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Preston Manning is the founder of the Manning Centre for Building Democracy.

My father, Ernest C. Manning spent almost his entire adult life in politics – 33 years as a member of the Alberta legislature, 25 of those as premier, and 13 years as a member of the Canada’s Senate.

On Father’s Day it is perhaps appropriate to share some of his sayings which are still meaningful to me and may be to others.

To selected members of the legislature on the occasion of their being sworn into Cabinet:
“Enjoy the swearing in; the swearing *at* will start next week.”

To members of cabinet, caucus, and the senior civil service: “Those of us who make the laws and those of us who administer the laws must keep the laws or we lose our moral authority to govern.”

To his senior political advisers when he would meet with them the day after a provincial election victory to discuss the crafting of a cabinet: “Let us now see what the great electoral tide has washed up on the beach. And let us pray that we will find enough timber to form a solid cabinet.”

When asked on one occasion what was the Alberta government’s economic development strategy, he quipped: “The election of socialist governments in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and British Columbia.”

To members of his own party on the dangers of excessive partisanship: “The public are never as partisan as the partisans. They will never love us and our party as much as we do and they will never loathe our opponents as much as we may.”

With respect to poetry, he sometimes quoted Walt Mason, an American whose whimsical poems and comments appeared in the Saskatoon Star Phoenix in the 1920s and 30s. We would then modify Mason poems to give them a Canadian twist, for example:

*The great men we’re adoring
The lions of today
Whose bright renown goes soaring
From London to LA.
The ones who give direction
To all our projects here
May pass from recollection
When they’ve been dead a year.*

*But perchance some humble yeoman
Who plies his trade on ice
And cross checks at the blue line
(Which isn’t very nice)
In people’s hearts be living
His fame right at the top
Immortalized for giving
Our land a Donut Shop.*

Once to impress upon me the power of words to “paint a picture” and to move public audiences thereby, he asked what I would say to convince others that Napoleon was a nasty fellow. I gave some nondescript answer to which he replied “Listen to this,” then quoted from memory an excerpt from a long-ago speech on Napoleon by a British parliamentarian:

“When I think of the widows and the orphans he has made; of the tears that have been shed for his glory; and of the only woman who ever loved him, pushed from his heart by the cold hand of ambition.

Then I said, I would rather be a peasant and wear wooden shoes. I would rather live in a hut with a vine growing over the door and sit in the evening with my wife at my side and my children at my feet watching the grapes turn purple beneath the amorous kisses of the autumn sun.

I would rather be that man and go down into the tongue-less silence of the dreamless dust, than to be that imperial impersonation of force and murder, Napoleon the Great.”

With respect to trying to build a legacy while still in political office: “Being preoccupied with your legacy while in office is like driving a car forward while looking in the rear view mirror. You’ll most likely run into a tree and that will be your legacy.”

And his favourite verses from the Bible: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths.”