that the 1980's saw a dramatic move toward the passionate side of the approaches to reform continuum. This was the decade of *conviction politics* that challenged the very core of our conceptions of good public administration. According to Olsen and Peters (1996),

*The old lesson of unmet expectations and disappointment with rational techniques was rediscovered. There was a reconfirmation of the lesson that managerial accounting and control systems have improved in sophistication, without producing convincing evidence that system sophistication is associated with effective performance and success.*

An examination of a number of major reform initiatives from the point of view of the role played by experience, reason and passion further enlightens our discussion.

## United Kingdom and Japan: The Success of Passion

Both the United Kingdom and Japan were subjected to major and extensive reforms on the biased and intuitive belief that the private sector held many of the answers when it came to public sector organisational effectiveness. In both countries, a high level of distrust of the public service on the part of politicians, the public and big business (Japan, for instance, cast the bureaucracy not as a guardian of national interest, but as a special interest group—they became the villain), fostered the impulse to apply private sector practices to the public service. Business leaders and entrepreneurs were called upon to help open the system to new ideas. Both countries had experienced and knowledgeable politicians in positions of power with lessons learned from previous reform failures fresh in their minds. Between 1970 and 1974, the Conservative government in the UK had learned its lesson well. Japan too had learned from previous reform failures. Both nations had relatively long government tenures, learned from trial and error, drew on refined political memories and welcomed ideas from outside the bureaucracy.

Because Thatcher and most of her ministers had first hand experience with dramatic reform failure earlier in the decade, in 1979, dramatic restructuring was for the first ten years, carefully avoided. While relentless in her criticisms of the bureaucracy, she wanted public servants to simply *get on with it*. Initially, emphasis was laid on financial management approaches such as efficiency scrutinies and the Financial Management Initiative. These amounted to in-depth evaluations, goal setting, performance indicators, the division of departments into *cost centres* and improving financial information systems.

Brow-beating and improved financial management techniques were attempts at reform without changing structure. These attempts did not work. The more dramatic plan to implement executive agencies, first recorded in Fulton's 1968 Report, was rediscovered and the idea incubated for nearly a decade before being implemented. In 1988, the first steps to restructure the public service were taken.



*Instead of a program of institutional reform which began with a bang and ended with a whimper (like those of its 1964 Labour and 1970 Conservative predecessors), the Thatcher government began with a whimper and worked up to a bang in both privatisation and civil service reform. (Hood, 1996)*

The success of both British and Japanese reforms is attributable to the care put into implementation which included active learning. Surprisingly, Japanese reform in the 1980's was very "Anglo-American". However, the Thatcher and Reagan reforms were used to legitimise the Japanese reform efforts rather than as models to be imitated. The reform in Japan was successful because, like the United Kingdom, there was an abundance of experience and learning. In addition, there was consensus, among government, opposition leaders, big business and citizens, around the belief that, while government is important, it should be small.

### **United States: Reagan's Impassioned Reform Failure**

In the United States, reforms before Reagan, (Kennedy's Program Based Budgeting, Nixon's Management By Objectives and Carter's Zero Based Budgeting) were rationalistic or scientific in Taylor's sense. These attempts to develop approaches that would lead toward the single right answer to the administrative problems that faced government represent a faith in human rationality and in government institutions' capacity and willingness to learn (Peters, 1996). It is widely held that these reforms, based on reason, were complete failures. On the heels of these failures, animosity towards big government and bureaucracy grew by leaps and bounds in the United States leading to the election of Ronald Reagan who vowed on his inauguration day, to *drain the swamp*.

Like in the United Kingdom, the same strong bias and unsubstantiated belief that private sector approaches could be successfully applied to the public sector fuelled reform during the Reagan era in the United States. Passionate too was the belief that there were no

valuable lessons to be learned from previous reform initiatives or from experienced public servants. Earlier failed rational approaches were replaced in the 1980's with simple ideas—generic management ideas such as de-layering and downsizing—some simplistic, some even false. For example, the belief that the public sector was overpaid could not be empirically substantiated. Peters (1996) sums up the United States experience:

*Appeals to rationality, science, and expertise tended to dominate most of the history of administrative reform in the United States. The experience of the 1980's however, was characterised more by appeals to political ideologies and the experience of private business, and by a denial of the relevance of expertise within government for generating reform. In terms of the reforms, the experience of the past was regarded almost entirely negatively and as something to be overcome rather than as a source of information to guide the present reform initiatives...[Reform] forces were so powerful that mere knowledge and information, presented in a coherent manner, would not be sufficient to overcome them.*

Harking back to our earlier discussion about the mistake many researchers make about scientific and rational approaches, it could be maintained that Peters is slightly off the mark in his summary. Perhaps Taylorism had run its course, but it is more probable that what was rejected was simply big government and not science. Nevertheless, Reagan's closed, ad hoc approach to reform can be characterised as systematic unlearning. Organisational memory was reduced as many senior officials left government, encouraged by constant brow beating, erosion of influence and wage freezes. The idolised private sector, along with numerous other sources of policy advice such as the Executive Branch, Congress, think tanks and sophisticated interest groups, seemed to generate shockingly little organisational learning and hence very little in the way of reform. This poor learning, despite a good idea generating apparatus, points out Peters (1996), can be explained by the low priority assigned to the public sector in the United States. Most people experienced with the public sector were excluded from the reform process and, therefore, the machinery for implementing ideas was ill equipped. Like the Reagan's attempted reform, the current Common Sense Government reform initiative in the United States is charged with strong rhetoric and conviction, an anti-

bureaucratic underpinning, and with a heavy bias toward private sector practices. Since it began in 1993, this reform has achieved a number of milestones: departments and agencies have established detailed service standards, hundreds of experiments with innovative approaches to service improvement are under way, costs have been cut, and the regulatory burden reduced. The reform effort is headed by Vice President Al Gore and the high-powered National Performance Review Office. It differs from the Reagan reform in four important respects:

- there is a more strategic approach to implementation, including powerful leadership, and involvement of public sector expertise;
- serious attempts are being made to monitor and evaluate progress;
- attempts to systematically learn are evident in the many experiments underway; and
- bridges are built to citizens concerning the reform and its effects—*customers* are listened to.

Where Reagan's conviction or passion driven reform failed, this comprehensive reform effort has had considerable success. As voluminous documentation demonstrates, a strong argument is made that this success is based on the fact that Clinton and Gore took a much more strategic, planned and reasoned approach than did their predecessors. They also took a much more active leadership role than had Reagan. However, some argue that ultimate success will be limited because the real problem is a divided government, with a Congress that micro-manages, and a constitutional impediment to get around the problem.

### **France, Australia and New Zealand: A Balance of Reason and Passion**

Over the past decade, France implemented relatively far reaching public sector reforms. Key to the success of this reform initiatives are the realisations that:

- the public sector is ill equipped to identify its own errors and suggest changes;
- the uniformity of the civil service is more myth than reality, resulting in a general questioning of reforms aimed at changing public administration as a whole; and

- politically led reforms seldom result in anything more than announcements and bureaucratically led reforms most often fail (participation, empowerment, and quality circles are examples).

Organisational learning was consciously fostered and institutionalised, to the point where there is now, in France, a constant reflection on reform and modernisation, a major reform plan, the systematic involvement of academics and researchers and comprehensive evaluation systems. In addition, a ministry has been put in charge of civil service reform and a network of consultants for modernisation has been established in each department and operating unit, an approach based on the 1992 OECD 16 nation study on using internal consultants to facilitate organisation renewal.

The public provided the external pressure required to spark the reform. French citizens, frustrated beyond their limits with the rigidity and self-centredness of their public service, put intense pressure on politicians to have their needs taken into account and satisfied. This resulted in a politically-driven decentralisation, the main element in the French public sector reform. Practically all management duties were transferred to the local level, the centre retaining responsibilities for policy, monitoring and evaluation.

*[The traditional] pyramid-shaped organisation is being rejected in favour of directly operational horizontal units. In accordance with this logic, uniformity vanishes because the behaviours and attributes of these new units are negotiated on the spot, depending on local initiatives and constraints...The incapability of a universal structure to solve bureaucratic problems is henceforth acknowledged, and local understanding of the field in question is relied on more and more heavily (de Montricher, 1996).*

In addition, because the demands of citizens are volatile, the public service had to learn to become more adaptive. This required bringing in people with different ideas and backgrounds.

At the end of 10 years of trial and error and decentralisation experiments, learning is still somewhat constrained, particularly since 1993 when the current government came to power showing little enthusiasm for comprehensive change and a strong desire to return to the days of the *Grandes Écoles*. However, reform in France exhibited thoughtfulness

combined with passion. The fact that the reform wavered and stalled is disappointing to many, including de Montricher (1996) who sums up the current reform situation in France:

*...at the top, the direction of the bureaucracy remains in the hands of the same homogeneous elite, trained in conformity with the traditional values of authority and uniformity as bases for action. That is why new groups representing new interests have been excluded from the evaluative process. At the bottom, whatever reform is suggested, it is impaired by the entrenchment of the services in their social and territorial milieu. What is at stake here is the recognition by politicians that public administration is not a monocentric and single-district hierarchical organisation. The reality is more one of multiple clienteles, territories, and interactions. This conclusion could explain why the results of reforms implemented "from inside" are so discouraging, while the consequences of external pressures, such as decentralisation or restriction of resources, are so overwhelmingly effective in terms of acting upon experience.*

Reform in Australia followed a more pragmatic mix of principles and experiential learning than did the more ideology or passion driven reforms in the United States or the United Kingdom. It began in 1972 with an opening-up to ideas from outside the civil service. The main political goal was to enhance political power, as the sole significant source of policy advice to ministers had been the civil service. Following 1972, many more sources of policy advice were systematically added including: task forces and committees of enquiries using external experts, commissions, a priorities review staff, think tanks for long-term advice, and strong ministerial advisors.

In the early 1980's lots was going on in Australia including an election and the Labour Party's influential critique and manifesto on the public service (*Labor and the Quality of Government*, 1983). Also, in 1983, the Review of Commonwealth Administration report came out listing five key thrusts reflecting private sector practices:

- improved leadership;
- management improvement;
- more devolution of management;
- improved financial management and cost consciousness; and
- better accountability and performance evaluation.

The Review of Commonwealth Administration report concluded that the main problem faced by the civil service was developing its institutional capacity: *...the government believes there is a question whether the public service, as presently organised, has the management tools, the flexibility and the capabilities to meet the challenges that presently exist and that lie ahead.*

In 1983, the newly elected government placed a high priority on administrative reform to improve public sector efficiency. Although the exercise did not entail a re-examination of the fundamental role of government, the program facilitated the devolution of authority to managers while establishing objectives for program activities and performance management. In 1984, the Financial Management Improvement Program was launched. The key objective was to change the operating culture from one centred on compliance with externally imposed rules to one which encouraged managers to do their best with the resources at hand. While basic government structures remained unchanged, there was considerable streamlining. In 1987, the amalgamation of departments reduced their number from 28 to 16 and some departments were transformed into Government Business Enterprises (the equivalent of crown corporations). The three main mechanisms used to handle the reform and changes were:

- devolution of management responsibilities to line departments;
- adoption of a stronger corporate approach to senior appointments; and
- appointment of people strongly committed to reform.

Commentators agree that the effects of the Australian reform are deep and long lasting. While many saw the reform as fundamental and radical, the new government is maintaining that too little has been done, the bureaucracy is still too large and too influential. However, the changes to date reflect a healthy blend of reason and passion in a comprehensive reform carried out by experienced and knowledgeable ministers who systematically increased their channels of learning about public administration, policy making and reform.

Reform in New Zealand began when the new government came to power in 1983. The new government had no clear plan for reform but was faced with an unprecedented fiscal crisis and a public service system that was perceived to be incapable of correcting the catastrophic downward spiral the country was experiencing. Unlike the United Kingdom, however, the new government had no strong biases. By 1986, the New Zealand government had come to the conclusion that “the State cost too much, contributed too little to wealth-generation and was dead weight on...society”. In addition, it was felt that, because of self-interest, departments should not both implement policy and advise the political executive.

A well thought out plan previously prepared by the Treasury—a forward thinking unit in an otherwise *old boys club*—placed the emphasis on negotiating and monitoring explicit contracts and finding more efficient ways to deliver services than the traditional vertical organisational models. As a result, starting right after the election, government agencies that performed trading functions were turned into commercial agencies and a number of service delivery functions were assigned to crown entities and business units with greater managerial authority than normal departmental units. Then this experience was used to model the restructuring of departments, in essence, separating policy and operations. By 1990, economic conditions were improving significantly in New Zealand and it began to appear as though the reform, combined with successful economic policies, had produced remarkable results with little likelihood of turning back. At the 1996 Dallas *Summit on Service to the Citizen*, Minister Maurice Williamson made this observation about New Zealand’s comprehensive reforms: *we know it works in practice, however, we’re not certain yet whether it works in theory.*

## **Germany, Norway and Switzerland: Reason is Not Enough**

Germany is characterised by an almost total lack of interest in public sector reform on the part of both the public, whose concern is limited to the local level, and, as a consequence, on the part of politicians at the Länder (provincial or state) and federal levels. *[Länder and federal politicians] neither drove reforms nor claimed their merits. They are never on reform commissions. They rely on the intelligence of bureaucracy* (Derlien, 1996). Due to the absence of any significant outside push for public sector reform, there has been remarkably few comprehensive reform initiatives in Germany, besides some modest attempts at economising and deregulating in the 1970's and 1980's. Even reunification failed to prompt a reform as traditional West-German civil service methods and institutions ended up being reinforced by the sharp contrast with the political and administrative incompetence of the Eastern state functionaries. Observers claim that the absence of reform in Germany is attributable to their scientific, rational approach: *bureaucrats and their scientific advisors have controlled the various reforms during the past 30 years* (Derlien, 1996), and to their self-assessment of their own more than satisfactory performance.

The accounts of many service recipients in Germany contrast with this rather self-appreciating conclusion that there is no need for reform. They indicate that the monstrously rule bound bureaucracy, so effectively described and ridiculed by Franz Kafka in the first part of this century, has indeed taken on growing seriousness, and institutionalised vigour.

The German case sheds considerable light on our discussion about reform. German conditions and factors are shared to some degree by other Western European, non-Westminster countries, most of whom experienced little in the way of reform. Like Norway and Switzerland, Germany did not experience severe financial crisis as did the Westminster countries and Japan. Further, service delivery takes place principally at the local level. Even the Länders, have traditionally separated policy from operations. Departments at the federal and Länder levels tend to be small policy shops rather than large service delivery organisations. Further, departments hire their own staff and



manage their own personnel functions. There have never been large central agencies such as Treasury Boards or Public Service Commissions. In this sense, Germany could be a prototype toward which many nations are moving in their attempts to delegate to local levels or establish alternative service delivery systems. The main problem with the German system is that it is rule bound—they have not found ways to deliver service with fewer complex and legalistic regulations.

Like Germany, Norway was the antithesis to the international reform conventions of the 1980's. There were many reasons why reform ideas did not take root, among which the absence of a financial crisis and of a central apparatus to handle change or reform. Perhaps most important was the fact that there was no perceived performance crisis despite the fact that, in 1981, a conservative government took power for the first time in 50 years. While modernisation was a political aim, and there was some readjustment (such as the introduction of corporate plans and objectives, better accounts of results, and the elimination of outdated laws), there was no comprehensive reform.

Moreover, the public sector in Norway has traditionally been an effective problem-solver whose principal technique is institution building. Leaders of these institutions are seen by Norwegians as being at the vanguard of the development of one of the best public sectors and welfare states in the world. In Norway, there was no perception that the public sector's performance fell short of that of the private sector. While having some influence, private sector advisors did not gain a strong foothold in Norway, perhaps because the public service was adaptable enough to move on many of their ideas such as fewer and simpler rules, more autonomy for executives, corporate plans and objectives and budgetary reforms. In short, organisational learning came from the inside rather than being externally imposed. Norway may be an exemplary case of a rationally adaptive public service but even her most knowledgeable observers are not fully convinced. For example, Olsen who has monitored its government for many years, questions whether Norway is a *slow learner or another triumphant tortoise*.

Since the 1960's, the main public sector problem in Switzerland, was a lack of strategic leadership and insufficient co-ordination between different sectors and territorial units. When the wave of international reforms was felt in Switzerland in the 1980's, a very successful bureaucratic opposition was launched. While there was some adaptation to pressures to modernise, learning was fragmented along policy fields and territorial units. The main political thrust was to control the executive branch which required stronger, more routinised and standardised bureaucracy. Klöti (1996) explains that the three main reasons for exemption from the wave of reform are Switzerland's:

- *direct democracy*—political institutions designed for the maximum participation of individual citizens and for the accommodation of differences;
- *politically conservative culture*—they believed they were a special case and had reached perfection, an overestimation of their own performance; and
- *lack of crisis*—a good economic and financial situation.

Klöti (1996) concludes that the opposition of the bureaucracy to reforms and efficiency programmes was rather successful in the 1980's. Having applied impeccable reasoning in raising questions about suggested reform initiatives, the Swiss bureaucracy learned that: *In the event of doubt, the only common denominator is the status quo. With any reform, the risk of disturbing a very fragile equilibrium of power and influence in a heterogeneous country is high. Institutions guarantee stability and hinder change.*

## **Practical Conclusions**

As a group, Westminster systems of government were subjected to the most fundamental reform. Peter Aucoin in *The New Public Management, Canada in Comparative Perspective*, (1995) has clearly and insightfully analysed reforms in Westminster

systems, hence, there would be little benefit in repeating the findings here. It is worth noting however, that he concludes, as does the Auditor General of Canada, that a comparative study of Westminster systems reveals that strong political leadership and commitment and sustained leadership from the centre are prerequisites for reform as are the perception of a gap between expectations and performance.

In the United Kingdom, Thatcher clearly and virtually single handedly initiated the wave of reforms that started in 1979 and continues today. It started with an abundance of anti-public service and pro-private sector bias but no plan or analysis. Her approach was to *just do it*. Many outsiders were brought in, efficiency measures were established and eventually, a plan was put in place. It is interesting to note that this process took ten years, that the *plan* spent the last full year on the Prime Minister's desk, and that Executive Agencies were not introduced until 1989. Executive Agencies were the central idea of the plan to establish crown corporation type autonomous agencies. It was Thatcher herself who pulled this idea back, establishing agencies as part of departmental structures rather than the more independent legislated ones recommended in the plan. As Prime Minister Thatcher was fond of reminding the public service, *We establish the policy, you implement it*.

Common to reform in the three Westminster models of Australia, New Zealand, and The United Kingdom, is the fact that implementation proceeded without having all the circles squared. This, it seems, is caused more by financial crisis and political push than public service pull. It is also maintained that public service learning in these systems is inhibited by the accountability structures. The accountability structure in Westminster Parliamentary systems is such that ministers are not allowed mistakes. Therefore, with their accountability system and, more generally a culture of error intolerance, they have a major built-in obstacle to learning. As Olsen and Peters (1996) comment:

*If learning is defined as occurring through trial and error, however, parliamentary regimes may encounter some difficulties. The notion of parliamentary government and, associated with it, ministerial responsibility, is that, if a government or a minister admits to significant*

*error, he or she is responsible for the mistake and may be honour bound (if not necessarily legally bound) to resign from office. That being the case, parliamentary governments may be less likely to admit to a mistake, or even to perceive a mistake as a mistake. Without that openness to defining and admitting error, the learning capacity of the government may be significantly lower than it would otherwise be. This tendency to error avoidance is especially pronounced in Westminster systems, with their strong institutionalisation of the concepts of opposition and adversarial politics, in contrast to the more consensual and deliberative styles found in many smaller European democracies.*

Another observation about the three Westminster models referred to is that they all used *opening the system* to outside ideas and talent as a reform implementation technique. This openness of administrative institutions to non-career officials and advisors seems to influence the capacity of the system to reform and to learn (Olsen and Peters, 1996). Finally, when we examine reforms in Westminster systems from the point of view of our *thoughtfulness continuum*, our conclusion that both reason and passion are necessary is clearly substantiated.

Over and above the Westminster categorisation, the cases touched upon in this discussion paper follow two main traditions. France, Germany, Switzerland and Norway, from the Continental tradition, are *statist* states sharing a political culture that stresses the central role of the state in managing society. They are legalistic regimes built around codes of law. The civil service works for the good of society rather than for elected bodies. The United States, Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom follow the Anglo-Saxon tradition of a separation of state and civil society. In this tradition, the state exists as a compact between citizens and their government rather than in its own right. Laws are based on the accretion of decisions rather than codification of principles. Therefore, government is somewhat more restrained. Japan is between the two traditions.

It is not surprising that, as a group *statists*, (or *jurists*) resist change since there is less central integration. Such systems find outside opinions of little interest. These countries are administered by technocrats, to use Pitcher's typology, and vision and flexibility do

not flourish. Further, revolutionary learning such as replacing hierarchy by market systems did not take place because of the juridical training of the public service, politicians and their academic advisors (Derlien, 1996). However, as seen in France, some uncommonly strong external pressures, such as a public discontent of crisis proportions, can force the system into action and prompt a reform.

The cursory overview of reforms in nine democracies points to the conclusion that countries where reforms were the most radical (United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, and Japan) were those that experienced dramatic fiscal crises and perceived the public service to be a large part of the problem. Under immense fiscal pressure, solutions emerging from the private sector became ever more appealing and reform strategies were directed at reducing and containing the influence and power of the public service and its institutions. These strategies included casting the public service as villains (Japan), setting up anti-bureaucratic authorities reporting directly to the Prime Minister (United Kingdom), systematically adding other influential channels of policy advice to counter-balance or replace the public service (Australia and Japan), encouraging people to leave by reducing promotional opportunities and freezing wages (United States), filling senior positions from outside the public service, eliminating some institutions such as policy research schools and public service commissions, and reducing the authority of central agencies. In these cases, reforms were driven by financial crisis and underpinned by ideology, strong conviction and passion. Little concern was given to institutional impacts other than to contain, reduce or eliminate influence.

Abstracting from these *actual life* cases, we draw the following more or less definitive conclusions.

- The surest route to institutional change is a massive failure in governance or a real or perceived crisis. Contrary to the managerial reform ideology of the 1980's, reform activity is not systematically related to factors supposedly creating a critical need for reform, including the size of the public sector, rigid bureaucracies, rule orientation and so forth.

- As seen in France, Norway, and to a lesser extent in Australia and New Zealand, there is a noticeable correlation between the capacity for analysis and the capacity to adapt behaviours and structures in the light of experience.
- The more a public service is open to people with little vested interest in the status quo of existing systems, their traditions and orthodoxy, the more likely it is there will be demands for reform and a higher ability to learn.
- Error intolerance inhibits a system's ability to learn and therefore to reform itself.
- Since reforms are essentially experiments requiring resources, reform is more probable when there is some slack in the system.
- Comprehensive reform comes only from political involvement and leadership.
- Whether or not reforms take root and result in significant transformation is more a matter of circumstance, serendipity and passion than it is of careful analysis, planning and reason.

## Part 3      Reason Follows Passion: Order from Chaos

*Democratic politics is a form of governance, an argumentative practice, and a way of accumulating experience, where public discussion and criticism, opposition, regulated competition, and conflict are tolerated, even encouraged, and institutionalised...Here we consider the relevance of ambiguity and uncertainty, strong conviction and organisational routines, and conflict and power. (Olsen and Peters, 1996)*

### General Observations and Conclusions

The theoretical and practical discussion about the role of passion and reason in public sector reforms leads to several conclusions. First, successful government reforms:

- go beyond the world of reason and ideas,
- allow room for extra-rational elements,
- capitalise on lessons borrowed from a wide variety of experience,
- recognise that *the public service* is not a homogeneous closed system,
- result from significant external pressure, and
- harbour a powerful will to change.

Second, the evidence is conclusive that a healthy dose of passion and conviction—enough to rally in considerable public support—is a prerequisite for reform. It is equally clear that successful implementation of reform is dependent upon reason and a well developed

organisational learning capacity. The failed 1970's reform attempts in the United States and the United Kingdom pose a serious question for Tom Peters' arguments against rational approaches, organisational learning and knowledge, in favour of organisational forgetfulness.

Third, reform without public consent is impossible. Democracy cannot exist without passion, ambiguity and a degree of messiness, otherwise there would be no protection from orthodoxy or the tyranny of the majority. Democratic reform is built on the underlying and inescapable assumption that continuous improvement of individuals and organisations is possible. Current students of the topic argue that reforms themselves are a form of learning. This notion of improvability is an essential part of our (*generally agreed upon, but necessarily vague*) democratic ideal. This foundation is a part of our political and bureaucratic culture that predisposes organisations and the individuals in them to learn.

Finally, the learning capacity of the public sector is at the heart of modernisation and reform. Olsen and Peters add that the only evidence for organisational learning is action—a change in behaviour or way of doing things, which requires passion in addition to reason. Passion, or strong conviction, continues to play its historical role. High organisational learning aspirations and abilities are essential to effective reform implementation. There is a threefold reason for this commonly held high aspiration.

- *Experiential learning is part of a cultural heritage emphasising faith in science, reason, rational criticism and ideologically neutral scrutiny*
- *Organisational learning is part of a democratic trust in an enlightened, responsive, and accountable governance based on the informed consent of citizens. This requires openness, participation, criticism, and opposition, all of which facilitate collective learning.*
- *The limitations of planning, forecasting, and rational calculation have necessitated a move toward learning organisations equipped with well defined feedback mechanisms that produce a history of diminishing mistakes and over or under-corrections (Olsen and Peters, 1996).*



The evidence indicates that reform ideas are generally developed by politicians with the help of private sector and other advisors, as was the case in the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, the United States, Japan and France. Very often, the reform ideas are formulations, amalgamations, and modifications of previous ideas combined with the current thinking of political leaders in other jurisdictions or the global sweep of private sector managerial ideas. Change processes and strategy are formulated, often forcefully, by political leaders experienced with reform and government failures. Further, where implementation of reform fails, the public service is often not involved in the development of change strategies. The most notable examples are the failed implementation of reforms initiated by President Reagan and the 1970-74 reforms attempted in the United Kingdom.

The overriding case made in this discussion paper is that passion is needed before radical change or fundamental reform can occur in practice and that this passion is often motivated by crisis and founded on conviction. This, however, does not mean that reason is not as important or as necessary as passion. As the Westminster and other cases clearly demonstrate, passion was exhibited in full form by leaders with exaggerated biases against the public sector and blind faith in managerialism. However, were it not for the earlier Fulton analysis and the ten years of thought and planning leading to executive agencies in the United Kingdom, the Treasury's reform plan in New Zealand and an openness to experiment, and learning in many countries such as France and Australia, the reforms, initiated by what Weber called *charismatic authority*, would never have been put into practice. In other words, reason and passion go hand-in-hand, or rather, one in front of the other, in the reform process. In addition to providing an important source of policy advice to government, the role of the public service is to implement policy once decisions have been taken. In this respect, the task of the public service is to put order into the chaos that reform often brings, that is, to apply reason and rationality.

Moreover, there is overwhelming evidence that neither passion or reason alone achieve intended reform results. Passion is essential to focus attention, launch reforms, ignite imaginations and press players into action. Reason is needed to turn simple initial reform ideas into logical and practical implementation plans drawing on both internal and external experience and expertise. Effective reform implementation requires what reform observers call a *learning capacity*, that is a heightened ability of a system of government to learn from both its own experience and the experience of others. *Learning is not simply having a new insight or a new idea. Learning occurs when we take effective action, when we detect and correct error* (Argyris 1993).

A most troubling aspect of this reflection on the roles of reason and passion, is the lack of consensus on the value of the intended results of reform and on the results achieved. The literature is fraught with serious disagreement among researchers about what has been achieved by reform. Scholars are in disagreement about whether citizens are better off and if reforms have had beneficial or lasting impact. However, it seems that the conclusion is inescapable that passion-based reforms have left indelible marks on systems of government. For example:

- we no longer assume that the state is the necessary provider of public services.
- it is possible, in many areas of government activity, to do more with less.
- managerial and administrative accountability has improved to some extent. *Indeed, the accountability implications of commercialisation have only just begun to emerge and must be viewed in the context of a redefining of accountability responsibilities of ministers and their civil servants.* (Dixon, Kouzmin and Korac-Kakabadse 1996); and
- greater demands are being made of public servants as the success or failure of government programs is open to greater exposure and because reforms have improved information available for performance accountability.

## Relevance to the Canadian Public Service

In his paper, *Boxed in a Five-cornered Circle*, Franks (1996) concludes that the essential structure of administration through departments has been in place since the nineteenth century, and that, outside of government expansion, Canada has seen no fundamental reforms in over a hundred years. Another researcher (Halligan, 1996) writes that Canada, in contrast with other democratic nations, *has been dabbling in managerial reform for 30 years without producing an all-enveloping thrust and quite the degree of change accomplished elsewhere*. An analysis of reform in Canada is outside the scope of this paper, yet, to ignore it would be to disregard the most important purpose of the discussion—What does all this mean to the Canadian system of government? In contrast to the views of Franks and Halligan, Canada has been actively experimenting with reform, both federally and provincially, and is now well positioned to reap the benefits from this experience. At this point in time, Canada is better poised than any nation to learn from its own and others' experiences about public sector reform.

At the federal level, changes resulting from Program Reviews 1 and 2 have fundamentally shifted the direction of the public service, its role and methods of operating. The dramatic and extensive reforms of some of the largest service departments—Food and Agriculture, Transportation and Human Resource Development are examples—when considered together with the Program Review initiative (with which there is a high level of policy consistency), create a somewhat more progressive picture than that painted above by Franks and Halligan. Further, Wright and Zussman's *Review and Analysis of Recent Changes in the Delivery of Government Services*, (1996) for the Deputy Ministers' Task Force on Service Delivery Models, and the Task Force's own detailed case studies document hundreds of provincial, federal and departmental initiatives and experiments to better plan, organize, and deliver government programs and services. In addition, support has been provided centrally for a number of important initiatives such as alternative service delivery systems. Aucoin (1995) points out that Canada now has

*...the full range of options now common across the Westminster systems. These include interdepartmental cooperation at the point of service delivery; partnership arrangements with other levels of government and non-profit organizations; joint ventures with the private sector; commercializing services; using regulatory instruments in place of direct services; using tax measures in place of spending programs; contracting out the delivery of services; and increased emphasis on voluntary compliance mechanisms in the areas of regulation and tax administration.*

The observation that these changes are somewhat disjointed and lack central coordination and leadership, though, may be valid (Peter Aucoin 1995, et al.). Unlike many of the nations surveyed for this discussion, Canada put no significant or comparable mechanisms in place to orchestrate the reform initiative and lacked intense and uniform political commitment. Further, while Canada has access to lots of experience from experiments abroad, at the provincial and municipal levels and within its own vertically integrated departments, there has been surprisingly little learning taking place. Like Switzerland, much of Canada's learning has been fragmented along policy fields and territorial units.

Nevertheless, Canada's experience offers a unique insight in our deliberations about reason and passion in reform. The Program Review initiative coupled with some of the large departmental reforms, while driven by fiscal crisis, reflect much more reason than passion in implementation. Changes in Transportation and Agriculture for example, have been analyzed and debated for decades by commissions, task forces, committees, public servants and politicians. Indeed, these recent Canadian reform initiatives were well thought out. As Greenspon and Wilson-Smith (1996) noted, the earlier Conservative reorganization of ministerial structures completed in June 1993 was seen as irrational by many observers including the architects of Program Review, Marcel Massé and David Zussman, because the much needed thorough review of programs was planned to occur after the restructuring. Their more rational process would review programs before restructuring. By most accounts, Program Review was strategically planned and implemented in a rational and, by and large, dispassionate manor. Yet, as the authors of

*Double Vision* point out, it was Massé and the Finance Minister, Paul Martin, who held enough political power to turn the theory into practice.

While many questions remain unanswered, two inescapable ones, stem from what our discussion about passion and reason in reform means in our Canadian context:

- *If reform is inevitable and it is linked to learning, as the literature suggests, how can we strengthen our learning capacity?* and
- *What is the appropriate role for the public service in reform?*

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