

Anthony Germain, host of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's national political affairs radio show, "The House", interviews *Forum President, Bob Rae*, March 29, 2003. "The House" is broadcast Saturday mornings on CBC Radio One.

Q Well one of the stated goals of Operation Iraqi Freedom is to build a new nation, to give Iraqis the tools and political institutions to govern themselves. And that's easier said than done. In Afghanistan it continues to be nation-enforcing. So, how do you create lasting political institutions in countries such as Afghanistan or Iraq? Well Bob Rae has given the subject some thought. He's the former Premier of Ontario and now chairs the board of the Forum of Federations, an international network on federalism and Mr. Rae is with me now. Good morning.

B. Rae Good morning.

Q We've been listening to our discussion this morning and wondering what, what are your initial thoughts about how do we actually approach this entire issue?

B. Rae I think Mr. Manley's got it right in terms of where we're at now. I think obviously with respect to the United States it's a very difficult situation. But I think that we also have to recognize where Canadian public opinion is and, and where some of our important traditions internationally have been with respect to the situation. We're very much committed to the war against terrorism. I think there has been a recognition across the country that the world has changed since September 11th, but I also think there's some very important commitments that Canada has to the way we should do things internationally: The importance of international law, the importance of trying to create broader consensus. And I think that was the thrust of our efforts at the U.N. over the last few months.

Obviously it's a difficult time because we are in a sense caught up very much, necessarily, by necessity in this war against terrorism, in the fight against terrorism. At the same time we have some very important international commitments that go back a very long way.

Q Now the last country to be liberated was Afghanistan. It's still early, but can the international community claim much success there as far as...

B. Rae I think it's very early days. I mean, I think the thing we have to recognize is that the world is in many places a very unruly place and we obviously as a country have a very strong commitment to democracy. We are a federation, which I think speaks to the need for people to learn how to live together who come from different backgrounds and who reflect different religions and different races and different languages. And there are a great many other countries who either are federation or who aspire to be, but look, creating a democratic political structure in countries which have not experienced democracy forever, or for a very long time, is a very difficult thing to do.

And, you know, we, we can go back and look at the reconstruction of Japan and Germany after the second World War where clearly in the case of Japan you had a highly literate country that had been defeated, that accepted its defeat at a certain level and decided, from the leadership right on down, that there had to be profound change and that, that change is still, still going on.

Q But, but I guess if you compare life in the mid-40's with industrialized nations such as Germany and Japan, it's much different than when developed nations such as the United States or Canada or others go into a place like Afghanistan or Iraq and say hey...

B. Rae Absolutely.

Q ... how come you guys don't understand the merits of democracy.

B. Rae Absolutely right and that's what I'm trying to say. I guess what I'm saying is, is that, is that it's not an easy thing to do. And I think that just as the war is proving to be difficult, as all wars are difficult, there's no question that the peace in Iraq is going to be difficult. And I think that's something that we, we as a country should be spending some time and attention on. I happen to believe that, that, that rather than looking back in recrimination, etc., what we should be doing is looking forward, recognizing that the United States and Britain are going to prevail in some fashion.

And the question then becomes, what does the U.N. do, what do we as Canadians do, is there a role for us to play with respect to the, the reconstruction of Iraq, and with respect to the effort to establish democratic institutions there. And I, I think that's a, that's a, that's a serious discussion that needs to happen. Because if, if you, if you have, this is a military conquest and the Americans as an occupying army, that's a very different situation than if you have a truly international effort that works in partnership with Iraqi civil society to rebuild. Those are two very different sort of scenarios.

Q Well if the invaders in this case, excuse me, the Americans and the British, or liberators, choose the language you like, if, if the United States insists that they are the ones who are going to play a lead role in the reconstruction of Iraq, what impact does that have, not just on the actual rebuilding and trying to get fire stations going and a court system and all the normal things in a civil society, but on the big picture of actually addressing issues of governance, what impact would that have if the Americans say no, we're in charge?

B. Rae Well I think there's a real question that, that has to be engaged with the Americans. I think it's, I think that we have to ask them what do they want to do, what do they think is going to happen as a result of that. How stable do they believe those institutions are going to be and how, how reflective of that society they're really going to be, how successful is that effort going to be in the longer term.

You know, we, this isn't the first time we've had, we've had differences of opinion with the United States. During the Vietnam War I think the position of the Canadian government was different from that of the U.S. We did have a different view with respect to certain issues and certain, how, how things should be done and what the likely outcome of, of the American position was. And so I think it's not easy, it's not an easy discussion because the Americans and the British are losing troops, they're fighting on the front line, they're suffering as a result and they're, they are the ones taking the hit and also inflicting damage on Iraqi society and on the regime in Iraq. And I don't think they're just going to turn around and say OK now we've done that, let's hand it over to a bunch of people we don't know what their, what their views are.

The Americans are going to stay very much involved, the Americans are going to insist on obviously having a principle role, but the question really becomes, how broad based is this effort going to be. How successful is it likely to be. You know, Anthony I've been involved in, recently in events in Sri Lanka, civil war, 65,000 people killed, a response from the, from both sides saying we want to get some advice on how federal structures might work, we're there at the invitation of the parties giving them advice.

That's very different... from coming into a country at the invitation of, of the American military governor of Baghdad. That's a totally different situation and likely to generate a very different response. But at the same time, if there's going to be an American, basically an American run civil administration, I think we as, we as a country can't simply take pot shots from the sidelines, we have to recognize that it's a difficult and different world and, and if we want to play a constructive role we have to encourage a real dialogue and a real discussion. Not just with the

Americans, but with the British and others. I think the British are very concerned about this, certainly Mr. Blair in his public comments has made it very clear that he sees a very strong role for the U.N. and I think it's at that point that Canada would also want to play a role through the United Nations in some fashion.

Q Well, given the failure of the U.N. to prevent this war, how likely is it that the future of the U.N. depends on the reconstruction issues surrounding Iraq?

B. Rae Well I, I think, I think reports of the death of the United Nations are much exaggerated. The U.N. will carry on. The fact of the matter is the U.N. simply reflects the divisions that are in place in the world at any given time. And the, the strength of the United Nations is the quality of its institutions, of its institutions, the quality of the people that it's able to bring together, and its, its, its role as a, as a forum for, for, for debate and not just for debate as a, as a place for action. A majority of members of the Security Council were not prepared to support a resolution which authorized an immediate invasion of Iraq. And those facts are clear.

But I also believe that the United Nations will feel a very strong obligation to be involved in, not only simply humanitarian aide, but in the, in the reconstruction if Iraq. You know, the reconstruction of Afghanistan is just beginning. It's not going to end quickly. It's not something you do in a week. It's not something you do in a year. It takes a long time to get these things in place and to help to move societies towards a more constructive path.

Q Bob Rae, thank you very much.

B. Rae Thank you.

Q Bob Rae is chair of the board of the Forum of Federations.

END INTERVIEW