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PRESIDENT

This space is usually a pulpit. But for my last three opportunities I want to write about the stuff that makes a full life—issues of our times, of the arts, and of humanities.

Naturally, these are just my thoughts, perhaps too frank, and this will not necessarily fit everyone's opinion of a full life. So, if we disagree, please accept that no offence or put-down is intended.

When I ran for President a second time (having served previously as President during the 1999-2000 term), a number of friends asked me what I was thinking. Not why did I run, but what in Heaven's name I was thinking. See the rub? In retrospect, I understand the question better. To run was an urge that, as Will Rogers said about exercise, should involve sitting 'til the urge passes.

Recently, a member who disagreed with me began his letter to me by inquiring what possessed me to allow the action that displeased him. My state of mind again.

The photo at the top of the page shows what my head looks like; what is inside it is more difficult to show. So here are my thoughts on some general interest topics.

At times I don't know what to think about politicians and their antics. Sometimes, some who give the impression of being smart and intelligent get their brain into some Bermuda Triangle state that reduces it to rat poop.

Take Peter MacKay. Everyone knows how sometimes you can't pass up getting off a zinger. But, hello, when you get yourself in a hole, the idea is to stop digging. As a kid, I discovered (perhaps through the direct intervention of Mother), that if you were caught in flagrante (as in smoking), your best outcome was to fess up, take your lumps and smarten up (as in better camouflage).

It seems that in political life, admitting a mistake is a no-no, whether it is unkind references or weapons of mass destruc-

Cogito ergo sum (I think)

tion. Frankly, I think that admitting a mistake should be considered a matter of character to be admired.

On the federal scene, I think the Liberals need more time in exile to allow real, tempered, and credible leaders to emerge and articulate a real liberal view. I think Stephen Dion fits this description but I can't see him getting much support outside Quebec, and I don't think the party has come to grips with its recent failings.

In our government relations drive, I have met many politicians and sat in on question periods in Queen's Park and Ottawa. Watching politicians at work is a trying proposition. Someone said that making laws is like making sausages—better not observed.

I think the prurient invasion of privacy in political life today does us all a dis-

into engineering curricula as a lever to extend undergraduate degree times to five years should be resisted.

If, as is argued, new information is raining on us at a rate as never before, and that in today's world careers need to be redirected every seven years, surely basic education should be about broadening outlooks and providing learning about learning skills. Engineers, more than other professions, are at the cutting edge of all new technologies and, in most cases, advance through formal and informal research, and personal professional development.

I don't think that compulsory continuing competence or professional development do anything more than occupy us with point gathering and form filling. I do think that formal climates

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service and deprives us of many good people who might make excellent contributions to public life. Look how the media respected the late Ian Scott's privacy versus the treatment of Belinda Stronach's private life. Who would want to expose themselves and their families to such an unwelcome hazard?

On engineering education, I think today's world demands that it be broad and garnished with arts and humanities and business topics. Our work has such an impact on society and the physical world that constraining education to core engineering subjects is inadequate training, and verges on irresponsibility. The push-back in parts of academe is sad to me and attempts to use putting "soft" subjects

need to be established to support continuing education and professional development as is happening today in advanced countries, such as my native land (Ireland). In truth, the people I would want to work with in any area of life are those who love to learn, have a keen interest in what is going on around them, and relish the challenges that any project provides. And I don't think that leaving engineering so broad as to be all things to everyone is wise. I believe we need to declare our areas of competence in more direct ways and titles.

I wish I had learned enough Latin to translate, "I think, therefore I am," but I confess I only remembered the cogito in the title and had to look up the rest. ❖