

## Guess who is coming to Kananaskis?

Civil society and the G8 in Canada's year as host

By John Kirton

### INTRODUCTION

The Group of Seven and Eight (G7/8) major market democracies (United States, Japan, Germany, France, Britain, Italy, Canada, and Russia) is coming to Kananaskis, Alberta, for its annual summit on 26-27 June 2002. The question of who will be coming with it is on everyone's mind. At the last gathering in Genoa, Italy, in July 2001, the eight leaders, together with the European Union, were joined by their personal representatives or 'sherpas,' by official supporting delegations that totalled some 2,000 people, and by 3,000 media representatives. Then there were the leaders and officials of several international organizations and developing countries, who attended an 'outreach' session at the summit's start. To protect everyone within the secure zone in the centre of Genoa a security force of several thousand was in place. Up to 200,000 civil society protesters from all across Europe and around the world were assembled outside the secure zone. Less visible were the many hundreds of civil society representatives who worked with the host Italian government to shape the agenda in the lead up to the summit, the anarchists who sent bombs to Italian authorities in the days before it began, and the members of the al-Qaeda terrorist network who planned to murder the summit leaders and their entourages.

The injury to an innocent Italian civilian from the lead-up bombings and the death of an anarchist who attacked Italian security forces at the summit itself seemed to show that the summit was dominated and its fate was determined not by the G8 leaders but by those who surrounded them. Indeed, the wave of ever larger, ever more violent civil society protests at major international meetings began at the World Trade Organization (WTO) ministerial meeting in Seattle in November 1999 and proceeded through the International Monetary Fund (IMF) meetings in Washington and Prague in 2000. In the summer of 2001 the protests came to the Quebec City summit of the Americas, where 25,000 gathered to demonstrate and to hurl teddy bears over and to tear down the now infamous but all-too-fragile perimeter fence. While Quebec City was a quintessentially Canadian, predominantly peaceful, protest, the Swedes suffered a real shock soon after when major violence broke out at the European Council summit they hosted in Gothenburg. Three weeks later at Genoa, a new, uglier peak was reached. To those huddled within the secure zone, marching outside on the streets, or watching on television or the internet around the world, it seemed a far cry from the first G7 summit over a quarter of a century before. In France, in November 1975, six leaders and their foreign and finance ministers had met at Château de Rambouillet on the outskirts of Paris for a weekend of intimate conversation with only a few hundred officials and journalists in attendance.

Not surprisingly, the reaction from the G7/8 leaders to the violence and death in Genoa was swift and severe. They issued a statement condemning the violence and the few who had corrupted the event for the many who had come in peace to make their democratic voice heard. Backed by the citizens of Genoa, who saw their town trashed by anarchists and alien invaders, they supported the hard pressed security forces, who had to call upon untrained reservists at the last moment to cope with the massive hordes and those intent on injury. Yet, as the G8 leaders witnessed the violence, the way it distracted them and the media from the serious substance of the summit, and the predictable reaction from hard-pressed security forces, they quickly concluded that their next summit would have to be a very different affair.

Thus the prime minister of Canada, Jean Chrétien, as host of the next summit, switched the 2002 venue from its intended site in urban, easily accessible downtown Ottawa to an isolated mountaintop resort in remote Kananaskis, Alberta. The dominant mood behind the retreat to Kananaskis was a desire to go 'back to basics' - if not all the way to the 1975 model, then at least to 1981 when Canada hosted its first summit in the serene rustic sanctuary of the world's largest log cabin at Montebello, Quebec. The 2002 Alberta equivalent of a small, secure, secretive, executive-retreat style summit meant tiny delegations of no more than 30 per country, less visible on-site security, and a surrounding media core housed in a medium sized city with free tourist attractions many miles away. Separated in such fashion from the media and civil society, the G8 leaders could hold their summit, so they calculated, in splendid isolation, just as they had two decades ago.

In the following months, Jean Chrétien and his G8 comrades became increasingly attached to the Montebello model. Chrétien decided to dispense with the traditional end-of-summit communiqué that encoded the leaders' decisions. The massive terrorist attack on the North American homeland on 11 September 2001 put security concerns, rather than civil society dialogue, at the top of the agenda. The successful ministerial meeting of the WTO, held with minimal protest in November 2001 in remote, heavily policed, undemocratic Doha, reinforced the momentum toward a Kananaskis retreat. Canada began its formal year as host in January 2002 with no developed plan to consult Canadian civil society organizations and only a minimal effort to engage those abroad. It slashed the summit's duration from the usual three days to two, arguing publicly that it could effectively squeeze its scheduled dialogue with African leaders and international organizations, its G7 economic summit, and its regular G8 summit into forty-eight hours.

All this chopping and changing led a former Canadian foreign minister and G8 participant to conclude that both Chrétien's G8 and Osama Bin Laden's al-Qaeda had been forced to flee to the mountaintops and to meet in caves. Alberta's premier, Ralph Klein, suggested that no-one should come to this shrunken summit and that it should be cancelled on the grounds that it was now more trouble than it was worth. Indeed, it appeared that the president of the United States, George W. Bush, might not spend even one night in Kananaskis. He might well decide instead to stay at a secure military base in nearby Montana and helicopter up for those sessions he chooses to attend. As summit costs approached an estimated \$200 million and rising, Kananaskis was turning into a very expensive executive retreat, more appropriate for the Cadillac Brian Mulroney that Chrétien had conjured up on the hustings than the 'Chevrolet style' event Chrétien trumpeted at the Halifax summit in 1995.

The understandable instinct to retreat to a small, ultra secure, secret summit, separated from civil society, is now in danger of leading the G8 into a major mistake. After the assault on the ducale palace where the leaders met in Genoa, on the World Trade Centre in New York City, and on the Pentagon in Washington, the G8 has been launched into a new war of persuasion and legitimacy. The primary target is no longer the other privileged few leaders from once competing major powers meeting in private in their mountain hideaway. It is the many millions watching on TV or via the internet or listening to the radio and reading newspapers around the world. One month after Genoa, the proliferating stories of the death, injury, protests, and police brutality there made it essential for G8 leaders to mount a much more innovative and effective effort to show that they were indeed trying to make globalization work for the benefit of all. Two months after Genoa, with the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon in flames, the need was to prove to the world that such socially sensitive globalization was not just a singular crusade that predominantly white, wealthy, Western, often Christian countries were imposing on Muslims or on a dispossessed developing world. Private encounters on a mountaintop, designed with little recollection of the failures of the original model in 1981 or recognition of new circumstances, are inadequate in the face of the new challenges.<sup>1</sup> Instead, better and more innovative ways must be found to connect with civil society and, through the media, with citizens throughout the G8 and around the world.

This article offers a ten-point programme to meet that challenge, at least in part - a minimum, modest foundation on which other innovations can be built. Its proposals flow from the seminal and enduring purpose of the G7/8 summit as a unique institution led by democratically elected leaders. The proposals do not disturb the integrity of the summit, including the need for leaders to meet alone to deliberate with full frankness, set new normative directions, and take timely, well tailored and ambitious decisions that express their collective political will. To a large extent, they are drawn from mechanisms that similar international institutions, to which Canada and its G8 partners belong, have successfully employed. They have modest funding and other resource requirements. They can be instituted in the few months before the Kananaskis summit takes place. And in some cases the G8 has already taken a few tentative steps in the right direction in recent years. Together they could transform Canada's 2002 G7/8 summit from a shrunken retreat of apparently scared and insecure politicians in Kananaskis into an occasion on which self-confident democratic leaders reach out in partnership with their citizens to build a better world.

## **1 REMEMBER THE RAMBOUILLET REALITY**

In considering how to produce a G7/8 summit that can both connect with civil society and accomplish its ambitious agenda, the first step is to remember the reality of Rambouillet - the essential reasons why the summit was created and its main purpose. Three elements stand out.

First, the summit was conceived and created as a global concert, the brainchild of Henry Kissinger, the American secretary of state at the time. Kissinger recognized America's new relative weakness and consciously sought to construct the modern equivalent of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Concert of Europe.<sup>2</sup> The summit was thus conceived with a comprehensive, interlinked global agenda to provide effective collective global governance where America alone had failed, across the acute East-West and North-South divides. Its agenda was neither exclusively economic nor

exclusively political; it embraced and linked both. Moreover, in contrast to the United Nations system, the G7 proclaimed its willingness to intrude into the domestic affairs of its members to defend fundamental democratic values and to deal with pressing national concerns. Civil society protestors, G8 citizens and outsiders, thus have every right to ask the summit to take up and solve any problem they and their communities face. Unlike charter-bound and subject-specific international institutions, the G7/8 system, especially at the summit level, cannot legitimately ignore an issue or pass the buck without offering a credible rationale for doing so.

Second, the summit was conceived and created as a democratic concert. Its common purpose, highlighted at its founding in 1975 and repeatedly reaffirmed, was, in the discourse of the time, to combat the political 'crisis of governability' and economic 'stagflation' - the entrenched combination of stagnant growth and high inflation - that was both cause and effect of the crisis facing the democratic world. In what might be considered the 'Charter of Rambouillet,' the G7 leaders proudly proclaimed at the beginning of their first communiqué: 'We came together because of shared beliefs and shared responsibilities. We are each responsible for the government of an open democratic society, dedicated to individual liberty and social advancement. Our success will strengthen, indeed is essential to, democratic societies everywhere.' G7/8 leaders are thus in the first instance self-defined democrats, not market-worshipping plutocrats. They can thus say with confidence to civil society protestors at the summit and around the world that theirs is not a closed club of neo-liberal devotees dedicated to ever more far reaching financial, trade, investment, and other forms of economic liberalization. At the same time, their seminal purpose of strengthening democracy, social advancement, and individual liberty everywhere requires them to reach out to the world's citizenry and to practice as well as to preach the principles they proclaim.

Third, the G7 was constructed as a public concert. G7/8 governance was from the start an outwardly oriented exercise rather than an effort to practice democracy in private. Beyond informal discussion, summit leaders had to produce, present, and persuade others of the value of new directions - the innovative principles and norms that would guide government policy-makers and their democratic publics along different paths toward an improved global order. They also had to take concrete decisions to put these new principles into effect. The early leaders were indeed initially attracted to the secret diplomacy of their predecessors in the original Concert of Europe. But they knew that they were, above all, popularly elected, twentieth century politicians who needed the limelight of the attending media. Thus the temptation to meet in private and announce only afterward that a meeting had taken place was easily discarded, as was the more serious suggestion that the media be banished from the first gathering at Rambouillet. This in part was making a public virtue of physical necessity. It was virtually impossible to move the United States president, his advisers, secret service, and nuclear deterrent without the attending White House press corps catching wind, demanding on-site briefings, and rushing to print their conclusions in the post-Vietnam war world. But, above all, the leaders knew that if they were to be successful they had to speak directly to their voters and to those around the world who wanted the chance to vote.

After 11 September a new premium has been placed on the old purpose of using the summit to send a persuasive public message of confidence that democratic governance is possible, to identify the formula to realize this ideal, and to call upon the best of citizens' social capital to give it life. Such actions, from the collective G7 as well as from a single presidential bully pulpit, are what effective democratic governance is all about. Preaching, persuasion, psychology, moral suasion, and the provision of reference points matter as much as coercion and bribery through material punishments and reward. Some summits may indeed seem like little more than global hot tub parties that produce little beyond a concluding piece of paper, a family photo, and surrounding photo ops. But the founding generation understood the importance of direct face-to-face deliberations and the formidable power of credible commitments encoded on paper and presented through photo ops.

## **2 RELY ON THE ALBERTA ADVANTAGE**

The second step is to rely on the natural 'Alberta advantage' that this year offers instead of imposing more restrictive measures that will prove to be unnecessary and counterproductive. Even before the shock of 11 September and the success of Doha, there were several reasons to think that the Kananaskis summit would put an end to the rising cadence of civil society protest and violence that has infused major international meetings of late.

The first is timing. For the first time in many years, Kananaskis will be a workday rather than a weekend summit. While the professional protestors will come any time, as they did in Seattle for the WTO, the less hard core, political tourists may not want to take time off regular work, book in sick, or lose their income to go on a weekday jaunt.

The second reason is geography. Genoa is cartographically central and conveniently located for an all-too-easy, inexpensive, one-day train trip from virtually anywhere in densely populated Europe. Its location inspired well-organized anarchists to sponsor special trains to take the faithful, fellow travelers, and freethinkers to the summit site for a weekend of political action and tourism, replete with colour, drama, danger, and possible historic significance.

Calgary, in sharp contrast, is an easy one-day train ride or drive from virtually nowhere other than Edmonton. It sits isolated from the major metropolitan centres across a widely dispersed North American continent. Unlike Genoa or Seattle in 1999, Calgary has no harbour in which cruise ships and other watercraft can dock - and thus no unionized longshoremen to lend the protestors a hand. And unlike Genoa, with its proximity to Milan, Calgary is essentially a one airport town. Dedicated protestors are in for a long and lonely drive.

The third Alberta advantage is political culture. The heartland of the Alliance party is likely to greet anti-globalization protesters from Toronto, Seattle, San Francisco, and other liberal metropolises with something other than a heart-felt comradely embrace. Civic boosterism to make the summit as successful in luring tourists and investment as Calgary's winter Olympics, rather than political protest against free global markets, is what Calgarians will specialize in. In sharp contrast, Genoa, an old economy, industrial, blue collar port city, was an Italian bastion of that historic curiosity - a still functioning, hard core, old line communist party that attracted a considerable share of the vote in recent national elections. Genoa thus had an ample supply of comrades to give visiting protestors free room and board, psychological reinforcement, local intelligence, and medical and legal aid as they ventured into and returned from the violence-ridden streets. Such supportive soul mates and cells will be far less abundant in Calgary and even less available as the entourage moves to more rural Canmore or mountainous Kananskis. Moreover, even if Calgarians give the visiting protestors a warm welcome as the latter conduct their teach-ins and demonstrations, would-be civil society voyageurs will wonder what the purpose is in journeying to distant Calgary to listen, learn, and shout sixty miles from the summit site.

The fourth natural Alberta advantage is the summit's location. The mountain venue will be difficult for civil society protesters and terrorists to get to and easy for security forces to defend. For the leaders, it will be difficult to see or to be distracted by anyone on the outside. Demonstrators could indeed congregate in the neighbouring forest, where no one but the most dedicated camera crew would encounter them. But, despite the protestors' preferred Star Wars mythology, there they would not be noble Ewoks valiantly defending their forests against alien, invading imperial storm troopers, but urban trespassers destroying the forests and fragile ecosystems owned by others. Indeed, as they scale the summit mountain, they are less likely to hurt others politically with their catapulting teddy bears than to be hurt by the grizzly bears for whom the mountain is home. The protesting invaders are more likely to require search and rescue services from the Canadian Armed Forces standing guard than to inflict any other inconvenience on them.

A fifth natural advantage comes less from Alberta alone than from New York, Washington, Genoa, and the G7/8 summits of the previous five years. After 11 September, citizens are more willing to accept government explanations for denying access to their leaders and for tightly controlling those who are allowed near them. It will thus be much easier in Alberta than it was in Genoa persuasively to make the point that much of the security apparatus at the summit is not there to deprive citizens of their democratic duty to dissent but rather to protect them, other innocent civilians, and their leaders from very real terrorists. Since their inception, G7/8 summits have offered terrorists a perfect target as they conveniently assemble in one location, for a lengthy period, at a time and place known long in advance. Bush, Britain's prime minister, Tony Blair, Russia's president, Vladimir Putin, and their colleagues virtually all have good historical reason to believe that they might be the target of terrorist attacks. Bin Laden's al-Qaeda network and its affiliates have, not surprisingly, targeted the G7/8 summits for at least the past five years. In Genoa, G8 intelligence indicated, its plan was to fly civilian aircraft with explosives into the ducale palace while the G8 leaders were meeting. The reports prompted the Italian security forces, *inter alia*, to deploy surrounding surface-to-air missiles of the sort that the Pentagon apparently lacked during the attacks of 11 September. This elementary but previously overlooked point about terrorism should now receive the broader public understanding that it deserves. The current mood may help explain why, in a late November 2001 public opinion poll, 77 per cent of Canadians thought the summit should go ahead even with the threat of protest, disruption, and violence, 63 per cent would blame protestors rather than police for any violence that took place, and 44 per cent would be in favour of the police using all necessary force to control demonstrations, even if the result was loss of life.<sup>3</sup>

### 3 INFORM THE PUBLIC

The third step is to provide much more information about the G7/8 on the internet and in other forms.<sup>4</sup> One does not have to be a devotee of Canada's former foreign minister, Lloyd Axworthy, and his faith in the effectiveness of soft power to recognize the enormous imbalance in information available about the G7/8, from its participants on the one hand and from the critics on the other, and the cumulative impact this can have in shaping public attitudes and arousing public action about the G7/8.

The information imbalance reached critical levels in the months immediately following Genoa. Then the world's media were filled with words and images about violence and death, the alleged brutality of the Italian police, and the

continuing imprisonment under cruel conditions of some of the detained protesters. Hundreds of civil society groups reinforced the message by devoting their websites to the cause. On the other side of the story, or even in the moderate middle, lay virtually nothing. The host Italian government added no new information to its summit website after Genoa ended. The Canadian government, as the successor host, launched its summit-specific website immediately after Genoa but loaded virtually no new content for the remainder of 2001. The G7/8, with no secretariat and website of its own, was left defenceless as its reputation was assaulted on the internet and in the information wars. In the world of film documentary, the opposition again struck first. A TVO series on student activists at the summit and a feature film from Italy's leading leftist directors hit the airwaves as Canada assumed the G8 chair.

Because transparency is a basic democratic duty, the G7/8 collectively, perhaps through two or three successive hosts working in tandem, should devise a co-ordinated strategy to redress the imbalance. They should, in similar fashion to the G20, have a single permanent website with a continuous stream of new information to meet the needs of an interested public.<sup>5</sup> The website should include a comprehensive list of the activities of the many dozens of ministerial bodies and official working groups that now make up the vast, invisible system of G7/8 governance - a system that even those inside the G7/8 process have difficulty tracking. It should also provide regular compliance reports on how and how well existing commitments are being met or why they are not and should not be met as circumstances change. Both insiders and outsiders have a similar need, and common democratic obligation, to know and understand how the 'soft law' decisions of their democratically elected leaders are being fulfilled. Indeed, the leaders themselves should be the first to want to know if their summit commitments are being implemented as they intended, and, if not, why not.

#### **4 INCLUDE PARLIAMENTARIANS**

The fourth step is to put parliamentarians into the summit process. For the past half-century, the major intergovernmental institutional systems, from the United Nations to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), have understood that parliamentarians are essential to their work. Canadians and Americans have learned a similar lesson in the management of their unique bilateral relationship and long ago created the Canada-United States Interparliamentary Group. More recently, under the leadership of William Graham as chair of the Canadian House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade (SCFAIT) before he was appointed foreign minister in January 2002, Canada founded an assembly of legislators in the Americas. The democratically and popularly elected leaders, who meet periodically in the plurilateral institutional system of the summit of the Americas, recognize that the ongoing engagement of democratically elected legislators is essential to the realization of their democratic purpose and their many development tasks.

The basic mission of strengthening democracy for its own sake and as a building block for development is no less central to the G8, especially when Chrétien has given such a high priority on the Kananaskis agenda to poverty reduction in Africa and the shared recognition that good governance is now a prerequisite for sustainable development. 'Eurocommunism' and the 'crisis of governability' in the mid-1970s, the democratic revolution in Russia in the 1990s, the ongoing democratic deficit in the European Union, and the need to sustain the democratic revolution confirm that the democratic mission remains central to the work of the G8. As the summit of the Americas and the G7/8 systems are, for Canada and the United States, the only genuine international institutions centred on institutionalized, plurilateral summitry in which all participants are democratically and popularly elected leaders, it is clear that the G8 should join the Americas in bringing parliamentarians into the process in an organized way.

The case for putting parliamentarians in is clear. Legislators explain to citizens the work of, and thinking behind, the actions of the executive branch. They act as sophisticated political sounding boards and give executive branch governors timely advance information about what the citizenry wants or will accept. Legislators are thus, in dynamic democratic practice as well as dry constitutional formula, the great connectors between executive branch governors and their citizens. They are the first line of defence in explaining to citizens and voters what the G8 is doing and why. This is a subject that, as with foreign policy more generally, many have long thought of as too specialized and of little concern to voters preoccupied with immediate domestic issues. But the events at the Quebec City summit of the Americas and at Genoa have made it a matter of broader and more active concern. Moreover, the events of 11 September have given every citizen in G8 countries an immediate interest in combating terrorism and generating global growth - the two other priorities on the Kananaskis agenda. And in many constituencies across Canada and in other G8 countries, the challenge of reducing poverty in Africa and elsewhere in the developing world is of direct relevance to many voters, some of whom are recent arrivals from Africa with intense family ties to those they have left behind. Similar personal connections apply to combating terrorism.

Parliamentarians are, of course, busy people with many existing interparliamentary groups to attend and fearful lest some constituents dismiss their international work as mere junketry or a perk. But the case for the G8 and its core agenda is now sufficiently compelling in the mind of the average voter that the moment to launch a G8 Interparliamentary Group has come. One could wait until the leaders at Kananaskis endorse the creation of such a body and endow it with an authoritative mandate and direction about how to contribute to the system as a whole. Such a top-down sequence would respect the seminal *raison d'être* of the G7/8 summit, but domestic democracy is often a bottom-up affair. There are good grounds for getting an earlier start.

The process could thus begin within Canada, by building on the SCFAIT hearings across the country in the spring of 2002 in preparation for a parliamentary committee report. It could take as its private inspiration the Hockin-Simard Committee's work in the summer of 1985 and the record it set for popular engagement and influence in the foreign policy process.<sup>6</sup> SCFAIT's more recent work on Canadian trade policy provides timely evidence of the valuable contribution that hearings outside of Ottawa can make. Parliamentarians in other G8 countries could be encouraged in parallel efforts. The parliamentary participants could meet together 'at eight' to pool their results and pass them on to leaders at a timely moment prior to, or even on the eve of, Kananaskis. The inaugural meeting of a G8-wide parliamentary gathering could be conveniently hosted in Canada to make it easier for domestically preoccupied congressional representatives and senators from the United States and legislators from Europe and Japan to attend. The meeting of speakers of G8 legislatures, scheduled for September 2002 in Canada, could serve as a launching point for a G8 interparliamentary group.

## 5 GENERATE G8 STUDY CENTRES

The fifth step moves beyond politicians to the people, beginning with a strategic elite that the Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation Forum (APEC) has long realized can play a critical role in information wars and other tasks. The many thousands of citizens who came at their own expense to Genoa, Okinawa, and other summit sites did so not just to protest, but also to participate in the many 'teach-ins' and conferences sponsored by civil society organizations. Their presence reflects a pent-up demand for greater information and understanding of the issues dealt with at summits, how the G7/8 system is treating those issues, and how it might advance the common cause.

That students and citizens should have to journey to distant and now dangerous summits to acquire such information underscores the inadequacy of existing educational institutions in meeting these needs. If the G7/8 system is indeed emerging as an effective centre of global governance, just as important as the United Nations-Bretton Woods system constructed in 1945, then it warrants commensurate attention from the academic community, in the classroom and in regular research.<sup>7</sup> Although there is a wealth of expertise and research on the subject, it is largely episodic and individual, conducted in isolation and diffusely disseminated, rather than a dedicated, continuous enterprise, mounted by teams of researchers and supported by major centres throughout and beyond the G8. It thus lacks the critical mass, cumulative quality, and visibility needed to inform the public, enrich the policy community, and contribute to an intellectual mass that could strengthen the summit system and its major thrusts.

It is curious that the G7/8 still lacks the equivalent of the APEC study centre network. APEC is, like the G7/8, an international institutional system with a transregional membership and comprehensive agenda centred on an annual, plurilateral leaders meeting and supported by a host of ministerial meetings and official working groups. Even without the G7/8's democratic character and commitments, APEC has involved civil society at many levels in its work. The network of APEC study centres is a key element. (Each member country hosts at least one such centre.) The centres conduct research on APEC and the issues confronting it, contribute to the current APEC agenda, and are available to take on analytical tasks that APEC leaders may choose to entrust to them. Although the centres do not provide an analytic secretariat for APEC, they help deepen the intellectual foundation and expert connections of its work in the same way that the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), with its large formal secretariat, has long done for the Euro-Atlantic democratic world. The degree of direct government support for, and guidance to, the APEC centres varies considerably, depending in part on the democratic character of individual national regimes.

The circumstances are ripe for equipping the G7/8 with a similar analytic capability and intellectual support group. G8 leaders at Kananaskis should announce their support for a network of G8 study centres in each G8 region or member country, offer the initial financial investment to ensure their speedy creation and operation, and suggest the initial research themes on which they would most welcome proposals. These might include establishing relationships with United Nations networks, reducing poverty in Africa, and monitoring the implementation of the G8's own action programme on Africa.

## **6 SPONSOR G8 SCHOLARSHIPS**

To build capacity for a future generation of scholarship and to give the current generation of students a much deeper understanding of the G7/8 system, it is important to devise the means by which the best students from within and outside G8 countries can study, on a year-round basis, the G8 community and how it can be enriched. Thus far, G8 efforts have been exceedingly fragile. For example, at the 1998 Birmingham summit, a small group of sponsored high school students came to the summit and conducted study sessions alongside the leaders, with whom they met briefly. The exercise was useful as a photo op to reinforce the G8's new interest in an education agenda, but no lasting legacy - for example, national and international networks of mock G8 summits equivalent to the mock United Nations assemblies and NATO councils, in operation for many years - came of it. Instead, the year round educational burden has fallen on the regular university and secondary school curricula, where there are many courses on globalization, global governance, and the United Nations from a variety of perspectives but virtually none on the G7/8 system.

The required year-round educational effort must begin with the basics, that is, the most promising students must be given first hand, intensive exposure to the other members of the G8. Because of demographics and longstanding Commonwealth, francophonie, and more recent Fulbright scholarship programmes, Canadian students collectively should have no trouble acquiring a sound understanding of Britain, France, and the United States. Family ties might add Italy and perhaps Germany to the list. But it cannot be assumed that even the most advanced Canadian university students will have an intimate knowledge, intuitive understanding, or even initial awareness of Japan, Russia, or the European Union as a whole. The same holds for other G8 countries when their students strive to reach across entrenched regional and linguistic divides. Existing bilateral programmes are inadequate to the task, especially as the proliferating G8 system moves to address the global challenges of the twenty first century.

An obvious solution is for the G8 leaders at Kananaskis to create a scholarship programme similar in structure to the Commonwealth, francophonie, and Fulbright programmes, which have long proven their worth. The programme should, in a spirit of outreach, be open to students from non-G8 countries, to enlarge the understanding of the G8 beyond its members and to enrich the ability of those inside to assess the G8's impact on the global community as a whole. The G8 education ministers forum, born on the road to the Okinawa summit of 2000, could be assigned the task of developing such a scholarship programme, in appropriate dialogue with subfederal governments. Such an assignment would be an appropriate part of the G8's future work, especially now that they have taken up education in its many dimensions as a permanent part of their agenda.

## **7 EDUCATE THE CITIZENRY**

The seventh step is to reach out directly to educate students and the citizenry as a whole, with short-term measures designed to meet the immediate information and education demands. A minimal task for the current and subsequent hosting teams is to devise an organized programme of information about G8 issues, institutions, and members that will secure and maintain audience interest and cumulate in a coherent whole.

One attractive vehicle for making such an educational programme readily accessible to many around the world is to place it on the internet, in video, audio, and text form, in as many G8 and world major languages as possible. The site should include a multilingual, organized, semester-long programme of serious teaching and learning. A website that merely tells schoolchildren how to say hello in all summit languages may be a useful start, but it is far from a serious response to the need.

## **8 MESSAGE THE MEDIA**

The seventh step is to massage, as well as manage (as the term is understood in the standard communications strategy sense) the media. Most of the world learns about the G7/8 through the media, overwhelmingly from the coverage of and at annual summits. The result can be singularly limited. At Genoa, Jean Chrétien publicly complained about the media's fascination with pictures of a single burning car. When word was first heard of the death of an anarchist, virtually all of the 3,000 assembled media abandoned their coverage of the summit to focus on that single event. The collective statement of regret about the death issued by the leaders was essentially inaudible and invisible against the full might of the media and the deluge of words and images they produced.

Newsworthy events for the mainstream media will always put bodies, bullets, bombs, and blood over politicians talking and issuing co-operative communiqués. Indeed, the elite of the summit media corps, from the United States White House press corps to their equivalents in other G8 countries, come to the summit in part on an 'assassination watch,' in case their leader is assaulted and does not survive. In the face of such facts, some summit managers are

occasionally tempted to limit media access in ways that might facilitate media management and communications strategy.

Such instincts, as Rambouillet proved, are at best a waste of effort and at worst counterproductive. It is inconceivable that the public or the press in eight major democratic polities and throughout Europe would allow their leaders to gather for two or three days of public business, of potentially the highest importance, without a media presence operating with sufficient freedom to record and report on the event rapidly and accurately. Currently fashionable, all-too-clever ideas to allow only a few pool journalists onto the mountain or to have only the Canadian host rather than each national delegation brief the media will produce a predictably negative reaction from the attending media corps. If a minimum democratic duty is transparency, then pondering ways to restrict media access is akin to shooting oneself in the foot.

And for the leaders themselves, limiting media access would be immensely counterproductive because it would emasculate much of the unique power of the summit. The summit offers a singular occasion for leaders - members of the world's loneliest profession - to deliberate privately and share their deepest hopes, fears, and ideas, far from the madding media and masses. But it also provides a powerful collective 'bully pulpit' from which to set new directions for the global community - to highlight new challenges, themes, issues, and interconnections and to articulate new norms and principles in response. That it can do so is suggested by the literature on compliance with summit commitments. Leaders can get desired welfare outcomes even without mobilizing their own policy instruments to implement actions themselves.<sup>8</sup> In short, governments, organizations, and societies can and will respond on their own, if only they know the direction in which G7/8 leaders want them to go. An essential part of the dynamic, and the broader process of monitoring and mobilizing pressure to ensure compliance with even hard summit commitments, is to have the media on hand to give leaders the global audience they need to get their collective message out and to help ensure that they and their partners live up to the promises made.

That is why since the beginning leaders have basked in the glow of media attention, whether from the 400 who gathered at Rambouillet in November 1975 or the more than 10,000, largely Japanese, accredited at Okinawa in 2000. The physical care and feeding of the attending media corps, as much as the content of the communications strategy aimed at them, is vital. At Denver in 1997 the media centre was equipped with on-site massage facilities - a useful therapy rather than a frivolous luxury for those who must work, often round the clock, for three days straight to get their information in and their messages out through all the time zones and across major languages around the world. Getting enough information to deliver a useful and credible message can be a major challenge and explains why, at the margins, the media rush to cover such relatively easy alternatives as burning cars, protests, and death in the street.

To combat such tendencies, an open, easily accessible, adequately equipped media centre, fully functioning round-the-clock, is essential. Closing portions of the facility when the local service providers reach their normal break times or at night is an act of cultural insensitivity that cripples the ability of G8 governors to get their globally relevant message out. Global civil society activists with their hundreds of websites and more traditional media outlets do not take half or more of the summit off.

There is also a need for more adequate briefings, the frequency and quality of which have declined at summits of late. Following the Italian example, the process could start well before the summit with the release to the public of the major thematic paper prepared to guide summit deliberations. More extensive briefings by sherpas and others in national and media capitals in the week or two prior to the summit could contribute much. The host and other countries should assume the burden, traditionally borne by the Japanese and European Union, of providing on-site briefings immediately before the summit opens in which they outline what they expect to achieve. Documents should be available far enough in advance to allow the media to read and to digest them. Briefings by the host and all members after every working session and meal should be the norm. They should be timed and spaced to allow even small media contingents to attend as many as possible, to ensure that they are not being 'spun' by a single source.

The briefings should also be broadcast and webcast to the world in real time, with a transcription available shortly after. This would allow those busy at concurrent briefings to access all briefings by archived video. It would reduce the number of journalists who have to be present at each briefing or even at the summit itself. It would also enable the whole world to hear the message more directly, without the filter of the media corps with their own and their editors' particular preoccupations at the time. Transcriptions of the webcasts would enrich, broaden, and diversify the public record of G8 summits. Traditionally only the United States can be counted on to provide such transcripts to all of the attending media corps, and then only those briefings given by United States government spokespersons. Transcriptions on the web would allow those on the other side of the digital divide, equipped with only first generation internet-computer facilities, to access the information as readily as their privileged webcast



counterparts. Together, this low cost, non-intrusive innovation would do much to make the summit available to the wider world.

## **9 CLARIFY THE COMMUNIQUÉ**

The next step is to clarify the communiqué to give it greater credibility and to make it intelligible to all who have a stake in what it says. At the summit, the briefing programme centres around hints about the final communiqué, while the summit itself culminates with its public presentation, the ultimate moment in the great drama of every G7/8 summit. Not surprisingly, the communiqué has been the subject of intense debate since the beginning: what should it contain; should it even exist?

The first step is to keep the communiqué, as a minimum transparency measure, to inform citizens about the decisions of their democratically elected leaders, even if those citizens cannot participate in the deliberations that produce it. Despite the comforting rhetoric that the G8 is merely a caucus-like 'ginger group' rather than a global directoire, the reality is that the leaders have generated a large and growing number of ambitious and significant communiqué-encoded commitments in recent years, and what is more they have complied with them to a rising and high degree.<sup>9</sup> In short, communiqués and the commitments they codify do count.

Moreover, communiqués are consumed by a vast audience. Despite the prevailing cynical folklore, it is simply not true that more people are involved in preparing the communiqués than in reading them when they are unveiled. The 3,000 media on site at Genoa and the number who hit the relevant portion of the websites where the communiqués are mounted confirm that the communiqués receive at least a passing glance from millions around the world. Their contents may not always be reported in approving detail by the media or scrutinized by the mass public, but officials use them as high-level authoritative weapons to help get what they want. Here the problem is not with the inattentiveness of the audience but with the quality of the product.

Communiqués should be written with a clarity and concreteness that make them comprehensible to the average citizen. They should be more action oriented and should whenever possible specify targets and timetables for accomplishing what the leaders say they want done. They should also be more honest in identifying new or enhanced promises instead of merely repeating promises from previous years. They should acknowledge frankly where and why last year's promises were not kept. If leaders do not provide their own conscientious, self-correcting capacity and critique, then they cannot blame civil society protesters for claiming for themselves alone this part of the democratic turf. One solution, used at the Quebec City summit of the Americas and in part by past G7/8 summits, is to publish with the crisp, clear communiqué a detailed action plan containing specifics of what the leaders intend to accomplish. Another useful addition, following the tentative start made by G8 foreign ministers in 2001 on the conflict prevention agenda, would be to release, on the eve of or at the summit, a report card on last year's commitments, what they meant in practice, and to what extent and how they were kept. What most assuredly will not work is to move back to the world of secret agreements secretly arrived at, to adopt Ronald Reagan's idea of scrapping the carefully negotiated, leader-endorsed, enriched, and adjusted communiqué in favour of a brief, incomplete, vague statement thrown together from nothing on the summit's last night.

## **10 INCLUDE CIVIL SOCIETY ON-SITE**

The tenth step is to bring civil society into the summit itself as the summit of the Americas did in Quebec City and as the G8 started to do at Okinawa in 2000. A multi-stakeholder civil society forum, led by and involving parliamentarians, could meet simultaneously with the leaders, or, with minimal overlap, just prior to and at the start of the summit if some fear lingers that their presence would detract from the media limelight in which the leaders want to bask alone. Whatever the precise formula, the media and the leaders interested in civil society views would have something to report on and to respond to other than those shouting slogans on the streets outside.

An important part of this innovation would be for the G8 leaders collectively, and not just the host leader or others at their individual discretion, to meet with the leaders of the civil society forum. If the leaders of Canada, the United States, Japan, and Russia can find the time at their APEC sessions to meet with the APEC Business Council, they can surely find time as part of a standard-sized G8 summit to meet with civil society leaders of a much more inclusive, multi-stakeholder sort. Even as they properly reach out to leaders of international organizations and non-member countries at the start of their summit, G8 leaders should also reach down to their own citizens, to hear at first hand their views and to explain the desires, strategies, and constraints they as leaders bring to the summit.

## CONCLUSION

In his concluding news conference at the end of the first summit Canada attended, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau captured the essential purpose of the G7/8: 'the success of these conferences are ... not to be judged by the solution of individual economic problems or by the setting up of new institutions or by the agreement on any particular resolution. Their success will be judged by whether we can influence the behaviour of people in our democracies and perhaps even as important the behaviour of people on the outside who are watching us, in a way in which they will have confidence that our type of economic and political freedom permits us to solve problems.'<sup>10</sup> Trudeau and his colleagues, in the first generation of G7 summitry and those that followed, succeeded in this task. They solved the crisis of governability and stagflation, stopped Eurocommunism within the G7 community, waged the new cold war of the early 1980s, and set the stage for the democratic revolution in Russia, central and eastern Europe, and elsewhere in the 1990s. They did so by reaching downward to their own citizens and outward to those in the global community, with dialogue and persuasion, to give their decisions the sensitivity, understanding, and legitimacy they needed for maximum effect.

The twenty-first century has bred a novel and equally formidable set of challenges for the third generation of G8 leaders. But it has also brought new instruments of communication and engagement and new constituencies of civil society allies to help them meet the challenge. It remains to be seen if Chrétien and his contemporaries will be as inventive as Trudeau and his generation were in mobilizing these instruments to secure equal success. Their choice will do much to determine if Kananaskis goes down in Canadian and G8 history as a summit in retreat or as a summit reaching out.

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## Notes

- 1 The deans of summit scholars, Robert Putnam and Nicholas Bayne, rank Montebello among the least successful summits. Within the media, Montebello is remembered for the tendency of the Americans to helicopter back to neighbouring Ottawa to conduct their own media briefing, thus defeating Canadian efforts to manage the message and ensuring that the summit was seen through American eyes only. See Robert Putnam and Nicholas Bayne, *Hanging Together: Co-operation and Conflict in the Seven-Power Summits* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press 1987); and Bayne, *Hanging in There: The G7 and G8 Summit in Maturity and Renewal* (Aldershot: Ashgate 2000).
- 2 Henry Kissinger, 'The industrial democracies and the future,' address to Pittsburgh World Affairs Council, 11 November 1975, *Department of State Bulletin* 73(1 December 1975), 757-64.
- 3 'Since September 11,' *Maclean's*, 31 December 2001/7 January 2002, 39.
- 4 Nicholas Bayne, 'Continuity and leadership in an age of globalisation,' in Michael Hodges, John Kirton, and Joseph Daniels, eds, *The G8's Role in the New Millennium* (Aldershot: Ashgate 1999), 40.
- 5 Peter Hajnal, *The G7/8 System: Evolution, Role, Documentation* (Aldershot: Ashgate 1999).
- 6 *Independence and Internationalism: Report of the Standing Joint Committee on Canada's International Relations* (Ottawa: Supply and Services Canada 1986).
- 7 John Kirton, 'Explaining G8 effectiveness,' in Michael Hodges, John Kirton, and Joseph Daniels, eds, *The G8's Role in the New Millennium* (Aldershot: Ashgate 1999), 45-68.
- 8 George Von Furstenberg and Joseph Daniels, 'Policy undertakings by the seven "summit" countries: ascertaining the degree of compliance,' *Carnegie-Rochester Conference Series on Public Policy* 35 (1991), 267-308.
- 9 Andrew Baker, 'The G-7 as a global "ginger group": plurilateralism and four-dimensional diplomacy,' *Global Governance* 6(April-June 2000), 165-89.
- 10 Pierre Trudeau, 'News conference,' San Juan, Puerto Rico, 28 June 1976.