

# Positive Developments for Africa

Former Prime Minister Joe Clark joins the board of the Canadian Council on Africa



(L-R): CCAfrica Chairman Robert Blackburn, new board member the Right Hon. Joe Clark, and CCAfrica president Lucien Bradet, at the third General Meeting on June 17.

By Peter Schneider

At the third annual general assembly meeting of the Canadian Council on Africa held June 17, 2004, it was revealed that former prime minister Joe Clark has accepted an invitation to sit on the organization's board of directors. The Council, a non-profit private sector group, aims to facilitate and promote sustainable increased trade and investment between the Canadian and African private and public sectors while taking heed of appropriate corporate social responsibility guidelines. The addition of Mr. Clark to the board coincided with the launch of the group's web site, [www.ccafrica.ca](http://www.ccafrica.ca), and the unveiling of an ambitious agenda for 2004-2005. The Council is seeking to enhance its ties with the African diplomatic presence in Canada, and to pursue enhanced cooperation with Canadian government agencies such as CIDA, in order to fully explore opportunities for Canadian businesses of all sizes in Africa. Concerns that arose during the general assembly meeting included the need for creating greater awareness in Canada of existing business prospects in Africa, and the obstacles faced by African business people in gaining entry visas to Canada, in order to network with their Canadian counterparts.

During a break in the session, Mr. Clark spoke about his reasons for joining the council's board, and he shared his view of Canada's role in African development. Since retiring from Parliament earlier this year, he had already announced that he would be a guest of a Washington, D.C. think tank, the Woodrow Wilson foundation, for three months beginning in October. Mr. Clark said, "I am being fairly selective in what I take on, but I have always been very interested in Africa. There are already a lot of bridges in place— Canada is trusted in the area of building and sustaining democratic institutions; we have that trust where perhaps other western countries do not. I've always believed that our flag is a business asset— Canadian business abroad has a good reputation. I'm surprised that there has not been more active interest in the Canadian business community, particularly as we have a very good standing in Africa. We have the

advantage of being a bilingual country, and we also have a reputation as a culturally diverse country, domestically."

Mr. Clark continued, observing "the interesting thing I find about Sub-Saharan Africa is that it is still a remarkably Eurocentric part of the world. I understand the history of this, but I don't understand the logic of it today. There should be a willingness on the part of African and North American interests to collaborate; after all, we have the common experience of building on new continents. We need to have a concentrated focus."

During the board meeting, Mr. Clark emphasized the role Canada has to play in the emerging arenas of biotechnology and environmental management in Africa. Speaking afterward, he said, "There's already a remarkable amount of Canadian expertise in this area. The technologies are new. There's clearly a requirement in Africa for this expertise, and there are urgent needs to be met. Why are there not more bids by Canadian institutions? In terms of the environment, increasing access to potable water is a fundamental issue. Biotechnology is an emerging field where Canada, for its size, is a world leader. The University of Toronto centre, headed by Peter Singer, published a report a year and a half ago, about biotechnology and development, that points the way."

As a former head of government who also headed the foreign affairs portfolio during the Mulroney era, Mr. Clark is no stranger to the development milieu. "It is about the convergence of the private sector and public policy," he said, "and finding new ways of promoting Canadian assets."

Asked about the absence of substantive foreign policy debate during the current election campaign, Mr. Clark noted, "I think it's part of a larger Canadian problem. No-one has been talking about development for 15 years, since the time when I was Canada's foreign affairs minister. The levels [of development monies per capita] have come down. The levels have come down and the level of public concern has come down. I don't understand why that is, but it is both a public and a private sector concern."

GWYNNE DYER

# The Intelligence Agent Speaks

The book is called 'Imperial Hubris: Why the West is Losing the War on Terror,' and it officially comes out on July 4, but its author, 'Anonymous,' is already giving interviews. He is, we are assured, a senior counter-terrorist expert still working in one of the US intelligence agencies, and his message is that the Bush administration has played into al-Qaeda's hands. In fact, he thinks that Osama bin Laden might even campaign for Mr. Bush, after his own fashion.

"I'm very sure that (al-Qaeda) can't have a better administration for them than the one they have now," said 'Anonymous' in a pre-publication interview with the *Guardian*. "One way

to keep the Republicans in power is to mount an attack that would rally the country around the president." To which the only possible response is Homer Simpson's favourite reply: Duh.

There could be no better evidence of the abysmal quality of the thinking in official circles in Washington than the fact that this trite statement of the obvious is seen as bold dissent. OF COURSE Osama bin Laden would vote for Bush. Not only did Bush do what was expected of him after 9/11 and invade Afghanistan. When that didn't work out as well as al-Qaeda expected (it didn't end up in a draining ten-year guerilla war for the United States, as it had for the Soviet Union), then Mr. Bush invaded Iraq.

Bin Laden could not have foreseen that, because he had no links to Saddam Hussein (as the bipartisan commission in Washington investigating the September 11 attacks confirmed last week). Nor was bin Laden the real reason that the Bush administration invaded Iraq, although it misled the public into believing that Saddam had al-Qaeda links. But for the al-Qaeda leader the invasion of Iraq was a gift from God: his own plan to bog America down in an Afghan quagmire failed, but Mr. Bush then voluntarily plunged the US into a even worse mess in Iraq.

The US occupation of Iraq is producing all the images bin Laden originally hoped would be coming out of Afghanistan: Muslim women and children blown apart by American bombs; American soldiers torturing and sexually humiliating Muslim men; Muslim fighters armed only with light weapons, faith and a willingness to die successfully defying US military power in places like Falluja and Najaf. Why would bin Laden vote for John Kerry, whose first move (though he denies it now) would be to get American troops out of Iraq? Bush is his main man.

Osama bin Laden can influence the US election either by launching terrorist attacks in the United States before November, or withholding them until later. If he is still able to micro-manage the timing of such attacks from

his refuge somewhere along the Afghan-Pakistani border, which way will he jump? The answer is not as simple as 'Anonymous' suggests.

Regular readers of this column may recall that I brought this question up in October of last year, and that the calculations bin Laden had to make were not simple even then. President Bush has positioned himself as Mr. Security, the wise war leader who has kept Americans safe from another disaster like 9/11. So if the aim is to give him an electoral boost that carries him back into the White House in November, not just any old terrorist attack will do.

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Another big terrorist attack like 9/11 – supposing that al-Qaeda's remaining sleepers in the United States were able to mount it – would not necessarily help Mr. Bush win reelection. It might just as easily be seen by the American public as proof that he had failed in his main job. In fact, it is so hard to predict whether another terrorist attack in the US would help or harm Mr. Bush that so long as he seems to be headed for victory in November anyway, the safest course for al-Qaeda has been to do nothing.

On that basis, I have been predicting for the past eight months that there would not be a further terrorist attack in the United States before the November presidential election. So far, so good, but there is one thing that could invalidate that prediction.

If Mr. Bush's numbers start to slide badly in the next couple of months and it begins to look like Mr. Kerry will win the election, then al-Qaeda may decide to act. But even if it does, it will almost certainly avoid doing anything very big.

Carry out an attack that kills a thousand Americans, and you have discredited Mr. Bush beyond hope of rehabilitation. But an attack that kills only a couple of dozen Americans — enough to remind voters that the terrorists are out to get them, but not enough to raise questions about Mr. Bush's competence in dealing with the threat — could be just what the Bush campaign needs to squeak back in November.

So if the proportion of decided voters intending to support Mr. Bush sinks below 40 percent by August, then there is the distinct possibility of a small-scale terrorist attack, probably in some heartland city, in September or October — something like a truck-bomb in Cincinnati or St. Louis, to pick two cities at random.

The terrorists are not on the run, as Mr. Bush often suggests. They are ruthless but intelligent people with rational goals, and their violence is designed to deliver them to those goals. The game is still afoot, and nobody could say at this point that they have failed.