

State Funeral of Ed Broadbent Remarks by Frances Abele, O.C. | Discours funéraire d'État d'Ed Broadbent par Frances Abele, O.C.



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Canada was Ed's village. He loved to go about in this city, where he had long-established relationships with the people who worked in grocery stores, bookstores, restaurants, pharmacies and drycleaners. They all called him Ed. Beyond Ottawa, in Oshawa and in many parts of Canada, he rarely went anywhere without meeting someone who wanted to greet him, to shake his hand and thank him. Many recalled a brief meeting years previously in a way that made it clear that the speaker felt that Ed was their friend, then and now. I think this is a room full of people who feel this way. In public or in private, Ed had a remarkable capacity to extend empathy and good-humoured support to strangers. He respected them and he wanted to know what they thought. He was loyal to them.

Then there was his strength. Like many of you, I have been missing Ed deeply. So, like you do, I took to looking up video clips of his various speeches and interviews over the years. Just to see and hear him again. I found a wonderful speech that he made in early



2016 to the Broadbent Institute Summit. It was terrific –intelligent, erudite, funny, inspiring. Mostly he addressed the younger generation...bracingly.

Ed gave that speech two months after he had lost a second wife to cancer. He nursed each of them, Lucille and Ellen, to the end. When he gave that speech, he must have been living with terrible, redoubled sorrow. Yet at the age of 80, he found the strength to bring the force of his intelligence and commitment to speak to current activists and to future movement leaders. That strength, forged from commitment and love, is a powerful legacy, an example of the expansive generosity of spirit that is one of Ed's gifts to the next generation.

His other gifts were vision –a shining vision of a future in which all citizens of the world have peace and security—and his joyful confidence in the power of the younger generation to make this happen. Ed's view was that social democracy did not occupy some mushy middle ground but rather defined a principle-driven practical approach to the steady building of a good society. This in turn means containing corporate power, and realizing political, economic, and social rights for all, to create the conditions under which life could be not only endured, but above all enjoyed. He enjoyed the struggle, and he rejoiced in the gains. That is how Ed lived, and that is what I celebrate now as we come to terms with his death.