

## C H A P T E R 1

# F rom Memramcook to Rideau Hall

The installation of Roméo Adrien LeBlanc as the first governor general of Canada from the Maritimes, and the first Acadian, took place in the Senate chamber of the Parliament of Canada on February 8, 1995. His nomination and installation were the occasion for the usual array of public commentaries, both positive and negative.

Ever since 1952, when Vincent Massey was appointed the first Canadian-born governor general, questions have arisen about the possible partisan political loyalties of the individual chosen. The office, after all, is neither hereditary nor elective. As one political scientist has remarked, the governor general has been for a considerable time the “non-political representative of the people selected by their chief political officer.”<sup>1</sup> Inevitably, such a paradoxical arrangement has meant that appointments to the position have almost never received universal approval. To what extent did the choice of the prime minister of the day represent nothing more than the wish of a partisan politician to reward past



Official photograph of Roméo as governor general, 1995

services to the political party in power? Furthermore, by 1995, the office itself was being questioned. For some, having a governor general was a waste of public money, and many considered it to be the final colonial tie to the United Kingdom, which badly needed cutting. For others, it was the process of selection that was flawed. If the governor general was supposed to be without political prejudice, then surely the selection procedures should be visibly non-partisan? All these views were expressed when, on November 22, 1994, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien announced Roméo LeBlanc as the successor to the Right Honourable Ramon Hnatyshyn as governor general of Canada.

There was a good deal of positive commentary on the nomination, made the stronger because of the reaction of Preston Manning, leader of the Reform Party, to the announcement. Manning immediately criticized the appointment on the floor of the Commons, calling it both “unwise and inappropriate.” As Susan Delacourt pointed out in the next morning’s *Globe and Mail*, “Never in the 44 years since Canadians have been appointed to the largely ceremonial position has the choice of the Queen’s representative been opposed in such a manner in the Commons.”<sup>2</sup> Since, by tradition, the representative of the Crown cannot speak in the House of Commons, it had always been considered that such an attack in that place of privilege would be unfair. Taken aback, the prime minister responded by noting that Manning’s comment was “unprecedented,” and remarked that LeBlanc had decided to forgo his parliamentary pension during his tenure as governor general. Lucien Bouchard, head of the Bloc Québécois and leader of the Opposition, welcomed the appointment, and said that it showed a general “open-mindedness towards francophones.” Outside the Commons, Bouchard commented that Manning’s remark was “cheap,” and that the prime minister’s choice was “a good appointment and shows that Mr. Chrétien is a true federalist, who has a sense of the country he

lives in and defends, Canada.”<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile senior Conservative senator Lowell Murray observed that anybody appointed to the position needed some background in public life, and thought that Roméo LeBlanc would “do just fine.”<sup>4</sup>

As the *Globe and Mail* pointed out, much of the reaction sprang from the temper of the House of Commons, where the Progressive Conservative Party (Sir John A. Macdonald’s legacy to the polity he helped found in 1867) held only two seats and the Bloc Québécois, whose *raison d’être* was the dissolution of Canada, was the official opposition, with 54 seats. The western-based Reform Party had 52 seats, and the New Democratic Party nine. The Liberal Party had 177 seats, 100 of them from Ontario. As one noted political scientist remarked, this mix made not only for an “unhealthy balance within the government majority,” but also for an imbalance within the federal system as a whole.<sup>5</sup> The election of 1993, which produced this Parliament, revealed regional discontents with particular provincial problems and a national disappointment with the overall performance of the federal government. As well, in the background of many minds loomed the knowledge that another referendum on separatism was due within the year. Peter Donolo, Chrétien’s spokesman, pointed out that the prime minister had always considered himself a French Canadian first and foremost, not a Quebecker who was, for the present moment, a Canadian. The appointment of an Acadian as governor general, therefore, in the view of the prime minister, reinforced the idea that the “French fact in Canada is not limited to Quebec.”<sup>6</sup> Lucien Bouchard underlined this aspect of the appointment of LeBlanc when he remarked that, during the referendum debates which were to occur within the year, “Mr. Chrétien is going to be able to say...Look...the Prime Minister of Canada is a francophone, the governor general is francophone, the speaker of the House of Commons is francophone, the leader of the opposition is francophone.”<sup>7</sup> Manning

remained undaunted in his criticism, and defended himself by saying that he was merely articulating widespread public cynicism about the way in which the governor general was selected and the “special perks and privileges attached to the office, such as the exemption of income tax and things of that nature.”<sup>8</sup> The *Vancouver Sun* supported Manning, suggesting that, “regardless of his personal qualifications,” the appointment of LeBlanc represented “another lamentable step in the debasement of the office.”<sup>9</sup>

The day after the nomination, the *Toronto Star* published an analysis of the appointment by their Ottawa correspondent, Edison Stewart, a man who had been born and brought up in Moncton. He opened his article: “His profile is so low that, when word leaked out he was to be Canada’s next governor general, the country’s national news agency distributed a picture of someone else. No one noticed the error for twelve hours.”<sup>10</sup> Stewart turned to Canadian historian Jacques Monet, then president of the University of Sudbury and the acknowledged authority on the Crown in Canada, for his opinion on the wisdom of the appointment. Monet thought that LeBlanc was “a good choice to continue the line that stretches back centuries to Champlain in 1620.” Monet commented that the governor general-designate was “probably not as widely known” as some who had been previously appointed, but that he had “all the qualities one would look for. He is a man of great integrity.”

Stewart continued his article with a brief account of LeBlanc’s career. He had little space, however, to go into much background detail as to why a relatively unknown public figure would receive this appointment. Stewart’s article noted that LeBlanc had been born in Memramcook, New Brunswick, in 1927, and had worked as a teacher and journalist and then as a reporter for Radio-Canada. His service as press secretary to two prime ministers, Lester Pearson and Pierre Trudeau, was also mentioned. Stewart

summed up his career in Parliament, beginning with his election to the House of Commons in 1972, and referred to the rest of his long service in the Cabinet as minister of fisheries. It is as much a reflection of the lack of interest of “Upper Canada” in the Maritimes in general, and in that industry in particular, that LeBlanc’s tenure as Canada’s longest-serving fisheries minister was so little known or appreciated. One of his many achievements during these years, was his aid in establishing Canada’s two-hundred-mile fishing limit and the shaping of the international Law of the Sea. In the opinion of former fishery union president Richard Cashin, LeBlanc showed himself “a good human being and [had been] an outstanding minister. He brought dignity and respect to people who worked in the industry.”

The reaction in the French press, both in Quebec and in the Maritimes, was as mixed as that in the House of Commons: considerable praise and pointed criticism. Senator Louis Robichaud, who from 1960 to 1970 had served as the first elected Acadian premier of New Brunswick, thought that LeBlanc had every qualification necessary for the vice-regal position.<sup>11</sup> In its weekend edition, on Saturday, November 26, *La Presse* summarized the dominant feeling in New Brunswick, particularly but not exclusively, among Acadians. It was, according to the reporter, almost impossible to discover a word of criticism, even among the few Conservatives he could find in the province.<sup>12</sup> One source remarked that Roméo LeBlanc had as much support among anglophones as francophones. The reporter ended by quoting Nelson Landry, editor of the Acadian daily *L’Acadie Nouvelle*, who gave as his opinion that Roméo LeBlanc was “a governor general of the people! That is the best title for [someone] who truly listens to people, who seems as much at ease with the queen as with the humblest fisherman.” In terms of opinion in Quebec, the appointment was at first seen as reasonable enough. *La Presse*, already noted, emphasized LeBlanc’s Acadian roots.

*Le Soleil* announced the appointment on November 22, with a brief but accurate resumé of his career, and on November 24, it published a report of LeBlanc's decision to forgo his parliamentary pension while governor general.<sup>13</sup> The newspaper considered that it "was a decision that did him credit and would surprise no one who had followed his career."

A clear division in Quebec public opinion appeared, however, with an editorial by Michel Vastel in *Le Soleil*, published on November 25. It was a corrosive personal attack, not only on LeBlanc's three immediate predecessors and LeBlanc himself, but also on the prime minister. Ed Schreyer, governor general from 1979 to 1984, was categorized as "the defeated premier from Manitoba." Jeanne Sauvé, whose term was from 1984 to 1990, was described as one of Pierre Trudeau's ministerial failures. Ray Hnatyshyn, governor general from 1990 to 1995, was defined as "the Conservative rejected by Saskatchewan's electorate." Vastel considered LeBlanc a mediocre journalist with no great reputation in the Liberal Party, and someone of whom Trudeau had no very high opinion. The root of Vastel's bad humour was made explicit at the end of the editorial. "Historians will perhaps note," Vastel wrote,

*that since the arrival of Jean Chrétien at the head of the Government of Canada, the speaker of the House of Commons is a Franco-Ontarian, Gib Parent; the president of the Senate a Franco-Manitoban, Gil Molgat; and the governor general an Acadian, Roméo LeBlanc. Is it because those Québécois who were asked by Jean Chrétien, such as Jean Béliveau, refused to serve his administration? Or is it because it's necessary at all cost to wipe out of the memory of the world that Canada was born from political agreement between Québec and the rest of the country?*

Vastel concluded by warning Bouchard that, “in guaranteeing this historic precedent without reservation, [he] approves in advance all kinds of ‘alternates’ between the Québécois on one hand, and anglophones, Aboriginals, representatives of visible minorities, the handicapped, and francophones from outside Québec on the other.”<sup>14</sup>

The time between the announcement of the nomination and the installation is largely spent by the governor general–designate in preparing the speech that he or she will deliver on that occasion. As well as the necessity of saying something about what he hoped could be achieved during the coming years in office, his speech needed to provide, if obliquely, some counter to the criticism raised by the nomination. LeBlanc had already brushed aside the accusation that his appointment was the worst sort of political patronage. On being told of Manning’s comment, he remarked, “I didn’t know that the world of politics was excluded from consideration for any appointment that might come forward.”<sup>15</sup> He had made no comment, however, on the more serious allegations that his appointment was to an office that was an expensive and unnecessary part of Canada’s constitution, that it had been the result of a process much in need of reform, or that his appointment had broken an “unwritten convention” of the Canadian federation. These more theoretical attacks on the governor general–designate were combined with an assault from another more personally relevant quarter, that is, from among those in the Acadian population who considered his acceptance of the appointment a betrayal of his heritage.

In recent decades, Canadians have become more and more intrigued by the diversity of customs and traditions the country’s people cherish. It is the more surprising, therefore, that the Acadian heritage is, except in the Maritimes, relatively unknown. In most Canadian history textbooks, there is only a brief account of the eighteenth-century Deportation and no reference to the

complex heritage upon which the Acadian sense of identity developed. That heritage reaches back to the early seventeenth century, with the 1604 founding by the French of the colony known as Acadia. That year, on an island at the mouth of the St. Croix River, a river which today forms part of the Maine–New Brunswick border, 79 men spent an appalling winter. Samuel de Champlain was among them. In his journals, he recorded the deep snow and the temperatures that froze everything but the cheap Spanish wine. Cider was given out by the pound. He wrote in detail about the dreadful death toll from scurvy that the settlement suffered. Of the 79 men who saw the snow fall on October 6, 1604, only 44 were left alive when the spring melt began in 1605, and 20 of those were sick almost to death. From this disastrous beginning, the Acadian community grew, surviving an extraordinary number of vicissitudes to earn recognition as “the Acadian people—le peuple acadien” from the secretary-general of the United Nations in 1994.<sup>16</sup> At the time of this significant acknowledgement, there were over 300,000 Acadians in New Brunswick, well over one-third of the population of that province. Further, there were more than two million people claiming Acadian descent, some living in the other Maritime provinces, some in Quebec, some elsewhere in Canada, some even further afield, in France and in the United States, all of whom cherished their Acadian heritage.

Close to four centuries had passed between that first expedition and the recognition of Acadian identity by the United Nations. For the first century, the territory that France claimed as Acadia in 1604, lands that today make up New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and parts of northern Maine and southeastern Quebec, was from 1620 also claimed by England as Nova Scotia. Throughout the seventeenth century, these imperial powers squabbled over this territory being developed by the Acadians. The colony, referred to in the international treaties of the time

as “Acadia or Nova Scotia–l’Acadie ou la Nouvelle Écosse,” changed hands frequently. By 1713, in the Treaty of Utrecht, it was finally ceded by France to Great Britain, but its boundaries remained a matter of dispute. By this time, the Acadian identity was clearly formed and had become something other than a mere reflection of France or an echo of the French colony along the St. Lawrence River. The Acadian population spoke French but, because of strong economic ties with Massachusetts, had people in their villages who also spoke English. The Catholic religion was of considerable importance in Acadians’ lives, but they had little tolerance for priestly control. One commentator called them “the most Protestant of Catholics.” With a strong mixed economy and a growing population, as well as a strong belief in their right to live on lands their families had cultivated for close to three generations, the Acadians accepted the arrival of the English in 1713 as something that ought not to disrupt their lives too profoundly.

After 1730, both English and French authorities, whether in London or Paris, Boston or Quebec City, referred to the Acadians as *les français neutres*, “the neutral French.” It was generally recognized that the settlers had sworn an oath of allegiance to the British, on the understanding that they would not be required to fight against France. Unfortunately, by the 1740s, the struggle between France and England for the dominance of North America became increasingly bitter and deadly. As the Acadian population increased and cultivated more land, the land itself became more important as a border between New England and New France. Before the declaration of yet one more war in 1756, there was a concerted move by Massachusetts, Nova Scotia, and imperial officials in London (through a naval presence in Halifax) to secure control of the strategic “continental cornice,” the land between the northeastern limits of New England and the French position on Île Royale (Cape Breton Island) and Île

Saint-Jean (Prince Edward Island). The colonial authorities in Nova Scotia and Massachusetts were convinced that the Acadians would break their oath of neutrality. In the spring of 1755, matters came to a head and the lieutenant-governor of Nova Scotia, Colonel Charles Lawrence, demanded that the Acadians swear an unequivocal oath of loyalty to the British Crown, without any reservation of neutrality. They refused, and the decision was made to deport the Acadians from lands on which they had lived for three or more generations, to “distribute,” in the words of the recorded decision, the Acadians “amongst the Several Colonies on the Continent.”

And distributed they were! Some 15,000 to 18,000 people were shipped to the other British colonies in North America, an act that effectively destroyed the first Acadian society. No matter what judgment one makes as to the military necessity of the Deportation, let alone its morality, it had two quite unequivocal results: it sent the majority of the Acadian population of 1755 into exile, and reaction to that event has coloured the Acadian sense of themselves, to a greater or lesser degree, ever since. The sense of Acadian identity after the Deportation of 1755 was different from what it had been before that date. It was built not only on the memories of the few who had remained exiles near their former homes, but also on the experiences of those who eventually returned from the places where they had been sent by force. These Acadians, the link between the pre- and post-Deportation Acadian communities, rebuilt their lives after 1755 within lands that became part of Canada, but not on the lands that their ancestors had cultivated for six generations before their exile. The continued development of Acadian identity during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries wove together a rich heritage of cultural, social, and political customs with new traditions, invented because of the reorganization of life on different lands and the reaction after the exile to the presence of new societies as

neighbours. Yet because of the cataclysmic nature of the events of 1755, its memory, like a prevailing wind, shaped the development of Acadian identity over the next two centuries.

The preservation and growth of an Acadian identity after 1764, the year in which their exile was officially ended, was difficult. In Nova Scotia, and later in New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island, the Acadians worked as a collectivity, as a people with a sense of their distinctiveness, as members of communities with specific and deeply held beliefs in their unique identity. But they were now a minority where once they had been a majority, and the struggle to preserve their language and culture was not to be easy. There were always conflicting opinions about the best way to confront their problems, how to improve their circumstances, and how to gain recognition and respect from the more powerful majority.

It is in light of this heritage, then, that the nomination of Roméo LeBlanc as governor general was received with marked enthusiasm by most Maritime Acadians, but angered others. One or two letters were published in the Quebec and Acadian press in December 1994 excoriating LeBlanc for accepting the position, and a few others appeared after his installation. Their general message was the same: how could an Acadian forget it was the British who had deported them, who had ripped people from their homelands, split up families, and driven men, women, and children into exile? To add insult to injury, the British Crown had never apologized, and now an Acadian was to act as the representative of that same Crown in Canada.<sup>17</sup> The writer of one letter, published at the time of the installation, said that he would find it impossible, if the occasion ever arose, to shake the hand of someone, such as the governor general, who could forget the injury done to his own forebears 240 years earlier.

The installation of a governor general is, along with the opening of Parliament, one of the few occasions of official pageantry

in Canada. It is also an occasion for the muting of partisan politics, a moment when the idea of a national community is made visible, and beliefs that the country holds in common are emphasized rather than the many issues that divide it. In 1995, the new governor general faced a greater need than had his predecessors to defend the necessity and relevance of the office: Preston Manning, for example, maintained his criticism of the appointment by boycotting the occasion. The general tone of the installation, however, was positive. A number of those who would naturally attend assembled in the Senate Chamber: members of the federal Cabinet; former prime ministers Pierre Trudeau and Kim Campbell; former Progressive Conservative leader Robert Stanfield; and Gilles Ducesse, as representative of Lucien Bouchard. The premier of Prince Edward Island, Catherine Callbeck, and the premier of New Brunswick, Frank McKenna, were present, as well as the former premier of New Brunswick, Senator Louis Robichaud. Justice of the Supreme Court, the Honourable Gérard LaForest administered the oath of office, and the choir *Jeunes Chanteurs d'Acadie* provided the music. In the audience were many Acadians from all walks of life, who marvelled, as one Acadian journalist wrote, that one of their number would be governor general before there was an Acadian cardinal.<sup>18</sup> The prime minister gave a brief summary of LeBlanc's political career, remarking that he had been in public life since 1972, when he was elected to the House of Commons as the MP for Westmorland–Kent. Chrétien recalled that except for a very brief hiatus, when Joe Clark was prime minister, LeBlanc served from 1974 to 1984 as a minister of the Crown and, for eight of these years, had been the minister responsible for Canada's fisheries, and thus the nation's longest-serving fisheries minister. Summoned to the Senate in 1984, he became its speaker in December 1993. The prime minister pointed out that much of the governor general's time is spent with visiting heads

of state, who usually want to talk about politics, and LeBlanc was well prepared for such an activity. Chrétien concluded, speaking directly to LeBlanc, by saying, "I have known you as a man who has not sought glory for himself, but has simply strived to serve the people in Canada."<sup>19</sup>

It is always difficult to speak after having received fulsome praise, even if the praise is deserved. It is even more difficult to do so when assuming a position that is, above all, symbolic, and whose occupant is supposed to avoid making political comments, and at a time when a major part of the country is about to hold a referendum on whether it should separate. To the scarcely veiled astonishment of the national press, LeBlanc delivered a speech that drew considerable approval from most quarters and little outright hostility. He achieved this result by weaving together his perception of Acadian history, the personal experiences of his youth in what became Canada's only bilingual province, and his understanding of particular Canadian national traits into a vision of what he wanted to emphasize during his tenure as governor general. He achieved it also because, at a time when political nerves in Canada were rasped raw by bitter relationships between party élites, when the financial picture was not particularly rosy, and when ethnic rivalries seemed more sharp-edged than usual, he spoke without pretension about what he thought was right with the state of the nation.

In some ways, LeBlanc benefited from the fact that he was relatively unknown, that his political career lay in the past, and that his achievements had not left rancorous debate in their wake. Marc Lalonde, not known for sentimentality or much given to expressing emotion in public, described LeBlanc as someone more at home on the wharves where fishermen worked than in the "salons of Montreal." Other commentators remarked that LeBlanc was not known for being a publicity hound. The *Toronto Star* considered that he "more than rose to the occasion." The

*Globe and Mail* offered no major criticism, but reported that his ambition appeared to be to honour “the average Canadian”<sup>20</sup> and “take on the role with a note of informality.”<sup>21</sup> *La Presse* opened its report by saying that it was “a moment of historical irony when an Acadian, Roméo LeBlanc, yesterday became the 25th representative in Canada of a Crown that had deported his ancestors.”<sup>22</sup> As for the speech itself, the newspaper merely noted that it addressed the usual themes of tolerance, compassion, and the Canadian mosaic. *Le Soleil* and *Le Devoir* were more enthusiastic, and both reported the speech more fully than *La Presse* and commented more explicitly on its content. *Le Soleil* chose to emphasize LeBlanc’s vigorous assertion that, “if there was one group of Canadians who could have let their past poison their future, it’s the Acadians,” and continued with his description of the exile. “In the middle of the eighteenth century they were wrenched from their homes and deported to distant shores.”<sup>23</sup> *Le Soleil* also included praise for LeBlanc from former Cabinet colleagues Serge Joyal and Marc Lalonde. *Le Devoir* chose to emphasize the anecdotes that LeBlanc related about his childhood, living in a village where English Protestants and French Catholics farmed side by side, each coming to the aid of the other in times of crisis.<sup>24</sup> What seemed to baffle the newspapers, but also to stifle criticism, was that the speech seemed a homespun homily, delivered by an unassuming person who, as the *Toronto Star* reported, “had moved many in the stuffy Cabinet chamber to tears.”<sup>25</sup>

It was also helpful that LeBlanc’s Acadian heritage was viewed with something close to approval throughout Canada. While few Canadians, except Maritimers, had much knowledge about the Acadian people—except for the story of the Deportation—LeBlanc’s presence attested to the Acadians’ survival as a community, which seemed a good “third act” to Canadians in general. Survival was something that, as LeBlanc emphasized in

his speech, did not happen without a struggle, and a struggle that would have failed were it not for “helping hands from Quebec... [and] in New Brunswick more helping hands that reached out to us as our minority rights were recognized by enlightened people of the majority—people who knew that building a progressive society could not be the exclusive work of the privileged few.” Throughout his speech, LeBlanc’s choice of illustrations for the points he wished to make persuaded people that he believed what he said. His recollections of village life rang true, with their anecdotes of help between neighbours of differing religious beliefs and languages. When he came to speak about his wish to extend these local attitudes and to encourage Canadians to act as neighbours to one another, he mentioned well-known individual and community stories that had been recently reported in the media, rather than social and political theories. He asked for recognition of “the parents who daily nurture their developmentally challenged children week after week, month after month, year after year. Let us recognize,” he continued, “the children who care for parents struck down by an unrelenting illness such as Alzheimer’s disease. Single parents, who, in the face of great economic and social difficulties, raise children to be successful adults.” Turning to the actions of communities, he said, “Let us honour boat people and the communities who adopted them, the displaced persons, the refugees of this century, who came to the country with nothing but their hands and their hopes and through great effort and hard work have flourished in their adopted land.” He concluded this part of his speech by saying, “Let us salute the people of Newfoundland, who live with the worst unemployment rate, and yet have the highest rate of giving to charity.” No newspaper picked up this theme. The press preferred instead to focus on his reference to the Acadian history of past injustice and present cordiality. His comment, “Very few of us in this country share the same past, but all of us can share the same future,” was

seen as a plea for national unity, direct political advice to Quebec separatists, and something close to political interference by the new governor general. However, the press ended their commentaries with general approval of the level of informality that LeBlanc had brought to his installation ceremony.

If the press had time and inclination, there might have been further commentary on the extent to which LeBlanc's career had prepared him for the difficulties he would confront, in particular the need to persuade Canadians that the office was not merely an expensive and superfluous luxury. But there was little interest shown in how someone from a remote Acadian village, the youngest of eight children in a family of subsistence farmers, had traced a career path to appointment as Canada's governor general. Even if the office and its occupant were no more than symbols of the past, both were still worthy of some analysis. After all, the office could be traced back to the beginning of the seventeenth century and Samuel de Champlain. By the mid-1990s, however, Canada was preoccupied with immediate political urgencies. There was a confused sense of *malaise* in the country, as old political alliances fragmented and yet another referendum loomed. Cynicism seemed the order of the day. Journalist Ron Graham captured the mood of the country when he wrote in mid-decade about a media (press, radio, and television) more inclined to report dissent than consensus and a population where the wealthy grew wealthier and the poor found the social safety net wanting.<sup>26</sup> No one had time to give much consideration to the governor general, whose purpose it was to stand outside the fray, to point out to politicians that a prime minister is not a president or monarch, but an elected representative of the people, and to note that a broader community existed outside those systems designed by political ideologues.

The office of the governor general is about ritual and tradition. Without it people become bored with the dull necessity of

caring for those institutions without which communities decay. Quite apart from other more esoteric functions, the activities over which a governor general presides are spectacles which are “impressive public relations event[s] for government itself, not for *a* government.”<sup>27</sup> One of the most important responsibilities of governors general is to remind Canadians that there is more to Canada than the political processes of the country. In a time of political distemper, the individual who holds the position has more influence over the public mood than at other times. In appointing Roméo LeBlanc to the position, the prime minister had chosen someone who would prove to be a governor general for the time. LeBlanc had seen poverty as a child, had worked as a high-school and college teacher, had travelled widely in Europe in the 1950s, had worked as a journalist for Radio-Canada in the 1960s in both Europe and the United States, and had been the public-relations officer for two prime ministers (Lester Pearson and Pierre Trudeau) and for the Université de Moncton. He entered politics in 1972 and his service as minister of fisheries had earned the respect of fishermen, and the somewhat less enthusiastic support of fishing corporations, during a very fraught period for that industry. As he undertook the challenge of being governor general, he brought to the position both a broad experience of Canada and a great love of the country. Above all, he also brought a strong sense of where he had come from and of the forces that had shaped his career: of a life begun on a subsistence farm on the very edge of the village of Memramcook, New Brunswick. The service he offered as governor general was no more and no less than the service he had given throughout his life to the people among whom and with he lived and worked.