

## Chapter 25

# Courage to Reinvent

*Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed it is the only thing that ever has.*

—MARGARET MEAD

.....**I**n 1984, Brian Mulroney and the Progressive Conservative Party took power in Canada, after two decades of Liberal Party rule. Mulroney had campaigned in the footsteps of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, for smaller government and less bureaucracy. During the campaign he had blustered about handing out “pink slips and running shoes” to bureaucrats.

The day after assuming office, Mulroney appointed his deputy prime minister, Erik Nielsen, to chair a ministerial task force that would review all government programs and recommend which ones to eliminate or consolidate and how to improve performance in the rest.

A year and a half later, the task force published its report. It recommended cutting spending and taxes \$7-\$8 billion (in Canadian dollars), by reducing business subsidies, eliminating programs, privatizing agencies, contracting functions out, and devolving activities to the provinces. It also recommended massive reforms in the procurement system and an across-the-board “make-or-buy” policy in which the government would systematically study private contracting options, solicit bids, and choose the most cost-effective alternatives, whether public or private.

Three months after publishing the report, Mulroney removed Nielsen from his cabinet, because he had mishandled the resignation of another cabinet member. “After this, the Nielsen task force became an exercise in search of support in government,” says Donald Savoie in his book, *Thatcher, Reagan,*



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From ***Banishing Bureaucracy: The Five Strategies for Reinventing Government***, by David Osborne and Peter Plastrik.  
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*Mulroney: In Search of a New Bureaucracy.* Although the reports were referred to the appropriate committees in Parliament, they quickly sank from view. The bureaucracy heaved a sigh of relief.

The make-or-buy policy, considered by some business members of the task force its most important recommendation, did go forward. By mid-1988 pilot studies of a dozen functions had shown potential savings of 12-20 percent. In a classic political snafu, however, someone leaked word that the government was going to contract out its mapping service. Caught off guard, cabinet ministers denied the report. The responsible minister claimed he was not aware of the proposal, because it had come not from his department but from the Treasury Board secretariat.

Burned by this controversy, the government decided that departments would henceforth pick their own targets for contracting out, on a voluntary basis. That doomed the initiative. In 1990, the Mulroney government quietly let it die.

Meanwhile Mulroney's effort to sell Canada's public "crown corporations" also foundered on the prime minister's lack of conviction. In 1986 he had set up a secretariat inside the Treasury Board to handle the process. Savoie tells the story of its denouement:

*Mulroney spoke often about the need to privatize crown corporations, but when the time came to make a firm decision, he backed down. A case in point was Air Canada. His government had agreed, as part of its comprehensive privatization plan, to sell the government-owned airline. However, coming out of a private meeting with a Quebec labor leader and a long-standing acquaintance, Mulroney announced that he had assured his friend that Air Canada was not for sale.*

The government fared little better with its efforts to use the control and consequences strategies. A little over a year after coming to power, Mulroney announced an initiative called Increased Ministerial Authority and Accountability (IMAA). It was a rudimentary flexible performance framework: it called for a gradual reduction in central rules and controls, as well as agreements between the Treasury Board and the departments, to give them more flexibility in return for concrete performance commitments, indicators, and targets.

This led to a few minor improvements, such as departmental power to reclassify nonmanagement positions without permission. A second, later IMAA initiative, obviously patterned after the U.K.'s Next Steps reforms, called for the Treasury Board to negotiate formal three-year memoranda of understanding (MOUs) with the departments, to codify their flexibilities and accountability. Every three years, the board would review their performance.



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This too led to modest progress. But as Savoie writes:

*Some six years after IMAA was introduced, only about one-third of government departments had signed the MOU with the Treasury Board that was required to implement the concept fully. Those that have signed are not singing the praise of IMAA, insisting that the paperwork involved and the reporting requirements are not compensated for by the limited freedom they get from central-agency controls. The Treasury Board's pledge, made at the time IMAA was introduced, to review all centrally prescribed rules and regulations so as to remove constraints to good management does not appear to have come to pass.*

Why the snail's pace? "A widely respected former secretary to the Treasury Board, now retired, explained that the reason ... is because the 'work was largely the responsibility of central agencies which had little motivation for change.'"

Reelected in 1988, Mulroney signed off on yet another initiative, this one called "Public Service 2000." PS 2000 set up ten task forces to recommend management reforms in areas such as improving service to the public, resource management, administrative policy, and organizational structure. They were staffed mainly by senior civil servants and chaired by deputy ministers. They came up with 300 recommendations, mostly to decentralize control (delaying, reducing the number of job classifications to 23, reducing central controls, and so forth) and to improve customer service. In June 1991 the government introduced legislation to enact some of those recommendations. It balked at the most important step, however: reducing the power of the Treasury Board, the Public Service Commission, and the other central administrative agencies.

While developing Public Service 2000, the government sent a team over to London to take a closer look at the Next Steps process, then announced that it would create similar agencies, called "special operating agencies" (SOAs). Even this fizzled. By 1994 there were only 15 SOAs, which employed only 3 percent of the civil service. They had gained some flexibility, particularly those organized as enterprise funds (called revolving funds in Canada). But as a 1994 evaluation reported, "The SOA agreement had not significantly changed the way host departments thought of their relationships with SOAs compared with other departmental units."

Why? Savoie laid the blame, again, at the prime minister's feet: "Mulroney did not personally embrace the initiative, as Thatcher did, nor did he appoint a senior government official to oversee its implementation."

Despite initiative after initiative, Mulroney failed in his efforts to trans-



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form the Canadian bureaucracy. If anything, his halfhearted efforts left managers more cynical about reform than they had been when he was elected. Canadian officials report that many high-level civil servants were eager to reinvent and envious of their British counterparts. But without real support from the politicians, they couldn't get it done. "Although Mulroney spoke Thatcher's language," Savoie concluded, "he lacked her conviction."

The contrast between Thatcher and Mulroney says volumes about what it takes to reinvent. Thatcher brought in a nationally known business leader to lead her reform effort and gave him her full and visible backing. She weathered two long strikes by public sector unions without backing down. She ignored howls of protest as she privatized one public corporation after another. When her advisors proposed the Financial Management Initiative, she pushed it through. When it proved insufficient and her Efficiency Unit proposed the Next Steps reforms, she backed them to the hilt. And when the education bureaucracy tried to bury her education reforms—particularly her proposal to let schools opt out of their districts—she refused to submit. She demanded the legislation she wanted, then moved it through Parliament. Over 11 years, she stayed the course.

The Labor Party in New Zealand offers an even more dramatic contrast. Roger Douglas and his colleagues had the courage to throw overboard decades of party doctrine and privatize much of the state apparatus they had helped construct. Douglas entered Parliament a habitual advocate of government intervention.

*I believed in the ability and tightness of governments to pick winners in business and industry. I saw no problem in their being involved in the marketplace in a hands-on way. I thought they could encourage economic growth by directing government money and private funds into selected sectors or industries. . . . In my maiden speech in 1970, I criticized the breweries for raising the price of beer and recommended that the government institute a form of price control.*

Douglas radically changed his views, because he could see they weren't working. "I saw the policies weren't helping the poor, the disadvantaged and those on lower incomes. The unwelcome truth was that they actually made the situation worse for the less well-off."

Stan Rodger, who had once led a major public sector union, pushed through 1988 legislation that wiped away virtually all civil service protections. His labor movement colleagues were so angry they took back a medal they had once awarded him. When Richard Prebble was in charge of the department that oversaw the Post Office, he closed half the post offices in his own election

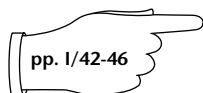


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district. “There was considerable public outrage at the closures,” Prebble recalled a year later. “Many people have still not forgiven me.” But like Douglas, neither Rodger nor Prebble flinched.

In the U.K., in New Zealand, in the Air Combat Command, in Indianapolis, in Minnesota, in the Forest Service, and in Hampton, it took significant courage to reinvent government. In chapter 3 we first addressed this fact; we now want to close this book by returning to it. We want to close, as we opened, with a dose of reality. Reinvention pays tremendous dividends, but they do not come easily. It requires fundamental, often difficult changes in the behavior of many key players in the public sector: elected officials, managers, employees, unions, at times even stakeholder groups like business and the media. Let us say it as bluntly as we can: you will not succeed unless you are willing to make those changes. Courage is the reinventor’s sixth C.

Brian Mulroney’s story is all too common. It is the story of a public leader who wants change but is unwilling to pay the price. Mulroney was unwilling to take the heat from those who would lose out through privatization. He was unwilling to devote his personal attention and political capital to the task of improving government performance. He was unwilling to take real power away from his central control agencies. He was unwilling to invest the time and energy, and resources—the blood, sweat, and tears—it takes to reinvent government. And he was unable to stay the course: to keep pushing and pushing until the promise of the Increased Ministerial Authority and Accountability initiative and Public Service 2000 and the special operating agencies had all been realized.



In part 1, we gave you three rules for reinventors, all under the general theme of the book: *be strategic*. We close this book with our final rules for reinventors. There is much, much more to say about the leadership challenges that reinventors face, and we hope to return to the subject in another book. But we would be remiss to leave this book without addressing the challenges reinventors *must* meet if they are to use the five C’s successfully. Along with the three already presented, these rules for reinventors spell out the gut issues: what we mean when we talk about the courage to reinvent.

## RULES FOR REINVENTORS

- 1. No New DNA; No Transformation.***
- 2. The Game Has Five Levels; Change as Many as You Can Reach.***
- 3. When You Want People to Let Go, Give Them Something in Return.***  
As we said in chapter 3, letting go of power and security is difficult. It re-



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quires courage; it requires faith in the results; and it often requires a deal, in which those who let go get something back in return. New Zealand's Labor Party leaders gave up their power to tell the Post Office and railroads how many people to employ and where to employ them. The U.S. Congress gave up its power to tell the Eastern Region of the Forest Service exactly where and how to spend each line item of its budget. In return, both Congress and the Labor Party got dramatically better performance for the public.

In Indianapolis, the U.K., and New Zealand, employees gave up their lifetime job security. But in return, many have gained freedom from red tape, richer work lives, more career opportunities and—in Indianapolis—gainsharing bonuses.

#### **4. Take Performance Seriously—And Accept the Consequences.**

When Oregon created its Progress Board in 1989, a process we described in chapter 4, the idea was to create long-term outcome goals for the state, called the Oregon Benchmarks. About the same time, the governor's budget office began pushing departments to measure performance and set performance goals. In 1993, Governor Barbara Roberts built her state budget around the Benchmarks. The legislature went along, but most members never bought into the Benchmarks. Similarly, only a few committees took performance measures seriously when they appropriated funds. After Roberts left office in January 1995, neither the new governor nor the legislature paid any attention to the Benchmarks in creating the next biennial budget.

Why? Because most politicians pay little attention to the performance of public institutions. Mayors care about the performance of their police departments, and governors sometimes care about the performance of their public schools. But otherwise, the typical elected official pays almost no attention to performance, until there is a crisis.

Donald Savoie puts it well, writing about the U.K., the U.S., and Canada:

*Seasoned officials know that, although politicians will speak of empowering employees and serving clients better, what matters most to them is how to diffuse a political crisis (of which there is never a shortage) or how to pilot a new policy or program through the government approval process and then how to package it for public consumption...there are still very few rewards for being known as a good manager.*

This has changed in Sunnyvale, Indianapolis, and other cities. It is changing in the U.K. and New Zealand, though it is still a struggle. The politicians in those two countries now have the tools to focus on performance, but not many have the inclination. Margaret Thatcher, John Major, Roger Douglas,



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Ruth Richardson, and others cared deeply about performance. In the long run, their successors must share that passion if reinvention is to continue.

The biggest barrier is not resistance, but the pull of other priorities. A senior official who worked closely with Mulroney told Savoie, “I have seen him become consumed by the Canada/U.S. Free Trade Agreement, by national unity, by a looming general election, but never by public service reforms.” Successful reinventors become consumed by improving performance.

A second barrier is fear of consequences: What happens if a leader sets performance goals, then fails to reach them? Won’t his opponents use that against him at election time? Why should he hand them data that could lead to his defeat? This fear killed the Clinton administration’s plans to write performance contracts with each cabinet member. The National Performance Review recommended such contracts, and a handful of secretaries who believed in reinvention quickly volunteered and drafted agreements. But after those were signed, it dawned on members of the Office of Management and Budget that by specifying performance goals in these contracts, they were handing the Republicans a yardstick by which to measure their success or failure. They stopped the initiative in its tracks.

What can overcome this fear? Only courage. The risks are not imaginary. Political opponents will use anything they can to win elections. If elected leaders want to reinvent, they have little choice but to swallow hard and take the risk. They must have faith that they can make it pay off, by improving performance and turning the resulting measures into political assets.

Managers and employees—what we call the institutional sector—face a similar challenge. They too must take the risk of becoming accountable for their performance. Very few people volunteer for this duty. It is normally thrust upon the institutional sector by political leaders and their advisors. When that happens, however, managers and employees have a choice. They can accept the responsibility and make the most of it. They can ignore it. Or they can go along but quietly resist, undermining the initiative. Most managers in Sunnyvale and Indianapolis have taken the first route, though not all.

If we were giving an award for the courage to accept responsibility for performance, we would give it to Steve Fantauzzo, the local union leader in Indianapolis. As we related in chapter 8, AFSCME officials had been saying for some time that their members could outperform any private company if given a level playing field. When Goldsmith offered just that (actually, Indianapolis’s playing field is tilted slightly in the employees’ favor), Fantauzzo and his members had the courage to play ball. When they convinced management to offer an upside, through gainsharing, it helped tremendously. But they never would have thought to do that had they not taken the challenge seriously and committed themselves to making it work.



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The gamble paid off. Indianapolis has not laid off one AFSCME member, and many members are now receiving annual gainsharing bonuses. Fantauzzo and Goldsmith have made competitive bidding work for both the union and the city.

Government's stakeholders also have a role in taking performance seriously. The public and much of the business community already do—though they need to become more strategic about how they demand higher performance. But the media rarely do. And the media are the crucial transmission belts between government and its citizens.

Most mass media outlets—major newspapers, magazines, and television stations—are in the entertainment business, not the information business. (There are exceptions.) They exist to make a profit, which they do by selling advertisements. To sell more ads at a higher price, they must demonstrate higher market share. And to do that, they must entertain their readers or viewers.

So the media are looking for stories that grab attention and hold it. Hence they focus on conflict, drama, and scandal—not performance.

Duke University professor Robert Behn tells a story that illustrates the point. When Governor Michael Dukakis was touting the success of his welfare reform program, Employment and Training (ET) Choices, the CBS program, “60 Minutes” decided to do a story on it.

*The producer spent several days touring welfare offices and ET training programs, all the time asking: What's the conflict? Who are the bad guys? In the end, 60 Minutes never produced anything on the ET program. We couldn't really determine what the story was, explained the producer; there was no conflict.*

Several years ago Katherine Barrett, then with *Financial World* magazine, visited Oregon to study the Benchmarks. She also talked with members of the Oregon media about the importance of performance measurement and benchmarks. Many of the reporters said they had heard of the Benchmarks, but that they preferred to write about things like state employee layoffs.

Reinventors need to understand these realities and feed the media information in a way that makes it entertaining—as the British have done by publishing performance tables that compare different cities, police forces, fire brigades, schools, and hospitals. But media outlets need to begin taking issues of performance seriously as well. It is useful to publish data comparing the performance of different cities and states, but it would also help if they wrote about what governments were doing right or wrong to produce that performance. If citizens rarely see a newspaper or television story about improving performance in the public sector—if all they see is a steady diet of scandals, conflicts, and



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abuses—their attitudes will never change, and politicians who invest their energies in improving performance will never get the credit they deserve.

**5. Stand Up to the Special Interests.**

Whenever government introduces competition or privatizes an asset or eliminates a program, there is an uproar from those whose interests are threatened by the change. This is one of the classic difficulties of any reform process. Machiavelli wrote about it 500 years ago:

*There is no more delicate matter to take in hand, nor more dangerous to conduct, nor more doubtful in its success, than to set up as a leader in the introduction of changes. For he who innovates will have for enemies all those who are well off under the existing order of things, and only lukewarm supporters in those who might be better off under the new.*

To succeed, political leaders must have the courage to stand up to the interests that block change. Stakeholders such as business and community groups can often help. Managers and employees can occasionally help, but they can seldom lead the charge.

The most effective ways to overcome special interests include the following:

**“Damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead.”** This was Governor Perpich’s approach with school choice in Minnesota. When the idea was new and only a third of Minnesotans surveyed favored it, he went full speed ahead, because he had faith that giving parents their choice of public schools was the right thing to do. Rather than worrying about the power of the teachers unions, he confronted them head on. It took him several years, but the public quickly came to understand that choice was in its interest, and the unions finally backed down.

Margaret Thatcher took the same approach, as did Roger Douglas. Indeed, Douglas believes in moving as fast as possible, so the interest groups do not have time to regroup.

*Do not try to advance a step at a time. Define your objectives clearly and move towards them by quantum leaps. Otherwise the interest groups will have time to mobilize and drag you down.*

**Structure the debate so it poses the general interest against the special interests.** Douglas advocates this approach also. Indeed, this was one reason he and the Labor Party always tried to package their reforms in “large bundles.” In 1984, Labor announced its first comprehensive plan for reform: phasing out subsidies in farming, manufacturing, transportation, and other



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areas; price increases for most government-supplied goods and services; a new 10 percent flat tax (starting in 1986) on all goods and services; and dramatic reductions in income taxes.

“Nothing like that had happened in living memory,” says Douglas.

*You could hear the jaws dropping open right across the nation as the Budget speech was broadcast, hitting one vested interest after another.*

*Paradoxically, however, it is harder to complain about damage to your own group, when everyone else is suffering at least as much—and you benefit from their loss, in the medium term.*

*The major interest groups gathered in the Parliament Buildings the following Monday. Road transport operators complained that road user charges on them had been increased by an appalling 48 percent. They were not supported—they were howled down—by the other groups present. It was seen as selfish and insensitive, with so many hurting at once, for any one group to push its own barrow.*

*The underlying fact is that, whatever their own losses, each individual group also had a vested interest in the success of the reforms being imposed on all of the other groups in the room.*

The Canadian Program Review managed to do the same thing: because everyone sacrificed for the common good, no one protested too loudly. Vice President Gore intended to do this with the National Performance Review recommendations in 1993—packaging the most important ones in one huge bill and forcing Congress to deal with it. But with national health reform taking precedence, the Clinton administration backed away from the idea. As a result, opponents easily picked off individual proposals as they were introduced in Congress, one by one.

***Use opinion surveys to prove you have the general interest on your side.*** In 1995, Boston’s school choice plan came under fire from some white parents who were frustrated because racial balance guidelines had kept their children out of their preferred schools. To counter the attack, the mayor and the Private Industry Council asked a consulting firm to pay for a customer survey of attitudes toward the choice plan. The survey showed that 80 percent of parents were satisfied with the assignment system and almost 90 percent got their first or second choice.

***Build constituencies to support your reforms.*** Minnesota’s education reformers consciously built a series of constituencies for school choice. They started with People for Better Schools and the Citizens League. Then they re-



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cruited the Minnesota Business Partnership. Next they reached out to minority communities, where parents were particularly eager for public school choice because they could not escape bad schools any other way, since they could not afford private schools. Later they turned the Post-secondary Enrollment Options students and their parents into a potent constituency, as we described in chapter 13.

Mayor Goldsmith turned the inner city and its political representatives into a constituency for reinvention by devoting the savings from his managed competition approach to inner city infrastructure projects. When Mayor Rendell in Philadelphia used managed competition, he turned to the private sector unions for support. He handed out fact sheets showing city pay and benefits compared with private sector pay and benefits, which demonstrated that the city workers got higher wages and more paid holidays. “Guys would listen to this, and say ‘Yeah, bingo, privatize,’ ” he remembers. He says the private unions became his most important allies.

Those who fail to build constituencies usually fail to reinvent. Massachusetts governor William Weld came into office vowing to reinvent; his inaugural address in 1991 was based on an article David Osborne wrote a year before *Reinventing Government* was published. Weld was perfectly willing to stand up to special interests, but he rarely mobilized any constituencies for change. As a result, he lost repeatedly in the state legislature, and his reinvention drive quickly lost momentum.

### **6. Protect Your Entrepreneurs: Don't Let Anyone Shoot Your Risk Takers.**

The prevailing culture in government is incredibly risk averse, because the politicians, the media, and the auditors are all quick to take potshots at any innovation that fails. Politicians love to snipe at the bureaucracy: Senator William Proxmire for years had his Golden Fleece Awards; Texas Comptroller John Sharp invented a Silver Snout Award to do the same thing. Meanwhile the political parties constantly snipe at each other, and managers who get caught in the cross fire are routine casualties. The media loves the warfare, because it makes good copy. Indeed, they generate a lot of the sniping on their own. The impact on reinvention can be devastating. As Bob Behn says, “One mistake can doom an entire innovation.”

This behavior may never change. To combat it, leaders who want to reinvent must have the courage to protect their entrepreneurs. When someone leaked the fact that the Canadian mapping service was going to be contracted out, for example, Mulroney and his cabinet should have stepped in to take the heat. By denying the report, they undermined a promising initiative.

This happens all the time in politics. Elected officials jettison innovators who have become controversial, to dissociate themselves from the controversy.



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When Mario Cuomo was governor of New York, he made his mark as an innovator in housing for the poor and homeless. The man who made it possible was Bill Eimicke, his housing “czar” from 1983 through 1988. After several years, Cuomo began to trumpet his success. His budget office decided to announce, in a state of the state address, how many low-income housing units the Cuomo administration had assisted since taking office. Eimicke objected, knowing that if they put in a number, the legislature or the press would probably force them to prove it. And without a computerized operation, Eimicke knew that would take an immense amount of work.

Eimicke lost that battle, and sure enough, when the governor claimed they had assisted more than a million units, reporters asked for proof. So Eimicke’s staff spent a year culling through manual records and putting together a list of every housing unit the state had built, rehabilitated, or otherwise invested in. Eimicke tells what happened when they released it:

*All the press took the list and began visiting the sites. About the eighth unit on the list was something like 32 W. 42nd Street and it was wrong; it was a typo. It was supposed to be something like 42 W. 32nd Street. So the Daily News went to it and found a vacant lot. If you’d gone to the other address, everything we said was there was there. But they didn’t. They put a picture of the vacant lot in the paper, and it was all over. All the other papers picked it up.*

The accusations snowballed, and pretty soon the newspapers were accusing Eimicke of lying about the one million units. Cuomo said nothing, and his aides began telling Eimicke he was through. Knowing he had become a liability, Eimicke resigned. Three years later, after computerizing the records, the administration released figures showing Eimicke’s numbers had actually been on the low side.

When a leader lets one of his most creative aides take the fall in this kind of situation—for no reason other than a media feeding frenzy—it sends a chill throughout his organization. No one else is going to stick his or her neck out to make changes after watching something like this. The Cuomo administration launched no new housing programs.

Sometimes the attack comes from auditors rather than reporters. In the mid-1980s, when he was deputy assistant secretary of defense for installations, Bob Stone threw out hundreds of regulations governing military base construction, taking them down from 380 pages to 4. The inspector general (IG), whose staff was there to enforce the regulations, didn’t like what he had done. When Stone took the new regulations to the Directives Branch to get them printed, the woman in charge would not print them, because the inspector



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general had objected. Stone knew he had the authority, so he did what entrepreneurs do: he went around her.

*We were having a conference, and I wanted to be able to hand [the new regulations] out, so I said to the guy running it for me, “Look, here’s a check for \$200, go to a printer, and see how many you can get for \$200.” Well, the people on my staff were outraged that I was going to buy the whole bundle, and they started kicking in. I think I finally got about \$160 refunded. This was personal money; there’s no budget for this. We raised \$300, had 1,900 of these printed, and mailed them all over the world—to all the generals, all the base engineers.*

*The IG didn’t like that; he had been outflanked. I also sent a copy to [Stone’s boss, William Howard] Taft [IV], and Taft loved it. The IG wrote to Taft and said that I had exceeded my authority and probably violated the law. I think it’s one of the last refuges of scoundrels that when you do something they don’t like, they act like you violated the law.*

*There’s a law, they said, that limits printing of the DOD seal. Only the Defense Department or authorized people can print it. You can go anywhere in Washington—you want a glass with the seal etched in it, an ashtray, there’s lots of places you can get it. But the IG said I had violated the law.*

*When the IG told Taft I had exceeded my authority, Taft should have called me in and given me a medal. Instead he referred the complaint to the general counsel, and I just survived by the skin of my teeth.*

(If we were giving awards for courage, our second one would go to Bob Stone, who has done more reinventing against greater odds than anyone we know.)

Politicians may never accept blunders that cost them politically. But someone has to protect public entrepreneurs who defy silly rules, as Stone did, or make well-intentioned mistakes, or simply run afoul of the media, the press, or the opposition party. Someone has to stand up and take the heat for his employees. If you want to lead a reinvention effort, you have no choice. If you won’t protect those who follow you, you won’t have anyone following for long.

When Mitch Roob bid out the first competitive contract in Indianapolis and the city’s street-repair crews won it, he came under intense pressure to void the bid, as we reported in chapter 8. Mayor Steve Goldsmith had campaigned for privatization, and some of his political advisors desperately wanted the first contract to go to a private firm. But Roob stood his ground, and Goldsmith backed him. Had the mayor reversed the decision, Indianapolis would not be the success story it is today.

In 1974, Community School District 4 in East Harlem—a district that pioneered public school choice—launched its first alternative elementary school,



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Central Park East. Soon a group of parents complained to the district superintendent about how its principal was running the school. The superintendent immediately sent Sy Fliegel, who ran the district's new Office for Alternative Schools, to work on the problem.

Fliegel first visited the principal, Deborah Meier. "I could tell from the way she looked at me that she didn't trust me," he recalls. "To her I was just another annoying bureaucrat from the district office meddling in her affairs." Then he met with parents three times.

*The truth is, after all my investigating, I determined that Debbie Meier was running a superior school. She regarded kids as individuals, an approach that my own teaching experience had convinced me was essential. She cared about youngsters, about learning, and had assembled a staff excited about education. There aren't enough people like that in the world, so when you find the Debbie Meiers, the people who really try to do something, you have to stand by them. They will make some mistakes, and they will always draw fire. But ultimately, people like Debbie and schools like CPE are always worth protecting...*

*So I went to the parents. I told them in the nicest possible way that even though some of their complaints were true, they were far outweighed by the fact that CPE was a really good place for kids. Meier was staying, I told them, but I would do everything I could to see that their children were placed elsewhere if they chose. In the end fifteen families decided to leave CPE. . . . The crisis was over, the credibility of the new Office of Alternative Schools was enhanced, and a lasting friendship [with Meier] began.*

*I had learned an important lesson, too. When push comes to shove you have to protect your good people.*

Leaders can also protect their entrepreneurs by inoculating them against attack, with honors and awards. Vice President Gore does this very effectively with his Reinvention Labs and Hammer Awards. "There's nothing like the magic of the VP's name," says Joe Thompson, director of the New York City Regional Veterans Administration Office, an early reinvention lab and Hammer Award winner. "He's really said and done some nice things for us, and that just helps in the bureaucracy. Having the VP support your efforts—a lot of times where people might not be inclined to help, they do."

Stakeholders can help inoculate innovators as well. A number of stakeholder organizations, including the Ford Foundation, the Fund for the City of New York, and the Boston Management Consortium (a consortium of 150 Boston area businesses) give awards to public sector individuals or organizations that have demonstrated outstanding or innovative performance.



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### 7. *Build Trust, One Transaction at a Time.*

Most public institutions swim in a sea of politics, and trust is rare in politics. Managers don't trust politicians, for example. A former British civil servant once spoke for many when he described politicians as "self-advertising, irresponsible nincompoops.... They embody everything that my training has taught me to eschew—ambition, prejudice, dishonesty, self-seeking, light-hearted irresponsibility, black-hearted mendacity."

Politicians often feel just as strongly about public employees, and they use just as colorful language. (Many an American politician has echoed George Wallace's favorite description: "pointy-headed bureaucrats.") Many politicians view civil servants as lazy, self-serving bureaucrats who routinely stonewall what the people and their legislators want and get away with it, because they cannot be fired.

Meanwhile employees distrust managers, and managers distrust employees. Unions distrust management, and management distrusts unions. And stakeholders—citizens, businesspeople, private sector unions, community groups, and the media—distrust the whole lot.

Yet if you want to reinvent, you cannot do it in an environment of distrust—unless you have enormous power to give orders and ensure that they are followed. That may have been the case, at least to some degree, in the U.K. and New Zealand, but it is almost never the case in the United States. And even in the U.K. and New Zealand, distrust undermined the reinvention process. When trust between Prime Minister David Lange and Finance Minister Roger Douglas broke down in the late 1980s, it hurt the Labor Party badly. It produced a series of nasty public squabbles, slowed the momentum of reform, and led to Douglas's resignation, followed six months later by Lange's. It was a factor in Labor's electoral defeat in 1990.

In the U.K., Thatcher never trusted the bureaucracy, and its members returned the favor. Nor did the national media ever develop much trust in the Conservative government. Both of these factors hurt John Major when he unveiled his Citizen's Charter. The media immediately dismissed it as an election-year gimmick, and many civil servants did the same.

Building trust is so important because reinvention requires faith. To embrace change, people must have faith that it will work. If they distrust those who are proposing and leading the change—or those with whom they will have to work to make it happen—they will not make that leap of faith. Reinventors must build mutual trust if they want to overcome this obstacle.

How do you build trust? You do it by proving, one transaction at a time, that you can be trusted. When Mayor Goldsmith decided to use competition in Indianapolis, the public workers union, AFSCME, was dead set against him.



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Gradually he and his managers won their trust. Mitch Roob did it first, when he offered union workers a chance to bid to keep their work. He did it again when he acknowledged the bloated management in his Transportation Department and fired 18 supervisors, most of them active Republicans, to give his workers a chance to compete. Roob and AFSCME's Fantauzzo began to look for common ground—"a way," says the union leader, "to maintain our principles but get out of warfare." Roob built a little more trust when he refused to void the workers' winning bid, despite intense pressure from his own party.

"Mitch brokered our relationship with the mayor," Fantauzzo says.

*The mayor committed himself to personal and regular meetings with our leadership. They discovered that he wasn't as big and bad as they thought. He discovered they were not as stupid and lazy as he thought they were.*

When Goldsmith, Roob, and other administration leaders began to make sure no union members were laid off as a result of competition, that made a big difference to the union. "It demonstrated a changing philosophy," says Fantauzzo. It started to become clear, he says, that Roob and Goldsmith understood "what's important to the union and how to take that and play it to their own advantage."

The union responded by playing ball. "The position we took was not the normal 'We're going to oppose privatization,'" Fantauzzo says. "We said, 'If it's going to happen, let's properly frame it.'" Union members made honest attempts to bring their costs down. When they proposed good ideas, management responded. When they proposed gainsharing, Goldsmith and his managers agreed.

Along the way there were rough spots. But by 1995, the city's AFSCME employees were ready to endorse their mayor for reelection. (They remained neutral, as we explained in chapter 8, because the teachers opposed him.)

The most important element of trust building is honesty. Real honesty can have a remarkable impact on people, particularly within a political setting. Peter Hutchinson, the Public Strategies Group consultant who has spent three years as acting Minneapolis school superintendent, talks often about the power of "speaking the truth in love"—speaking the truth out of love for those one is dealing with. He remembers a stakeholder group that formed to discuss the district's problems. It included teachers, principals, parents, students, school board members, union representatives, and community members. At a retreat, the group began talking about why some schools persistently failed to do well. Some people blamed bad teachers. The group agreed that the district did not deal with teachers who performed poorly. It decided—with great trepidation,



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Hutchinson says—to raise the issue with the executive board of the teachers union. Hutchinson worried that the meeting would simply put the union on the defensive.

It didn't, because people spoke the truth in love. People simply started telling stories about their own experiences with bad teachers in the schools. School board members, parents, even a union person— everybody had a story. "It went on and on," Hutchinson remembers.

*All of a sudden, the people speaking started to include members of the executive board. They had stories, too. . . . It was a breakthrough: outside and inside the union we really were observing the same reality.*

After the retreat, Hutchinson and the union were able to agree on new contract provisions to swiftly address problems with poor teachers.

To build trust, you also have to make yourself vulnerable. Goldsmith and Roob did this; they had to pay a political price within their own party. And the whole effort could easily have backfired: the union could have sandbagged them. It happens often enough in politics. In Minneapolis, the teachers union leaders had to let themselves become vulnerable. Management could easily have sandbagged them.

In a political world, it is very difficult to maintain a position of honesty and vulnerability. When you do, you will sometimes get burned. If at that point you withdraw, you will probably fail. One of the toughest things a reinventor has to do is maintain his or her honesty and vulnerability after a scorching.

Babak Armajani, CEO of the Public Strategies Group, remembers getting burned when he was deputy commissioner of the Revenue Department in Minnesota. In their efforts to reengineer the department's basic processes, he and his colleagues wanted to invest heavily in information technologies. To come up with \$1 million for new investments, they developed a list of proposed cuts elsewhere in the department. When they took their proposed new budget to their appropriations committee, it had the typical reaction: It liked the cuts, but not the new investments. It simply took back the \$1 million.

"This was the bleeding edge of change," says Armajani. "We were just crucified by our managers for this. How could we be so stupid?" But Armajani didn't give up. He proposed a two-day retreat with the committee to talk things over. Luckily, the committee agreed. "We fought a lot, but we worked it out," he says. "It led to a great relationship with the committee; they've since been very supportive and proud of the department. By now the committee tells other agencies they ought to be like the Revenue Department—and we had been in the doghouse until then."

Another key to building trust is what we call "the power of confession." If



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you are willing to acknowledge your mistakes, apologize, and take the hit, you will be amazed by the effect. Confession can be intensely cathartic. And frankly, there is often no hit to take. People are so amazed and grateful to hear an honest apology that they will forgive the transgression.

We have been discussing trust within government, but all of this applies to relations with the public as well. Most citizens have pretty good crap detectors, to use Hemingway's phrase. They can tell when a public official is being honest with them and when he is not. When they see consistent honesty, they develop a bond of trust with that official.

If you want to reinvent, Roger Douglas advises, "never fall into the trap of selling the public short." He decries politicians who, faced with the need for reinvention, "confide privately: 'I know it's needed, but people out there don't!' Politics is the art of the possible!"

*Nobody stops to think that what people may really want is politicians with the vision and the guts to help them to create a better country for their children in the year 2000 and beyond it.*

*Successful structural reform does not become possible until you trust, respect and inform the electors. You have to put them in a position to make sound judgments about what is going on.*

*Tell the public, and never stop telling them, right up front:*

- *What the problem is and how it arose.*
- *What damage it is doing to their own personal interests.*
- *What your own objectives are in tackling it.*
- *What the costs and the benefits of that action will be.*
- *Why your approach will work better than the other options.*

*Ordinary people may not understand the situation in all its technical detail, but they have a lifetime of experience at work and at home to help them sift the wheat from the chaff. They know when key questions are being evaded. They can sense when they are being patronized or conned, and do not like it. They respect people who front up honestly to their questions.*

### **8. Invest in Change.**

Reinvention is not free. It costs money, it costs time, it costs political capital. If you're not willing to make the investment, don't bother starting down the path. When we talk to leaders of organizations that have made the greatest strides—the Air Combat Command, Sunnyvale, Phoenix, Hampton, the U.K. Employment Service—they have all been willing to invest heavily in the process of change. At the ACC, Creech set up a "university" at every TAC base.



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He also created week-long courses for those in line to take on greater responsibility, and he taught most of the courses himself. Mike Loh created a Quality Schoolhouse and trained full-time TQM coordinators for every TAC base. He devoted millions of dollars and hundreds of full-time positions to this effort, in the midst of downsizing and without any extra appropriations. He didn't ask for permission or money; he simply found ways to save money elsewhere and redirected it to quality training.

You should anticipate investing 5 percent of your annual operating budget (excluding pass-through money, such as grants, welfare payments, and the like) in the change process. You won't be able to do this right away, because it takes time to find the savings you will need to generate these funds. But after several years, you should be spending at least 5 percent of your operating budget for things such as:

- Training
- Strategic Planning
- Culture Change
- Experimental Programs
- Market Research
- Internal Survey Research
- Rewards and Recognition
- Internal and External Communication

### ***9. Manage the Transition Humanely: Reinvent with a Human Face.***

With the exception of New Zealand and the United Kingdom, which left thousands unemployed because they corporatized or privatized at such a lightning pace, most of the other governments that are reinvention leaders have laid off few employees. They have used their natural attrition rates to keep positions open, then moved employees whose jobs have disappeared into those positions. When that has not been enough, they have required private contractors to hire the employees, or set up outplacement efforts and helped them find other jobs.

Indianapolis has done all of this, and in four years laid off only an estimated 4-5 percent of its employees. National and local governments in the U.K. have used virtually every option we recommended in chapter 8 for easing the transition (see pp. III/18-20). The U.K. downsized its national civil service by one third over 18 years—with few layoffs. Phoenix has required private contractors to hire employees and provide equivalent benefits, while also setting up a job bank for those who prefer to stay with the city. Philadelphia has done likewise. “That’s how you win this battle,” says Mayor Rendell, “by showing your humanity.”



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### 10. Stay the Course.

As we said in chapter 3, reinvention is a long, hard slog. It takes five to ten years to transform an organization, at a minimum. Phoenix, Sunnyvale, and Hampton have been at it for roughly 20, 16, and 12 years—and they're still improving, still using new strategies and tools.

In larger systems, it takes even longer. Leaders in the U.K. and New Zealand have been at it for 18 and 12 years, respectively. The most rapid reinvention we have ever seen was in the Tactical Air Command, where Bill Creech doubled the command's effectiveness and increased productivity by 80 percent in five years. But even there, his successors have continued the process for a dozen years, still finding new challenges and new tools with which to meet them.

To succeed over these long time spans, leaders need what quality management pioneer W. Edwards Deming called "constancy of purpose." They must push very hard, for a very long time, in the same direction. Deming was not sure that politicians could maintain such constancy—and neither is anyone else. Usually we think of politicians holding their fingers in the air, trying to find out which way the wind is blowing. Reinventors, by contrast, must create the wind that sweeps away the remnants of bureaucratic government.

To do that, they need to persevere and to persist. Reinvention is not for the fainthearted or the short of wind. Reinventors must pound on the door, again and again and again. If they can't get it open, they've got to climb in the window.

"The key element is that you have to have courage," says Don Forbes, one of Oregon's most successful reinventors when he ran the Department of Transportation.

*And courage means that you stick with it for a long time. I think what happens in organizations is people will start out with the best of intentions—"Here's the new initiative"—and somewhere about one to one-and-a-half years in they run into organizational resistance and back away. And in backing away they set up a suspicious, cynical culture, which learns to always resist, because it works. You've got to be prepared to take a lot of flak, which usually comes a year or two down the road.*

Forbes might be describing the Mulroney government, which launched one initiative after another, only to back away each time it met resistance. Whether you are a politician, a manager, an employee, or a stakeholder, you cannot succeed if you cannot fight through the resistance. When Steve Goldsmith tried to bid out management of his wastewater treatment plants, a year into his administration, he hit massive resistance. The plants were already



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award winners, managers told him. Why rock the boat? Environmentalists opposed the move. The union was so angry it finally sued. And when Goldsmith's hand-picked consulting firm, Ernst & Young, studied the possibility of competitive bidding, it predicted savings of only 5 percent.

But Goldsmith believed in the power of competition. He had constancy of purpose. He pushed ahead, and the final contract saved the city 29.5 percent—more than \$65 million over five years.

Even stakeholders must stay the course when they get involved in reinvention. Consider the education reformers in Minnesota we described in chapter 13. Nancy C. Roberts and Paula J. King wrote a book about them, called *Transforming Public Policy: Dynamics of Policy Entrepreneurship and Innovation*. After the authors finished their research, they asked each of the six central reformers about the keys to success. Several cited the necessity of staying the course, one with particular eloquence:

*A fourth policy entrepreneur, reflecting on his experience with public school choice, insisted that “nothing beats having a strategy. Hoping for the best isn’t good enough.” The strategy must be plausible and “once committed to it, you have to stick with it, no matter what distractions come your way.” He observed that many people “get caught up in tactical warfare and get off the strategic track.” You must stay “stubbornly focused on what you have set off to do, and don’t let anybody drive you from it.” “Unless you get exceptionally lucky, this sort of thing requires extraordinary patience and persistence from the moment of the first public statement on the issue.” He noted that it took the group nearly three years to get into a position where a major politician would risk taking on the idea. It took another three years to have the idea firmly embedded in law. “There were many opportunities to settle for less, but you just can’t do it.”*

The activist might have added that after the six years it took to get legislation on choice, he and others have spent an additional eight years adding a charter-school bill, strengthening that bill, making sure the new programs were evaluated honestly and effectively, communicating the results, and defending their reforms against counterattack. Once the reform legislation passed, their job had only begun.



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### Ten Rules for Reinventors

1. No new DNA, no transformation.
2. The game has five levels; change as many as you can reach.
3. When you want people to let go, give them something in return.
4. Take performance seriously—and accept the consequences.
5. Stand up to the special interests.
6. Protect your entrepreneurs: Don't let anyone shoot your risk takers.
7. Build trust, one transaction at a time.
8. Invest in change.
9. Manage the transition humanely: Reinvent with a human face.
10. Stay the course.

### NOWHERE TO HIDE

*No party holds power forever. Sooner or later we all find ourselves out of office. That is the reality of life in a democracy. We may as well use the time we have to do something worthwhile.*

—ROGER DOUGLAS

This may all seem like too much to expect. Honesty? Trust? Investment? Perseverance? Courage? *In politics?*

Perhaps it is. If so, we are doomed to watch government grow ever more ineffective—which means that many of our most severe problems will grow ever worse.

Most governments in the information age democracies are still in a deep hole. Few citizens believe that they do much of a job. When John Kennedy was president, 76 percent of Americans said they trusted the federal government to do the right thing most of the time. By the 1990s, only 20 percent did. In a 1995 poll, 72 percent of those responding agreed that “the federal government creates more problems than it solves.” Some 49 percent said “better management” should be its top priority—more than any other category. (Only 9 percent chose “cutting programs.”) In September 1993, when President Clinton released his reinventing government report and his health care plan, 51 percent of those polled said the former should be his top priority, only 43 percent the latter.



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In part because it was so fed up with government, the American public began the 1990s by throwing status quo politicians out of office in three elections running. In 1990, the governors felt the voters' wrath. In 1992, the president felt it. And in 1994, Congress felt it. We have experienced a massive upheaval in our electoral landscape. Canada and New Zealand have experienced much the same thing.

There is nowhere left to hide. Elected officials can blame someone else for the problem: the other party, petty bureaucrats, the welfare state. And if they survive the next election, they can continue to govern as they always have. Managers and employees can do much the same thing. But this solution won't last. Bureaucratic government simply does not work in the information age. Sooner or later the public will give up on leaders who do not understand this and do something about it—because people want better results.

Our leaders *must* have the courage to reinvent. Even if they have to break with old political partners, as Rudy Perpich did with the Minnesota teachers unions. Even if they have to give up old, cherished ideas, as Roger Douglas and his Labor colleagues did in New Zealand. Even if they have to learn to trust labor unions and civil servants, as Steve Goldsmith did in Indianapolis.

To make the job easier, we have offered a road map of the five strategies that work. We understand how long the road is, how large the challenges, how difficult the work. In our view, however, this is no reason to be discouraged. It is instead a reason to begin the journey today.

President Kennedy once told a story about a French military commander who ordered his gardener to plant a tree. "Oh, this tree grows slowly," the gardener replied. "It won't mature for a hundred years."

"Then there's no time to lose," the general said. "Plant it this afternoon."



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# Notes

All quotations that are not attributed in the text or in these endnotes are from interviews with the authors or their associates. Only in cases where there might be some confusion about the source of a quotation have we indicated in a note that it came from an interview.

## Chapter Twenty-Five

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- P. VII/20: Nielsen ministerial task force: *Ibid.*, pp. 127-131.
- P. VII/21: Make-or-buy policy: *Ibid.*, pp. 155-157.
- P. VII/21: Savoie quotation: “Mulroney spoke often about the need ...”: *Ibid.*, p.167.
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- P. VII/22: Savoie quotation: “Some six years after IMAA ...”: *Ibid.*, pp. 269-270.
- P. VII/22: Savoie quotation: “A widely respected former secretary ...”: *Ibid.*,
- P. VII/22: Public Service 2000: *Ibid.*, pp. 228-231.
- P. VII/22: Special operating agencies: *Ibid.*, pp. 231-234.
- P. VII/22: Quotation from 1994 evaluation: Auditor General of Canada, *Special Operating Agencies*, p. 25.
- P. VII/22: Savoie quotation: “Mulroney did not personally embrace ...”: Savoie, *Thatcher, Reagan, Mulroney*, p. 231.
- P. VII/22: Savoie quotation: “Although Mulroney spoke ...”: *Ibid.*, p. 271.
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- P. VII/24: Prebble quotation: Richard Prebble, “How to Privatise Postal Services: Lessons from New Zealand,” lecture delivered at the Canada Post Privatization Conference, Toronto, June 1989.
- P. VII/25: Savoie quotation: “Seasoned officials know that,...”: Savoie, *Thatcher, Reagan, Mulroney*, p. 295.
- P. VII/26: Quotation from senior official: “I have seen him...”: *Ibid.*, p. 272.
- P. VII/26: “This fear killed ... in its tracks”: Interviews with participants in National Performance Review.
- P. VII/27: Behn quotation: Behn, “Innovation and Public Values,” pp. 20-21.
- P. VII/28: “Several years ago Katherine Barrett,...”: Duncan Wyse and Michael Marsh, “The State of Oregon: Setting Measurable Standards for Progress,” presentations at the Managing for Results: Performance Measures in Government Conference in Austin, Tex., Oct. 27-29, 1993, p. 56.
- P. VII/28: Machiavelli quotation: Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince* (New York: Dover Publications, 1992), p. 13.
- P. VII/28: Douglas quotation: “Do not try to advance ...”: Douglas, “The Politics of Successful Structural Reform,” p. 14.
- P. VII/29: Douglas quotation: “Nothing like that had happened ...”: *Ibid.*, p. 15.
- P. VII/28: “In 1995, Boston’s school choice plan ... second choice”: Karen Avenoso, “Most Parents Back School Choice Plan, Says Boston



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- P. VII/29: “Minnesota’s education reformers consciously built...”: See Roberts and King, *Transforming Public Policy*.
- P. VII/30: Rendell quotation: Mayor Edward Rendell. address to top appointees of the Guiliani administration, Gracie Mansion, New York City, Mar. 5, 1994.
- P. VII/30: Behn quotation: Behn, “Innovation and Public Values,” p. 22.
- P. VII/30: “When Mario Cuomo was governor...”: See Osborne, *Laboratories of Democracy*, pp. 211-246.
- P. VII/33: Fliegel quotation: Fliegel, *Miracle in East Harlem*, pp. 33-40.
- P. VII/34: Quotation from former British civil servant: Quoted in Savoie, *Thatcher, Reagan, Mulroney*, p. 112. Savoie cites David Dilks, *The Cadogan Diaries* (London: Cassell, 1971), p. 22, for this quotation.
- P. VII/37: Douglas quotation: Douglas, “The Politics of Successful Structural Reform,” p. 27.
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- P. VII/40: Roberts and King quotation: Roberts and King, *Transforming Public Policy*, p. 219.
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