

Like those of my generation living in Western Canada, I remember only too well the grim coupling of the Great Depression and the great Prairie drought, both of which began in 1929, when I was 18 years of age, struggling to make a living and get an education.

Those disastrous events made an indelible impression on me and on my contemporaries. World War II ended the Depression and, at its conclusion, opened the way to a reconstruction of Canadian society designed to avoid another depression, to promote economic development, and to provide a social security net to protect the aged, the unemployed and the sick from the poverty, the privations and the humiliations they had suffered before the War.

In the midst of the War, I was asked to take a wartime job in the Department of Finance and had the privilege of being at the centre of economic policy making, during the War and in the post-war period of reconstruction.

I preface this lecture with a description of the beginnings of my personal involvement in public affairs for two reasons. First, although O.D. Skelton had died before I arrived in Ottawa to take that wartime job, I became very much aware of his legacy. Dr. Skelton was appointed by Liberal Prime Minister Mackenzie King as the Under Secretary of State for External Affairs. Mr. King was his own Foreign Minister, so, effectively, Dr. Skelton was the top civil servant in Ottawa. He used his position to recruit talented individuals to join him and to establish firmly the tradition of competence, impartiality and political neutrality in the senior ranks of the public service of Canada of which, for the best of reasons, he is regarded as the founder. Among his most significant recruits was Clifford Clark, a former colleague at Queen's University, whom he persuaded the Conservative Prime Minister R.B. Bennett to appoint as Deputy Minister of Finance. It was Clifford Clark who asked me to take that wartime job in his Department in 1942 as a result of which I came to work with many of the individuals that Dr. Skelton had attracted to Ottawa, like Lester B. Pearson, in whose Ministry I served many years later.

Recently, I was asked by the Prime Minister to give some advice to the newly sworn ministers of his government. The first thing you do, I advised them, is get to know your Deputy Minister who will be your most reliable supporter. He or she wants you to succeed because if you succeed your Deputy will succeed. If you fail your Deputy has to clean up the mess. I think O.D. Skelton would have approved.

The second reason for going back to the great Depression and the great drought is that it is an excellent point of time from which to begin this lecture which is billed as "Ethics and International Trade." I offered that title when I was asked what I was going to talk about before I had written a word. I shall deal with ethical questions affecting trade, but as you will discover, they are not as central as the title suggests.

I am the first O.D. Skelton Memorial lecturer who has been a politician and a Minister of the Crown. This, and my present poorly paid position as a personal advisor to the Prime Minister, requires me to say that mine is a personal, rather than an official, perspective on trade policy, past and present.

So I begin by reminding you of the attitude toward international trade prevailing during the Dirty Thirties among politicians and the general public, not only in Canada, but