

The Empire Club Presents



DAN SNOW AND PETER MANSBRIDGE

**ON: HISTORY IN THE MODERN WORLD:
WHAT CANADIANS CAN LEARN ABOUT THE
FUTURE FROM OUR PAST**

Welcome Address, by Mr. Kent Emerson, Associate Vice President at the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation and President of the Empire Club of Canada

April 23, 2019

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. From the Fairmont Royal York Hotel in downtown Toronto, welcome, to the Empire Club of Canada. For those of you just joining us through either our webcast or podcast, welcome, to the meeting. Today we present Dan Snow and Peter Mansbridge for today's topic, "History in the Modern World."

HEAD TABLE

Distinguished Guest Speaker:

Mr. Peter Mansbridge, Journalist, TV News Anchor, and Former Chief Correspondent for CBC News

Mr. Dan Snow, Popular Historian and Broadcaster; Ambassador, English Heritage; Founder, History Hit TV

Guests:

Ms. Vivien Clubb, Head, Marketing and Communications, IBK Capital Corp.

Ms. Kelly Jackson, Associate Vice President, Government Relations and Strategic Communications, Humber College; Director, Empire Club of Canada

Ms. Nona Macdonald Heaslip, Past President, Empire Club of Canada

Ms. Kate Mavor, Chief Executive Officer, English Heritage

Mr. Kevin McGurgan, British Consul General in Toronto and Director-General for the UK's Department for International Trade in Canada

Dr. Gordon McIvor, Past President, Empire Club of Canada

A quote from a 1998 speech “Who Killed Canadian History?” to the Empire Club by the then Director and CEO of the Canadian War Museum was: “Without a sense of our past, we are like poor souls wandering lost in the forest without a map. Without a sense of our history, we can have no future. Without a firm grasp of whom and where we are, we cannot hope to successfully integrate the newcomers who come to Canada to build a new and a good life in this most favourite of nations. Without history, our children will know nothing of what made Parliament, our laws, our society the way they are. Without history and the techniques that study teaches us, the ability to read, write, reason can never be well taught. Without history, our sons and daugh-

ters will never know what their fathers and grandfathers did to help save the world.” I think that it is incredibly well said. The Empire Club of Canada has always been a believer in the importance of documenting our past.

That is why the speech I just quoted you and all speeches from the past, 114 seasons, have been preserved and bound in what we call The Red Book. Since 1903, The Red Book has been used by university students in understanding Canadian history. It has been a part of the tapestry of our history.

Thanks to all of you guys, all the audience members today for sharing this experience with us. Our collective history about the country we live in determines, in many ways, our view of the world and how we make decisions. The old adage that “Those that do not understand history are condemned to repeat it” is well accepted as being an obvious truth. In people’s understanding of their personal history and that of the country is so often strongly influenced by political, and in many places, the religious ideology of that point in time. What makes Canada, Canada?

What makes all of us Canadian? It is our shared experience and our shared understanding of that experience. That is why today the Empire Club will present one of the world’s most renowned historians, in conversation with one of the most successful broadcasters and communicators of past decades. Together, they will dive into how Canadians can better understand their future by having a good grasp on events and leaders who got us to where we are today.

I am going to start with Dan Snow. Today’s guest is the

host of one the world's most-listened-to history podcasts, and founder of a new history channel, historyhit.tv. He regularly works with the BBC and The One Show.

Born and raised in London, England, he remembers spending every weekend of his childhood being taken to castles, battlefields, country houses and churches alongside visiting Canadian historic landmarks. Half Canadian, half English, Dan developed a great love of history while studying at Oxford and immediately started presenting military history programmes with his father, Peter Snow, the notable BBC Broadcaster.

He has written or contributed to several books including *On This Day in History, Death or Victory* which is the story of the siege of Quebec in 1759. He wrote also *The World's Greatest Twentieth Century Battlefields* and most recently *The Battle of Waterloo Experience*.

Dan is a proud ambassador and champion for English Heritage, a UK based charity that uniquely cares and looks after over 400+ historic sites across England and tells the story of England and its world history.

The Empire Club is proud to welcome historian, broadcaster, television presenter, and ambassador for English Heritage. Ladies and gentlemen, please, put your hands together for Dan Snow. At the Empire Club of Canada, we have often used the turn of phrase "the speaker needs no introduction." This could not apply more to anyone than today's moderator, who is a household name in Canada.

He is a widely respected journalist and has been the face

of CBC News for nearly 30 years. Nonetheless, I am incredibly honoured to make this introduction. I take pleasure in this because I grew up watching our guest on his nightly spot, along with the rest of you, as the chief correspondent and lead anchor of CBC's The National. He had this role from 1988 to 2017, winning 12 Gemini Awards for broadcast excellence, including the Gordon Sinclair Award for the Best Overall Broadcast Journalist in 1990 and 1998.

His other honours include two Canadian Screen Awards, numerous honorary degrees and a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Radio Television Digital News Association.

He has also been inducted into the Canadian News Hall of Fame and is an Officer of the Order of Canada.

He is deeply passionate about the importance of history and national history. To underscore this, I have found a passage in his 2002 Empire Club speech entitled "Canada in the Future." He said about this country, "We were meant to have courage, and determination and spirit. We were meant to teach our children that life is good. And we were meant to teach them that they can make it better. Robertson Davies once said that Canada is not a country you love.

It is a country you worry about. He was right. I certainly worry about it. I worry that we may become a timid people.

I worry that so many of us are unaware of the greatness of our past that we may become doomed to believe that we cannot be great in the future. And I know how sad that would be." Peter is drawn to broadcast the most historic events.

He set his retirement broadcast to the coverage of Canada's 150th celebration. He has most recently worked with today's feature speaker, Dan Snow, on a number of things, including December's CBC program called Royal Wedding for the Ages.

For his third appearance at the Empire Club of Canada, please, welcome renowned television news anchor, journalist, columnist, Peter Mansbridge.

Mr. Dan Snow with Mr. Peter Mansbridge

PM: Thank you, everybody. That was just the way I wrote it for you, Kent. Let me say a couple of things, first of all, about our real guest here today, Dan, who has brought to life history in ways that I do not think any historian has. He has brought in a whole new audience of young people by his dynamic presentation and, of course, he is young. He is also really tall. I did not agree to do this unless we were sitting. It is an interesting mix because you have got the British historian who has deep connections to Canada. Many of you would know his mom, Ann MacMillan and his aunt Margaret MacMillan.

We would like to say he is Canadian really, even though he was born in Britain. On the other hand, you

have got me who was born in Britain and 65 years ago, today, I got off the boat in Quebec City as we came to Canada. I did not realize that until my sister wrote me this morning or sent me an email this morning and told me this is the anniversary.

DS: Carried off the boat. Babe in arms, right?

PM: I wish.

DS: Little, tiny newborn.

PM: A newborn, yes, I was just struggling in my sixth year at that point. Nevertheless, it was a great opportunity for our family, and we, obviously, never regretted the move. For Dan, he has the best of both worlds.

He gets here pretty frequently to visit relatives and to talk history. I am going to throw back a quote of his right away: "History is the most exciting thing that has ever happened to anyone on this planet." That is before the Leafs game tonight, right? Tell me about why it is the most exciting thing that has ever happened to anyone on this planet.

DS: It is funny that lots of people pick out that quote to suggest that I am insane, but it seems to me self-evident. History is everything that has ever happened to anyone who has ever lived, who breathed, who has ever walked this planet. Therefore, whether or not it is Alexander the Great, leading the cavalry charge of

the Battle of Gaugamela, pushing off to the right wing, swinging around and taking Darius out at the end of that battle, or whether it is the Leafs winning, now, ancient history, the last Stanley Cup, or whether it is your parents' eyes meeting across the dance floor in that nightclub for the first time. That is what history is for me. I think sometimes we are not good enough at defining history. I think we can say that history—we hive off all the other bits, culture and film studies, engineering and medicine, and what is left is a kind of slightly dry, legal history, if you like, of constitutional development and kings and queens. I think we need to just be confident and firm about dragging back all that other stuff and talking about the—because human beings, we are an astonishingly eccentric species.

The stuff we got up to when you realize, when you set your boundaries from ancient Sumeria right up to Donald Trump's America is completely remarkable.

PM: That is quite a spin. It does not seem to be heading in the right direction. Kent mentioned in his remarks that saying that we have all grown up with that unless you understand your history, unless you know your history, you run the risk of repeating the mistakes that history teaches you. I like that quote for this reason.

I remember doing my first broadcast from Afghanistan, when the Canadian troops were there. It was 2003 or 2004. We were doing it live back here.

My first guest was Rick Hillier, the Canadian general who was, at that point, the Commander of all coalition forces in Afghanistan. I looked at him, and I said, “When you look around this country and you see the kind of carcasses on the ground of past armies who have tried to invade Afghanistan, and it has not worked out very well in most of those cases, and now you are coming in here, a big coalition force, I am sure you have read history”—because that is the kind of guy General Hillier is—“why do you think that you could not repeat the same mistakes that happened in the past?” He said, “We know our history and that will never happen. We know how we are going to deal with this.” Here we are almost 20 years later. The Afghan war is not over, and they are sitting down negotiating with the Taliban, the people who they went in there to defeat about trying to come up with a peace agreement.

You could argue whether that phrase works in that case or not, but, generally, how do you feel about, given what you know about history, what do you feel about that phrase that we use, that if you do not know your history, you run the risk of repeating it?

DS: I think it is one of the most well-known phrases.

I think there is a lot of truth in it. Again, coming back to my early point, which is the scientific principle is all about history. You learn; you do an experiment; it does

not work out; you build. In large, failure is a key part of development in engineering and science or medicine. The first thing when you go to the doctor's, the first thing that happens is you talk about your history. You talk about what the events that have led you to the place you are at at the moment. Yes, clearly, I find that for any study of state craft, history is vital.

If you are going to sort out—I mean, look at the world at the moment, if you are going to try and go to Israel, Palestine, Northern Island, Sudan, Mali, Timbuktu in Mali. Any way, any solution, any way of coping with these problems in these countries does not just start with—you first have to work out where that history has come from.

The composition—what is Mali and where did it come from? The unique geography of Mali, bolted together by the French, a Tuareg, large Islamic northern half of that country with Timbuktu in it, and then a Bantu African largely Christian or animist south—these two bits put together for imperial convenience by the French. Any discussion around Mali, that blighted country, which I happened to visit the other day, needs to start with history. Any discussion. Trump and the government—we must not endlessly talk about your southern neighbour. It is so difficult not to, because he looms so large.

PM: He is your friend. You just invited him for another state dinner.

DS: Right, he is coming to the palace. He is coming to the palace that is right. I would like to say it is unusual to invite, but the poor, old Queen has had a lot of dodgy folk at the palace over the years. What is interesting about him is he does not seem like he is aware of the complexities of the Golan Heights, for example, or the complexity of what is going on in Israel-Palestine or, indeed, in Korea. That is why I think he is ultimately frustrated, and Mike Pompeo is ultimately frustrated in their attempts to fix problems in the world, because they do not have a strong enough grasp of the underlying—of what is causing those problems. Of course, we have got Brexit close to home. I do not want to be a smug Brit who is always laughing at North Americans. We are leading the field at the moment when it comes to ahistorical mistakes. I think we are going to talk about Brexit in a bit. I will not jump the gun there.

PM: No, we had better spend a few minutes on Brexit. Before we get there, there is another one of your quotes. You wrote a piece in the Telegraph in 2017 where you said, “Canada and Britain share a past. We are fellow travellers in the uncertain world of the present.”

What were you thinking when you came up with that?

DS: Until 150 years ago, the place that we are sitting in now was known as British North America.

It is fascinating that Britain, just after the fall of Quebec in 1759 and the end of that war in 1761, there was this brief remarkable period of North American history where Britain basically controlled the entire continent west of the Mississippi from Florida up to Hudson's Bay. That did not last long because those ungrateful Americans, patriots, upset the apple cart there, but, anyway. The bits that were left, there was the United States of America and then there was British North America, the bits. That is why, by the way, when people in the UK, as they often do, go, "Well, this is the great thing about Britain, standing alone in 1940 against German Wehrmacht Luftwaffe," I just get—I am sorry, but I just have a quick point to make there. The second largest country on planet earth was firmly alongside Britain. This giant economic, demographic, agricultural, industrial powerhouse, the largest chunk of North America, in fact, and people say it was not truly a World War until—and hold on—the largest bit of North America was involved in the Second World War from September 1939. I think the Atlantic is—just as the channel, the English Channel has been—an air gap for many people in the UK, seeing Europe ending in one place and Britain and starting, even though we are a 20-mile gap between Calais and

Dover. I think the Atlantic Ocean has acted as a kind of air gap for British understanding and sort of remembering Canada. Nineteenth century stories talk about Canada being Britain's Wild West. The Americans had their western expansion, Britain also had its western expansion, but there was the Atlantic Ocean in the middle, and it was Atlantic Ocean dominated by British ships and increasingly, telegraph cables and things. Politicians, in the early 20th century, when there was this thought about how the world was full of empires and some were transitioned to nation states, and British politicians complained endlessly about why the Americans were allowed to conquer a whole bunch of territory and called it America, the Russians conquered a bunch of territory and called it Russia; and Britain's own expansion was going along through British North America into Canada out west, but because there was an ocean in the middle, it certainly looked completely illegitimate. They called it the "tyranny of saltwater."

They said the only difference is we have to get on the boat at Bristol, and we get off in Halifax. Apart from that, show me the difference. The Russians are dispossessing the Chinese. We are moving native people from land east of the Urals. The Americans are on this giant imperial project in the south and west of that continent and into the Pacific. So, how come Britain is the bad guy? What is going on around here?

Britain was unable to make that transition into—a lot of people were suggesting, “Would it not be great, Britain, that the commonwealth could have an imperial parliament?” I think, in the end, the geography kind of undid it. Also, you see Britain, the great British invention, its gift to the world, the railway, kind of undid Britain in the end, because the railway forged an empire in America, in Germany, in Russia, in India, and in Canada, and it meant, because you could not get on a train and hop somewhere, it suddenly, it just had the effect on the kind of building of nation states.

It kind of went differently. I think that the Canadian story is, of course, partly, is the stories of Indigenous peoples, of course, as well. But it is partly the story of the British. If you look at the people we are talking about—we are sitting in this building, which is named after one of George III’s slightly errant sons as was this city, Fort York.

I was looking on the map today. You have got Simcoe born in Britain; you have got Macdonald, whom I was considering in terms of the western expansion, which is apparently now controversial, certainly on the west coast, as some statues are being pulled down. These are British-born people. The Canadians and British were—and then we have got the First World War and the Second World War.

We have got 100 years ago, last year: The Canadians played a disproportionately large role in the defeat of Germany on the Western Front.

By 1917 and 1918 and the Battle of Amiens, the Canadian Corps advanced the furthest any Allied unit had advanced in the whole of the First World War on the Western Front. That is a fact I enjoy telling Brits as often as possible.

PM: What do they say when you tell them?

DS: Well, they just go huh. We have taken different tracks, because Canada has become a hugely self-confident, independent, proud country with its own national story, and has drifted apart, of course, from Britain. It is no longer economically, politically, socially or culturally dependent on Britain. Even when I was a kid, I understand that British soap operas, British TV shows were like top-rating Canadian shows. And, today, British people are surprised to hear the Queen is still on Canadian bank notes and stuff, as our paths have diverged, of course. The links are so powerful.

I am here on behalf of the English Heritage for this trip. On English Heritage, you go through these English Heritage properties, these medieval castles.

Regarding the Magna Carta, the thinking that was going on, the decisions that were being made in these

great castles, these parliament buildings, affected all of our ancestors, whether or not they were among those who took the boat west or were staying in the home country. That was the cultural, intellectual and political milieu and linguistic milieu. We are speaking English in this room, named after the errant son of George III. So much of this story of us meeting today goes back beyond Confederation to a time when Britain and Canada were almost as one.

PM: The relationship has changed over time. There has always been that connection, but it started off with sort of England as the parent, us as the child. Then, it became sort of England as the older sibling of the two.

DS: I think I know where this is going.

PM: You guys are in one hell of a mess over there.

DS: That is right. It is a bit like *The Godfather*, where there is the younger sibling, and then here is Fredo, who is the useless older, so we are Fredo, and you guys are—

PM: How would you describe the role? I find it interesting when you talk about trying to explain our role in the First World War. Wait until they find out that we were at D-Day.

DS: Not just at D-Day. There is English Heritage properties across Southern England where the Canadian troops trained for D-Day and garrisoned these won-

derful castles and things, but, no, the Canadians played an enormous role in D-Day. They played an enormous role, as you know, in liberating Holland, in particular, and Canadians are still welcome there as liberators.

PM: How would you describe the relationship now? Where are we on that scale of how the relationship has developed over time?

DS: You have outgrown your creators. It is the old Frankenstein “I am going somewhere where they are and stuff, but I am not really going to get there.”

You are now this hugely powerful, huge, well, one of the world’s greatest soft powers, cultural, intellectual powers with a hugely dynamic economy that is not in any way dependent on Britain. You do not need us for anything anymore. You used to need us as sort of immigrants, maybe, or migrants. That is no longer true. It is a story, now, as you say, of siblings. It is like there is my uncle in the audience there. When I was growing up, my uncle Tom was a god, to me. Now, I have grown up, and he is still a god to me, but we can have a beer, and we are going to watch hockey, and we are buddies now. We give each other relationship advice or whatever it is.

I think that is kind of the story. Particularly, as Britain lost its global empire, then like with Australia, like with Canada, you guys started paying more attention

to the neighbourhood because Britain was unable to offer to you. Australia, halfway through the Second World War went, “Britain, it has been great; our security against Japanese now depends on the U.S. Pacific Fleet, sorry,” and Britain said, “Yes, I am afraid so; we cannot afford to have a massive fleet in the Pacific and a massive fleet in Europe—just cannot do it—and in the Mediterranean.” The same kind of thing happened with Canada.

If we are having interesting discussions about the Pacific area, the Arctic, Britain does not really have a huge role to play. Ironically, it is us going to come knocking on the door now for trade deals and things, because we are severing our links with Europe, apparently, if that happens. I think the relationship will be completely reversed. We are going to come to you as supplicants.

PM: The Consul General is sitting here, right?

DS: Oh, yes, sorry.

PM: Let us deal with the elephant in the room, being Brexit.

DS: That is harsh on the Consul General.

PM: The Brexit issue I find fascinating for a number of reasons. In a way, it is the flipside of what we went through almost 30 years ago with the free trade negotiations where there was a fear on the part of a good

number of Canadians that we were giving up our sovereignty by working into a deal with the Americans.

In the election that followed, I think it was about 60/40. Bill Graham would remember, in terms of, he lost, but he made a remarkable comeback a few years later, but the issue was those who were against free trade outnumbered those who were for it. But because of our first-past-the-post-system, the Conservatives won and free trade went into effect, and it has been there ever since. Here, you have the situation that you were protecting your sovereignty, at least that is what the leave people would say, right. Where is this now?

Because I have got to tell you, for most of us, we just think, Wake me when it is over, because there have been so many false starts on an ending to this.

DS: This is one lesson from history. I think is very interesting. It is very unusual for people to voluntarily pull their sovereignty upwards, right. It is much more attractive—like we all do, and I do especially as I enter middle age—to dream about an island with just me on it, sitting around, no one telling me what to do. That is why Canada is so wonderful, because you have got a Georgian Bay, and you can live that dream. You rarely hear people going, “You know what I want to do?”

I want to pull my sovereignty to achieve outcomes together, but I recognize that I will maybe be outvoted

and have to do things I do not particularly want to do, but I am bearing in mind it is for a greater good.”

That is a harder philosophical principle. The USA managed to bind those colonies together, but then fought the bloodiest war in their history in the 1860s to try and keep that dream alive. In Scotland, we recently had a referendum that was remarkably close, unbelievably. And in Britain, which is thought around the world to be a pretty unified nation state, the northern half of our island, 45% of people voted to leave the UK project. In Canada, you guys had two referenda in the ‘90s. The second one was like the most complicated question in the history of the world, and it was what, 0.1? It was crazy the percentage in Quebec—the majority for remaining in Canada. And Spain, Italy—there were huge pressures on modern nation states, because it is a very beguiling thing, which is, “Guys, let us get rid of those southern Italians, and we will be rich.” I remember being in Alberta in the ‘90s and with the oil sands. Everybody was like, “You know what? Hang on. What about Quebec? What about Alberta’s independence? Now, we are talking.” It is an attractive concept both individually to assert individual sovereignty: “I am going to take back control. I want to make myself great again. I am going to get rid of all these other people.” We are experiencing a spasm of that in Britain at the moment, both internally because

of Ireland and Scotland, but also with our relationship with the EU. It is attractive. People are saying we are outvoted; we are doing things, and we are not able to have as much control over these outcomes as we would like. That is a reason, in my opinion, that point of view underestimates the nature of the interconnected globalized worlds. It also underestimates the nature of Britain as a European country in the last 2,000 years. Britain, for much of the last 2,000 years, has been part of a trans-channel empire. We do not like to think about it because of Britain's kind of snapshot of itself is the hot summer of 1940: "Winston Churchill, White Cliffs of Dover, RAF—everything is fine.

No Canadians, certainly no Poles. We do not like to think about the Polish airmen." But there is a snapshot. Or in the 1890s when Britain had the largest fleet in the world, the largest empire the world had ever seen, and it could just say, "You know what, Europe?

You do whatever you like. We are fine over here." Those were actually abnormal moments in British history. Normal in British history is we are like insanely integrated. Our entire British economy was basically built on supplying the low countries with wool through the medieval period. Our whole economy in the 19th century was importing stuff from the rest of the world and then pushing it into Europe, into Danube and the Rhine. Our trade with Europe was much more than

our trade with our empire. It is difficult for British people sometimes, to—and history is a huge part of that. We see ourselves as this fiercely proud, independent, once mighty nation, and we do not understand why we have to walk into a room in Brussels with 25 other finance ministers and hammer out a compromise, which brackets, ironically, that we are usually on the winning side of. We have pretty good outcomes in Brussels for us, but it was sold to the British people that we were being outvoted; we were being railroaded, and it is an attractive argument to say let us put up a barrier. Of course, there was the question of race as well. The Russians—we now know through disinformation and the nationalists on the other side—during the leave campaign were putting up huge, big posters of predominantly non-white people coming over from the Middle East, refugees from ISIS or North Africa and scaring people into thinking we were about to be submerged under a wave of non-white immigration. There are all sorts of things going on there.

PM: I am going to ask for questions from the audience in a minute, but there are just two other areas I want to go to. Just the last point on Brexit, because it is often at times this in a country where there is a crisis surrounding an issue that you tend to define yourselves.

I know that Canada went through this both on free trade and on the various constitutional crises of the

1980s and 1990s, that at least at the end of it you had a better sense of kind of who you were as Canadians.

Is there any sort of revaluation or defining of what a Brit is today?

DS: That is interesting. During the Scottish Referendum campaign—this is the same in Quebec—the number of people in Scotland identified as British actually crept up slightly. We do not know where this crisis is going to end, but, certainly, it is funny, because it has turned, most people—like I did not really think about the EU that much, to be honest, five years ago.

Now, my kids are in EU t-shirts. We are marching through the streets. I am like, “The EU—I do not even know how it works.” I am not even sure about the statutory function of the EU. I think there will be a process.

If the leavers win and we do see tighter immigration, it will be harder for international students to come, harder for people to get Visas and start businesses. I have got a wonderful nephew here today.

His brother came and studied business school in Spain and met lots of other really bright kids, and it was the obvious decision. They want to start a tech business. They want to come to London, because that is the thing to do. After Brexit, if we lose, the fear that

London will lose that lustre—we will not be attracting brilliant young, European minds to come and start their businesses in London. I think it is a battle at the moment between a vision of Britain that is older; it is whiter. This is probably sounding a bit similar to some of our southern neighbours here, but it is a vision that is older; it is whiter; it is more culturally homogenous, ethnically homogenous, and a vision of Britain that is embracing the changes of the world, embracing new industries, new ways of doing things, and new people, new migrants as well.

PM: This is kind of wide open, but I want you to try and reduce the answer, too.

DS: Sorry.

PM: Is history written by fact, or is history written by experience? History is rarely written at the moment, right?

DS: “Written”—you mean we are not writing it anymore?

PM: No, but in the moment.

DS: Oh, in the moment. Yes, sorry, of course.

PM: The further you get away from the moment, is it less about fact and more about experience?

DS: Lots of historians, I think, like in the 19th century, wrote histories of Britain that involved the end point. The story was this great, magnificent empire.

Lots of people write history for themselves in the present, I think, do not they? I think the best history should be based on trying to ascertain what happened. You go way back to ancient Greece. You have got Thucydides; you have got Herodotus. They wrote down these stories. They wrote down *historia*, from the Greek root word ‘wisdom’, and they just wanted to preserve the knowledge of the things that have happened to actually often save future generations the trouble of going through them themselves. Listen, we had a massive war; it was not great; it did not turn out that well. You guys might be interested in this because you can live the experience through my writing rather than going through all the trouble of having a gigantic internecine war in the Greek world and learning it for yourself. I think that preserving those facts—preserving that kind of ‘data’ is the modern word—is pretty important. That is why there is a way to end it. It is very funny, because in Britain, we had this big problem in the 1990s. Everyone complained all the time. All kids were learning at school was about the rise of the far right, or the rise of the extremes, Bolshevism and nationalism in the 1920s and 1930s Europe.

Everyone thought, “This is ridiculous. All kids are learning about is the rise of these fascists.” Now, everyone is thinking, “Okay, that was a good thing to teach. I am glad we taught that.”

PM: While the first person gets their question ready, there are microphones in the room, so raise your hand if you are going to have a question.

DS: Straight out of it. Look at that. Keen.

PM: Just before we get to him, let me give a plug to Dan when I talk about the new wave of historians, because Dan relies a lot on digitization, his podcasts. His video work, is available online, has a great following.

One of the things you do differently than others, aside from bringing your own kind of magic and presentation to it, is that you go to the location on a lot of this stuff. You are not sitting in some studio in London. One was just a couple of weeks ago. I watched you in Culloden doing your little gimmick with Twitter live or Facebook live—the one you taught me last year. That is great. It clearly is, well, we are living in that future already, but how do you see that as a tool in the teaching of history going forward?

DS: It is so exciting, isn't it? It is so wonderful. When Notre Dame was burning last week, I got on the phone—that is a bad introduction. It was not a 'wonderful' thing, but it is an exciting time, in a way, because as Notre Dame was burning, the mainstream, the news channels were interviewing tourists who were—I do not know if you guys were watching—were asked what they could see. Well, "I have actually gone home, because it is

getting late.” I got Britain’s best medieval architectural historian on the phone, and I did a podcast with him. He told me all about Notre Dame, why it is an astonishing building, why it matters, why it is that sort of ancestor to all of subsequent gothic cathedrals, and then we put that out. By evening, 100,000 people listened to it—25 minutes. If someone told me, when I was a student like you guys that I would be lucky enough to do that 15, 20 years later, I would have cried.

I would have wept with happiness. What an amazing privilege it is to do that. The podcast is great. I am trying to build subscribers up for an actual TV channel like Netflix where you actually bring a community of people that want to pay a little bit, and then you can make high-quality films, so I think the Internet is great, because it is allowing this. We all know this, but you guys, whether it is the Leafs or the Blue Jays or whatever, you can now go into so much more detail than we could get 20 years ago because you find these communities of insane fans. I am just looking for my community of insane history fans. That has been so rewarding to do that and to make high-quality pieces, and that it is also global—the global reach is fantastic. You had this, remember there were people from New Zealand, it was so exciting.

PM: It is remarkable. Let us take a couple of questions from the floor.

Questions & Answers

Q: Hello. I am from York University. My only question is that with the rise of Donald Trump and with Brexit at hand, how can we teach young people or people who vote about the importance of history and to not repeat the same mistakes again?

You kept saying that the reason that Brexit happened was because people wanted to take their country back. Same with Donald Trump.

How do we teach them that their country was never theirs because immigrants came and America was predominantly made of immigrants and so was Britain in the 1960s as the doors opened for other non-white or immigrants like myself? How do we teach people that vote or people whose voices are heard on the national stage about the importance of history and history from other perspectives?

As you said, people who conquered wars, who won wars, told a different version of history than compared to those that did not.

DS: That is a great, fundamental question of our time, which is how do we stop? There was a generation above us who knew that fighting gigantic trade wars, demonizing minorities and invading people was going to end badly, because they had experienced that themselves. There is the great dream of historians that you

are able to—like I said about Thucydides—explain to young people, that, hey, if you do all these things, bad, then, expect such and such to happen. Give them a sense that that is why people write. My sister is making this wonderful documentary about the holocaust at the moment, because these stories—it is not good enough that when that generation dies, we just forget about the Holocaust. The whole point of history is that we go to people who, hopefully, will never even experience anything like that, but we are able to say to them these are the dark places that humanity can go to if conditions are right or wrong. We all need to be aware of that. That is why what is so depressing is the language of new nationalists, of a Steve Barron generation, actually where Trump or the people of Europe demonize minorities. They go, “Well that is the beginning of something very dangerous.” If we have learned one lesson from the 20th century, it is when the alarm bells need to go off. Let us not wait until we are area-bombing German cities. Let us take action at the earliest stages of this, so when our political dialogue starts to get toxic, when our news media fail, when we get fake news, we get penetration of it. The answer is how do we do that? I do not know, but we have all just got to do what we can. That involves going to people where they are. For young people, it is about being on the social media apps; it is about being on those platforms. It is about producing short-form content.

There is a wonderful sharing of short form content that is good. Building trust in good sources of news and trying to sort of pioneer ways of kind of instant fact checking are important. There is some interesting stuff going on with technology at the moment. You can watch a clip of Donald Trump saying something, and instant fact-checking is appearing as they are doing so. It is for your generation to pull everyone else out of ignorance, because we are in a place at the moment; this epidemic of fake news is a big problem, sharing fake news.

PM: Yes, trust is the big issue of the moment for both viewers, readers and listeners, and for journalists. You have got to believe what you are reading. Part of believing what you are reading is doing your own vetting of what you are reading. I was talking to a group of students at U of T a couple of weeks ago, and there were 100 of them in the room, roughly, post-grad students, so smart, young people, and I asked them what their primary source of news was.

Without question, they are so far gone from TV and radio and newspapers; it is all about what is on their phone. Then, the next question is key: What are you reading on your phone? Do you know what you are reading on your phone? Are you going to a trusted source of information, or are you just sort of flipping through what you are getting on Facebook without

any knowledge of where it came from? That is the great danger in informing and educating the people, and it is the great danger for journalism. They can get sideswiped through this and, to some degree, elements of journalism have been pushed aside. I always describe the kind of news-making scene as a three-parter. There is that journalists have got to promise you that they are going to dig for the information. They are going to go as far as they can in finding the information. There are your public officials, whether they be elected or unelected, in business or wherever, and they have got to promise to you that they are willing to provide information. The key is no matter what those two do, if the public does not care, if they do not want information or if they do not go to the trouble of ensuring what information they are reading is real, then we have got a big problem. I think you are focusing in on a very important element of how future historians will look at this period.

Q: Hi, MJ Perry. I have lived through a lot of history. I was wondering: I spend a lot of time in archives, and I am concerned with our world, which is focused on return on investment and branding.

I go into archives, and I work with documents that, literally, are falling apart in my hands, that there seems to be difficulty in translating the importance of historic preservation. There should be the

ability for people to go to those original documents, original sites, all of that and get it out there and help people to understand history is an important part of who we are, and this area deserves as much funding as any STEM course, or it deserves a name on a building as much as any law library or any of those other things. It is just that at least here—I do not know about the UK—I will be honest, there seems to be something, along with the many humanities and liberal arts disciplines that is just sort of ignored.

DS: Well, you are not going to find us disagreeing with that. I think there is an interesting thing in the UK.

We have got a fake news epidemic, which a big problem; we have got fake news. We also have got a problem with young people feeling excluded from politics, young people from different backgrounds feeling this way, so we need to teach, civics or fake news education. Imagine if there was already a subject that you could study on those ancient subjects on the whole history of the world. The whole point of that subject was to use your critical faculties to work out whether something had happened or not or what was true and, in doing so, you would tune out lies and propaganda and try and get to the real sense of what happened. Imagine if that was already taught widely in schools.

It is. We have got history. History is made for this

time, and it is a vital tool. Study history; you will be no one's fool.

PM: Are there any others? We are sort of over time here. Short questions and short answers.

DS: I would like to leave tonight.

Q: Question on leadership. Are we really in a bad spot for leaders in the world, today, and was it better in Churchill's time? I seem to think we do not have very good leadership around the world.

DS: That is a very interesting question. I remember when Anthony Eden was Prime Minister of Britain was full of amphetamines. Hitler was not a great leader, but, in our past, it is kind of an unfashionable thing to say, "Actually, you know what, the world is not that bad at the moment." We have got a major problem around climate change.

We have got problems elsewhere, but, actually, we are pretty lucky to be alive. In fact, we are incredibly lucky to be alive today. We have got a robot on Mars responding to controls on an iPad down on earth. We are doing pretty well. We can take a—you can drink, not you, sir, you can drink too much—take a liver out and put another one in England, for free; there is a little bit of a waiting list, but that is a pretty extraordinary society we are living in.

The answer is I think there are pressures on model leadership around privacy; your life gets destroyed; your financial rewards are not very good, because Herbert Asquith, Prime Minister of Britain, again, during the peak of Britain—like an American press baron bought him a house, which he lived in. Very nice, right? Now, I think maybe some of the best people are not going into leadership positions anymore, but I do also think, though, we are also tapping into a vast reservoir of people that are leaders and that is women.

Actually, some of those positive stories around leadership in the world, at the moment, are coming from women who would have been excluded from these positions not even 20 years ago, let alone 100 and 200 years ago. I share your worry, I do.

Obviously, you look at the world and think, “How, in 2019, are we living in a world dominated by Trump, Putin, the new Emperor in China and Erdogan in Turkey?” This is not—it feels bad, does not it? I agree. Yet, leaders have always been, I mean, personally, I think there is a wonderful quote from the American Civil Rights Movement, which is, “Strong people do not need a strong leader.” I think there is a big question mark about now: Why do we have these leaders?

We do not really want a nuclear presidential monarchy in the U.S. Actually, I think we want leadership, but we do not need this kind of strange, strong man,

medieval tradition. We have still got a little bit of people, and, in Britain at the moment, all the polls say Britain really wants a strong leader.

I am like I am not sure we do want a strong leader. I think we just want a bunch of experts working out what we need to do. An interesting question.

PM: I am basically in alignment with that answer, with one exception.

I think that we, generally in the media, are responsible for the fact that not as many people choose to enter public life, because of the kind of scrutiny that Dan was talking about that they have to go through. It is not worth it. I do not have a perfect past. I may have done something wrong in school. Do I really want this all dragged out through an election campaign? I have nothing but time for people, like Bill Graham and the others in this room who have served in public office, who have run for office. In many ways, when I look at it, it is a thankless job. You run for, first of all, the nomination of your party, and you have got to go into rooms like this in front of party faithful, your friends and relatives, and you have got to basically declare everything you have ever done and be prepared to answer questions about things you have done and what you stand for. Most of the people who are running for that nomination lose. They are gone. They are done

already. If you win, you get to go to the next level, and go through it all over again with another four or five candidates, a much tougher crowd, and more insistent questions. You get through that; you win.

There. What have you got? You have got that likely you are leaving your home, leaving your family behind you while you go to the capital city to serve in office. You have probably given up a job that is probably paying a lot more. You had great ideas when you were running for office. You suddenly find that you are just one in a caucus who will decide what you are actually really going to do and stand for, and you have got people like me running down the hall chasing you, asking you questions you cannot even answer. That is if you win. I have covered politics in this country since 1968. I saw some bad apples in that time. The overwhelming majority are good, decent, honest people who are just trying to make life better for us, based on what they think is right, but that is why they entered.

They did not enter to get a bunch of money in an envelope. They did it because they believed it was the right thing to do.

DS: It is odd to me, and it feels jarring that we live in a world now where to go into childcare, you have to do qualifications now. Nursing, compared to our grandfathers' time—nursing is an astonishingly difficult ca-

reer to get into with qualifications. Yet, our politicians still might as well be drawn from the Athenian Pnyx.

I do not know where that, maybe that is necessary, because they should just be normal people or whether we do start to go, look, it is kind of unacceptable that you have never read the U.S. Constitution and you are—in Britain, we had a guy in charge of delivering Brexit. And the big sticking point of Brexit, one of the many sticking points of Brexit, is we have a situation in Ireland where the EU has provided a situation where two sovereign bodies, Northern Ireland and Southern Ireland, can have frictionless trade and travel between them, because we have regulatory alignment on either side. It is called the Good Friday Agreement. The guy trying to negotiate with Europe had admitted that he never read the Good Friday Agreement. You all work in offices and business where you would just be fired for—that is a gross dereliction. It feels odd, to me, that we have professionalized everything so remarkably, yet our politics is spectacularly amateurish. I am sure we can all think of some fairly amateur politicians not far from here.

PM: Do we have time for one more?

Q: The conversation has kind of gone beyond this, but I want to go back to the question Peter asked about the difference between experience and fact. We have an expression that we, in Canada, have

heard a lot recently, which is “I want to speak my truth.” How do you, as a historian, feel when someone speaks about their truth? Are there different truths?

DS: That is a great question, and the answer is, of course, there are different truths. “Make America great again” sounds very different depending on the community and socio-economic group in which you find yourself.

Yes, you can have the same facts and different truths, for sure. A weird example is one for which I have been nearly murdered: Some people enjoyed the First World War; they got away from a restrictive family. They were 17, 18 years old; they got away from narrow, geographical economic circumstances.

They were put in a big organization. They got promoted. They were good. They were lucky. They did not witness the terrible shell strike. They were lucky with where they were placed, and they came away thinking “That was a good experience; I enjoyed that.” They were serving alongside men for whom that trauma would last them the rest of their lives. Of course, you are right. You can go through the same situations and come away from different truths, I think, but we also need to be careful about what you say to people in an era of fake news and people showing memes on the Internet. One big meme on the Internet at the moment

that the white nationalists are really pushing hard is that actually there were more white slaves in colonial America than there were enslaved Africans, because these people came here as indentured labourers from Ireland, Scotland, England and stuff. But that is simply not true. This particular narrative is being pushed. There are certain truths that we need to hold to support, sustain and push back on.

PM: Good question, though. It has been a big part of debate here for the last couple of months. There are different versions of the truth around one story; at least the proponents of different parts of the story argue, “Now, I am going to tell my truth.” He can tell his truth; she can tell her truth. Leaves you wondering what is truth?

How do you define truth in today’s world? Anyway, this has been great. And I know Dan echoes this, thank you so much for your questions and your attention.

KE: Our sponsor, today, will be giving the thank you. Izzie Abrams, please, come to the stage.

**Note of Appreciation, by Mr. Izzie Abrams,
Vice President, Government & External Affairs,
Waste Connections of Canada**

Thank you, Kent. As Canadians, we have a deep, rich and proud history of having the news reported and history recounted, and nowhere is that better exemplified than with our guest speakers today, Peter Mansbridge and Dan Snow.

On behalf of the Empire Club and Waste Connections of Canada, thank you for the enlightening and entertaining dialogue we had today.

Concluding Remarks, by Kent Emerson

I want to take a moment to give a couple of other thank yous as well.

We have some people who organized today. A tremendous amount of work went into this.

Nancy Hertzog and Elizabeth Wilson, thank you so much. Thank you very much. Also, Gordon McIvor, from the Empire Club: Thank you for all the work you put into this. Looking ahead, we have a couple of events coming out. We have Councillor Thompson who will be speaking with Jan De Silva from the Toronto Board of Trade.

He is Toronto's Deputy Mayor, and he is responsible for

economic development in the city. We will have a great conversation during the lunch on May 16th.

We have an evening event organized by Mike Van Soelen, who will be the next President of the Empire Club.

He is the nominated President right now. He is organizing an event on May 22nd about all the various ways people, the outside influences in politics, are influencing the election.

Then, we have a sold-out event on May 2nd with Phil Verster from Metrolinx. Thank you very much for coming.

Meeting adjourned.