

# SIR JOHN A. MACDONALD AND THE PRAGMATICS OF NATION-BUILDING IN CANADA: LESSONS FOR NIGERIA

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## INTRODUCTION

Often times an individual, or a group of individuals, find themselves at a historical conjuncture that places in their path the opportunity to shape the destiny of their nation and chart the course for its subsequent development. These personages dot the pages of history and are easily recognisable as the “founding fathers” of their nations. The American founding fathers epitomise these historical figures.<sup>1</sup> Another such personage is Sir John A. Macdonald, Canada’s first prime minister whose nation-building policies in the second half of the nineteenth century is the subject of this article.<sup>2</sup> Like the American founding fathers who got their acclaim for their role in framing the American constitution, Sir John was one of the ‘fathers of Confederation,’ the constitutional negotiation process that gave birth to the Dominion of Canada with the enactment of the British North American Act in 1867.<sup>3</sup>

Through what became known as the nation-building policies, Sir John transformed disparate and disaggregated territorial entities brought together by an act of the British parliament into an integrated transcontinental nation and in the process laid a solid foundation for the transformation of Canada into one of the most advanced economies in the world. What were in the nature of these nation-building policies? What was Sir John’s vision for his country, and how did he manoeuvre through the maze of Canadian politics to bring this into fruition? These are some of the questions explored in this article. The article seeks to use the Canadian experience as a model for countries such as Nigeria whose citizens yearn for development and nation-building.

## 1. PRAGMATIC POLITICS AND NATION-BUILDING IN CANADA

The enactment of the British North American Act by the British House of Commons in March

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<sup>1</sup> The phrase, “founding fathers,” was coined by United States Senator Warren G. Harding of Ohio in the course of his keynote address to the Republican Convention in Chicago on 7 June 1916. See R. B. Bernstein, *The Founding Fathers Reconsidered* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 3-4. See also Colin B. Goodykoontz, “The Founding Fathers and Clio,” *Pacific Historical Review*, 23, 2, (May, 1954), 111-123.

<sup>2</sup> Sir John A. Macdonald was the prime minister in the Liberal Conservative government from 1867 to 1873 and from 1878 to 1891. After his death, the Liberal Conservatives continued in power until 1894.

<sup>3</sup> On Confederation and the establishment of the Dominion of Canada see Ademola Adeleke, “Constructing a Nation through the Constitutional Process: The Canadian Experience,” *Benin Journal of Historical Studies* Vol. 4, Nos. 1 & 2, (2002-2004), 81-103; R. D. Francis, R. Jones, and D. B. Smith, *Origins: Canadian History to Confederation* Fifth Edition (Toronto: Thomson Nelson 2004); P. B. Waite, *The Life and Times of Confederation, 1864 – 1867: Politics, Newspapers, and the Union of British North America* Third Edition (Toronto: Robin Brass Studio, 2001); J. M. S. Careless, *The Union of the Canadas: The Growth of Canadian Institutions, 1841 – 1857* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1967); Phillip Bucker, “CHR Dialogue: The Maritimes and Confederation: A Reassessment,” *Canadian Historical Review*, LXXI, 1 (March 1990), 1-45; R. C. Vipond, “1787 and 1867: The Federal Principle and Canadian Confederation Reconsidered,” *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, XXII, 1 (March 1989), 3-25.

1867 transformed the British North American colonies into the Dominion of Canada, a transcontinental state allied to the United Kingdom but independent of the United States. The process, known in Canadian history as *Confederation*, was initiated in 1864 to resolve the conflict arising from the co-existence of English and French speaking Canadians in the British North American colonies of Upper and Lower Canada.<sup>4</sup>

Although the Dominion came into being in 1867, not even the territorial objectives of Confederation, which was to create a transcontinental nation extending from the Pacific coast in the west to the Atlantic coast in the east, had been attained. On the Atlantic coast, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland remained outside the Dominion. The colony of British Columbia, created in 1866 when the mainland territory of British Colombia was merged with Vancouver Island, lay far out on the Pacific coast, with little or no connection with the Dominion except a common British heritage. And separating British Colombia from the Dominion was the thousands of square miles of territory, Rupert's Island, controlled by the Hudson's Bay Company and therefore outside the jurisdiction of the new state. For all practical purposes, the Dominion was in being, but it was yet to integrate all its territories into a state, much less fuse its people into a nation.

The United States remained a potent threat to the Dominion. American interests were heavily present in Rupert's Island. Even though the 49th Parallel was expected to delineate the boundary between the United States and British North America, Americans considered Rupert's Island, which was not under any sovereign entity, available for the picking. The purchase of Alaska from Russia, on the very day in March 1867 when Her Majesty signed the British North American Act, was a pointer to the threat, which America's *mani-*

*fest destiny* posed to the survival and territorial integrity of the Dominion.

Within the Dominion itself, there were strong annexationist sentiments held by those who believed that the young state could not resist the pull of geography and would do well to join the United States. The Dominion would also have to resolve its relations with its native and half-breed population. In short, after Confederation, Canada remained "a geographical expression," according to the country's first Prime Minister, Sir John A. Macdonald, until he could implement his nation-building proposals.<sup>5</sup>

Students of Nigerian history would find the description of the Dominion of Canada as a "geographical expression" most familiar. The late sage and politician, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, had used the same expression to describe Nigeria.<sup>6</sup> Both Canada and Nigeria faced formidable obstacles of nation-building, national integration, national cohesion and economic and social development after their emergence into statehood; the former in 1867 with the establishment of the Dominion, and the latter almost a century later in 1960. For Sir John, Canada remained a geographical expression in the 1860s because the business of Confederation remained unfinished. He was conscious of this and was determined, as he informed his friend James Cowan, "to complete the work of Confederation."<sup>7</sup>

As the architect of Canadian nation-building, Sir John and his Conservative Party government did not spend their time creating a vision document. He was a transformational leader who envisioned his country's future but was pragmatic enough to realise that actualising that vision would require adroit manoeuvring through the mucky waters of partisan politics. "I am satisfied," Sir John told parliament in 1865, "to confine myself to practical things—to the securing of such practical measures as the country really wants."<sup>8</sup> To create the nation he envisioned out of "scanty and refrac-

<sup>4</sup> See Adeleke, "Constructing a Nation"; Waite, *The Life and Times of Confederation*.

<sup>5</sup> *Nation-building: the Transcontinental Railroad*. The CBC Digital Archives Website. Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. <[http://archives.cbc.ca/politics/prime\\_ministers/topics/1456-9692/](http://archives.cbc.ca/politics/prime_ministers/topics/1456-9692/)> (Accessed 29.11.2011).

<sup>6</sup> Obafemi Awolowo, *Path to Nigerian Freedom* (London: Faber and Faber, 1966), 47-48.

<sup>7</sup> Quoted in Donald Creighton, *John A. Macdonald: The Old Chieftain*, Vol. 2 (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1955), 111.

<sup>8</sup> Province of Canada, *Debates* (1865), 1002. Cited in Rod Preece, "The Political Wisdom of Sir John A. Macdonald," *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 17, 3 (Sep., 1984), 465.

tory materials,<sup>9</sup> he fashioned solutions based on the expediency of power and politics.

In January 1869, the Dominion government purchased and extended sovereign control over Rupert's Land, owned originally by the Hudson's Bay Company. However, its attempt to take administrative control of the territory ran into resistance from the Métis, frontiers-people and settlers of French and Native American ancestry. Fearing that government control of the territory would affect their land rights and threaten their hunting way of life the Métis, led by Louis David Riel, launched the Red River Rebellion against the Dominion government. The government prevailed over the rebellion in 1870 and shortly thereafter carved the territory into the province of Manitoba and the Northwest Territories.

British Columbia joined the Dominion in 1871 after the government of Sir John pledged to connect the province to the rest of Canada by railway. When Prince Edward Island also joined the Dominion in 1873, Canada was transformed into a truly transcontinental state, stretching from the Pacific to the Atlantic. How could this immense territorial space be integrated into a *nation* and how could the nation be placed on the right trajectory towards economic and social development? How could the concept *Canadian* be made meaningful to societies as distinct and distant as British Columbia and Prince Edward Island? Sir John and his cabinet saw these as questions of nation-building and responded accordingly.

The nation-building programme initiated by the government had three major components: the development of the country's manufacturing base through tariff protection; the settlement of the west; and the construction of a transcontinental railway. However, as a seasoned practitioner of pragmatic politics, Sir John did not articulate these programmes at the same time; he also did not consider them as part of an integrated master plan designed by the government with pre-determined outcomes. The government did not produce a vision document based on any global index or comparison. On the contrary, Sir John determined what he considered to be the immediate needs of the new state, and worked within the limits of the

prevailing political dynamic to attain his goals. The government considered each of the programmes to be critical to nation-building and took practical measures to actualise them.

The construction of the transcontinental or Pacific Railway was the commitment the government made to get British Columbia into the Dominion. The government promised to begin the railway within two years after British Columbia joined the union and to complete it within ten years. Yet, the magnitude of the enterprise and the difficulties it would have to overcome were formidable indeed.

Opponents of the project questioned the wisdom of building a 3000-mile line through unchartered territory, at enormous cost, just to bring 28000 "whites" in British Columbia into the Dominion. Was not the Union Pacific-Central railway in the United States an example of such financial folly? That line had been completed in 1869. Yet, in spite of the fact that California had a population of 2 million out of a total population of 39 million, the railway was a financial disaster by 1874. The Pacific Railway, its opponents argued, would suffer an even worse fate.

Critics of the Pacific Railway project also pointed to the financial problems of the Intercolonial Railway (renamed the Canadian National Railway, now North American Railways), which had been funded by the federal government to link the Maritime Provinces of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia with Montreal in Quebec, central Canada. If the Intercolonial, which passed through settled territory, was losing an estimated one million dollars a year, what would be the fate of the Pacific Railway, which was six times as long and would chart a course through uninhabited territory with formidable engineering difficulties? For the government's critics the Pacific Railway would be an economic disaster, a perpetual drain on the resources of the state.

As it happened, the strongest opposition to the Pacific Railway came from members of the Liberal Party, which controlled the government of Ontario. Ontario had 45 per cent of the Dominion's population and therefore carried a larger proportion of the tax burden. Hence, the

<sup>9</sup> J. H. Aitchison, "Sir John A. Macdonald: Nation-Builder," *The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, 22, 4, (Nov., 1956), 549.

province had a legitimate reason to be concerned about the project's financial viability. Of even greater concern was the project's interface with the politics of provincial relations. The Pacific Railway was expected to bypass Toronto, the commercial nerve centre of Ontario, and connect Montreal in neighbouring Quebec. Montreal, not Toronto, would reap the economic benefits of the Pacific Railway.

Like most issues in Canada, the transcontinental could not be disentangled from the political rivalry and competition between Ontario and Quebec. The competition was a reflection of the dialectic of "two nations" which was at the heart of Canadian history and politics. French-speaking Canadians were dominant in Quebec while Ontario was largely English-speaking. The Confederation programme that gave birth to the Dominion was motivated largely by the need to resolve the dilemma of "two nations."<sup>10</sup> While Ontario was not enthusiastic about the Pacific Railway, the project was critical to keeping British Columbia in the Dominion. It was also indispensable to maintaining the Dominion's territorial integrity and transcontinental configuration. For Sir John, nation-building was impossible without the transcontinental railway. Without it, the state could hardly succeed in re-orienting the vision and character of its citizens from a north-south direction to an east-west *national* axis. The transcontinental was needed to infuse the new state with a Canadian essence.

It has been said of Sir John that he "had not perhaps a high code of political ethics," that he often times "raised opportunism almost to the level of a political principle; yet it may be doubted whether a statesman of stricter views could have guided the destinies of Canada during the difficult period of his prime ministry... In many ways, the Dominion of Canada is today the creature of his statesmanship."<sup>11</sup>

These were indeed difficult times, not only for the Pacific Railway project but also for Sir John's political career. The conjuncture between the project and Sir John's political fortunes were brought home most vividly by the general elections of

1872. It happened that the government awarded the contract for the transcontinental to a syndicate organised by Sir Hugh Allen, a shipping magnate, railway promoter and financier. That was all right except that Sir Allen had contributed about \$350,000 to Sir John's party's campaign fund. The Liberal opposition got evidence of the contribution and charged that Sir John had sold the charter for building the railway to Sir Allen. Thus broke out the so-called *Pacific Scandal*, which forced Sir John's government to resign in 1873. In the general election held shortly thereafter, the Conservatives were defeated overwhelmingly, and it appeared as if Sir John's political fortunes had reached an inglorious end. Under the new Liberal government of Prime Minister Alexander Mackenzie, the Pacific Railway remained a dream, its actualisation made even more difficult by the depression that hit Canada and the international financial market at the time. The downturn in the economy appears to have reinforced the prevailing view in the railway sector that the transcontinental could not be built ahead of western settlement.

Although the Mackenzie government was sympathetic to this view, it could neither ignore British Columbia's agitation for the railway nor the need to encourage western settlement. It nevertheless had to balance this with the prevailing depression. Consequently, the government decided to concentrate its efforts on improving communications with Manitoba while it negotiated with British Columbia for an extension of time for the transcontinental project. It also endeavoured to complete the Intercolonial Railway that linked the Maritime Provinces to the Dominion.

The economic depression of the mid-1870s brought the debate on unrestricted commercial reciprocity with the United States to the fore of national discourse. The United States had abrogated its reciprocal trade agreement with Canada in 1868. Since then, free trade Liberals across the country had canvassed for a renewed treaty with the United States. Attempts in this direction resulted in the Treaty of Washington, which came into effect in 1873. The treaty abolished tariff on Canadian fish exports to the United States. However, the American Customs Department put

<sup>10</sup> See Adeleke, "Constructing a Nation".

<sup>11</sup> "Sir John A. Macdonald", L'Encyclopédie de l'histoire du Québec/ <<http://faculty.marianopolis.edu/c.belanger/quebechistory/encyclopedia/SirJohnA.Macdonald-JohnAlexanderMacdonald-CanadianHistory.htm>> (Accessed 6 .4.2011)

a catch to it when it ruled that the manufactured metals used for canned lobsters were subject to duty. The Americans were obviously reluctant to abide by the spirit of the treaty.

The ascension of the Liberals to power in a period of economic depression provided free trade advocates with the opportunity to pursue their alternative. What was needed, the free traders argued, was a comprehensive reciprocal trade agreement. Towards this end, the Mackenzie government initiated negotiations with the United States in March 1874. The American Secretary of State, Hamilton Fish, insisted that Canada would have to retain her tariff regime against Britain as a precondition for a Canada-US reciprocal agreement. Such a proposition was, understandably, distasteful to Canada. However, in the face of American insistence, the Liberal government agreed, albeit reluctantly.

If the Liberals found the draft treaty acceptable, other interests in the country found it completely repugnant. The public debate on the draft treaty revealed a strong protectionist sentiment in the country. As far as these interests were concerned, the draft treaty was an attempt to impose commercial union, which Liberals and other annexationist sympathizers had promoted since Confederation. The protectionists argued that commercial union would lead to political union with the United States, and that there was little to differentiate commercial union from unrestricted reciprocity. Hence, unrestricted reciprocity implied, in the final analysis, annexation. This was the nature of the argument against the Liberal-sponsored policy of commercial reciprocity between Canada and the United States.

At the vanguard of the league of opposition to the draft treaty were the manufacturers. They asserted that their American counterparts were already using Canada as a slaughter market, a convenient market for dumping. To be sure, Canadian manufacturers faced serious competition from stronger and better-capitalised industries in Britain and the United States.

Canadian manufacturers were undoubtedly motivated by enlightened self-interest. There was nevertheless congruence between this sectoral interest and the popular demands for work and development across the national firmament. Since the abrogation of the first reciprocal trade agreement, Canadian manufacturers had come to dom-

inate the domestic market for processed goods, from agricultural machinery to soap and candles. Their business had also been boosted by the huge export opportunities created by the American civil war and the rapid development of transportation in Canada. It was therefore logical for them to believe that the domestic market was theirs by right. Canadians were also happy with the situation since the manufacturers' gains translated into more work for the citizenry and more development for the country. What both parties needed from the government was tariff protection to strengthen indigenous control of the domestic market and accelerate the process of development. Canadian manufacturers wanted tariff protection, Canadian citizens wanted work and development, hence the two found common cause in opposition to the draft treaty. When the Manufacturers Association of Nova Scotia passed a resolution asking the federal government to inaugurate protection and not reciprocity, this received wild acclaim across the country.

Unable to resist the pressure and popularity of the manufacturers' argument the Mackenzie government reluctantly agreed to raise tariff by twenty per cent, only to abandon the policy when it was criticised by free trade liberals. As events later proved, this costly political error would keep the Liberals out of power for the next eighteen years.

For a pragmatic politician like Sir John, the debate on tariff protection offered excellent opportunity to redress his political misfortune. While the Liberals were willing to swim against the tide of popular sentiment, Sir John realised immediately that the growing power of the manufacturers and the swing in public opinion towards protectionism could be harnessed for political purposes.

In 1876, he moved a motion in the House of Commons for a tariff policy that would benefit manufacturers, workers and farmers, in essence, a broad spectrum of the electorate. From this point forward, Sir John, whom the Liberals thought was washed out politically, began his inexorable ride back to power, on the crest of tariff protection. Having seized the political initiative Sir John also deployed a tactical strategy that conferred enormous political advantages on the Conservatives in the competition for power with the Liberals. Sir John believed that the word *protection* evoked negative images, which could offer his political opponents with some room to manoeuvre. He therefore

appropriated the phrase *National Policy* to describe what was in reality a programme for tariff protection. In the 1878 general elections, Sir John and the Conservatives campaigned on a *National Policy* programme that would stimulate domestic manufacturing through higher tariff regime.

The *National Policy* evoked a pan-Canadian ideology that was in consonance with the nationalist sentiments of the electorate. Sir John's evocative statement to the voters: "There has risen in this country a Canadian Party which declares we must have Canada for Canadians"<sup>12</sup> doomed the Liberals and their free trade agenda. The Conservatives crushed the Liberals and took over power, with Sir John back in the saddle as Prime Minister.

In its first budget in March 1879, the new government implemented a tariff regime that imposed duties ranging from fifteen to thirty per cent on manufactured goods. It also imposed special duties on agricultural produce. The *National Policy*, Sir John told the House of Commons, would be permanent and would ensure a steady growth of Canada's industrial capacity. The principle of permanence guaranteed for the Conservatives the financial support of the manufacturers and the electoral support of workers and farmers, in essence, the Canadian electorate.

In 1880, the government made fresh attempts to charter the Pacific Railway. The contract was finally awarded to a syndicate led by the railway financier, George Stephen. Even then, it required adroit manoeuvres by Sir John to bring the project to fruition. We should recall that the first attempt to charter the project had precipitated the Pacific Scandal that led to the political demise of Sir John. Upon his return to power, Sir John prevailed successful on parliament to grant a loan to the Canadian Pacific Railway Company, CPRC. In March 1885, the company exhausted its funds and decided to seek another loan from the government. At this juncture, even the Conservative caucus was prepared to allow the company to go under. With the House of Commons unwilling to entertain another request for a bailout loan, the future of the railway appeared to be doomed. However, Sir John saw things differently; the CPR was more than an economic or financial project; it was a political imperative; a tool of nation-building.

The Northwest Rebellion, which occurred in this gloomy period, provided the Prime Minister with a timely opportunity to prove that the nation's ability to settle and defend the west depended on successful completion of the CPR. As Donald Creighton has noted, Sir John believed that he "could use the railway to defend the west. He could use the west to justify the railway."<sup>13</sup> Echoing the Red River Rebellion of 1869, the Northwest Rebellion was once again organised by the Métis and was led again by Louis David Riel. The need to put down the new rebellion provided Sir John the opportunity to rescue the Canadian Pacific Railway. By the time the last spike was driven on 7 November 1885, the project had consumed \$150 million out of which the syndicate invested \$62 million. The balance was covered by a government cash subsidy of \$25 million, a land grant of 25 million acres worth \$25 million plus the \$38 million the government spent in building a 730-mile section, which it handed over to the company.

As Sir John had envisioned, the CPR brought immediate benefits to the nation. It carried large numbers of farmers and settlers to the west and set the stage for the development of the region's resources. It stimulated the region's wheat economy that began spectacularly at the turn of the century. It re-oriented the west into the mainstream of Canadian business, which, under the aegis of the *National Policy* tariff regime, was gradually expanding into a truly national economy. Although it was not planned as such, the CPR turned to be very complementary to Sir John's *National Policy*.

In the Maritimes, where the decline of the shipbuilding industry had created serious economic crisis, the *National Policy* was embraced as the agent of economic growth. This expectation was largely fulfilled. Between 1881 and 1891, the industrial growth of Nova Scotia outstripped that of all other provinces in eastern Canada. With just a fifth of the country's population the Maritimes by 1885 contained eight of Canada's twenty-three cotton mills, three of its five sugar refineries, two of the seven soap factories, one of three glass works, the two steel mills, and six of the twelve rolling mills. Naturally, Maritime manufacturers expected that Nova Scotia would ultimately become Canada's foremost industrial centre. This expecta-

<sup>12</sup> Waite, *Life and Times*, 91.

<sup>13</sup> Creighton, *John A. Macdonald*, 417.

tion did not consider the effect of Sir John's *National Policy* on the central provinces as well. As in the Maritimes, the *National Policy* accelerated industrial development in Ontario and Quebec. In fact, by the 1880s, industrial combines sponsored by capitalists of the Montreal Stock Exchange had absorbed the community industries in the Maritimes. Montreal emerged as the hub of the integrated economy that Sir John's *National Policy* had created for the nation.

Expectedly, the general elections of 1882, 1887 and 1891 were contested on the platform of the *National Policy*. The economic boom of the 1880s was attributed easily to the *National Policy*. Justifiably or not, the two were linked organically in the minds of the electorate, offering Sir John and his party enormous electoral benefits. As long as the policy endured, Sir John remained in power. The victory of the Conservatives in the 1891 election, the fourth in a row, provided sufficient proof that the *National Policy* platform had percolated into the consciousness of all Canadians.

Sir John's effort at nation building was obviously a success story. Without any vision document or blueprint, but with an intuitive understanding of his country's needs and unparalleled pragmatic political skills, Sir John transformed disparate entities into a political and economically integrated nation. The foundation established at Confederation in 1867 was now firmly consolidated. By the time Sir John died in 1891, he had transformed Canada from a geographical expression into a Canadian nation. The nation could march into the twentieth century, confident that it had tamed the iniquities of its spatial dimensions.

## CONCLUSION AND LESSONS FOR NIGERIA

Nigeria and Canada are both creations of British imperialism. Nigeria is blessed with a population five times that of Canada. Both are among the most resource-endowed countries in the world. However, whereas Canada has evolved into one of the most advanced nations in the world, Nigeria remains by all indices one of the most underdeveloped. Fifty years after independence (1960-2010), Nigeria has changed little from the "geographical expression" Chief Awolowo observed in 1960. In spite of the country's enormous natural resources and huge income from petroleum, poverty

abounds. Over eighty per cent of the population live on less than \$2 a day. The society is beset with numerous ethnic, religious and social conflicts, which underline the need for a fundamental restructuring and reorientation of the polity.

On 1st January 2012, the democratically elected government of President Goodluck Jonathan gave Nigeria's a Greek gift by eliminating the so-called fuel subsidy on Premium Motor Spirit, PMS, known locally as petrol. Overnight, the pump price of a litre of the product jumped from NGN65 to NGN141, (US\$0.40 to US\$0.87); an increase of 116 per cent. The prevailing sentiment across the national firmament was that the fuel subsidy should be retained since it was the only visible benefit Nigerian's derived from the social contract that binds citizens with their rulers. The policy was therefore against the grain of public opinion, and Nigerians responded with massive demonstrations and a debilitating 6-day strike across the country. They fought desperately to compel the government to reverse its policy. However, as far as the government was concerned, popular sentiments and expectations; the views of the citizenry from which it derived its sovereign powers; counted for naught. The government was determined to have its way, and, in the end, only agreed to reduce the new price to NGN97.

Unlike the leadership in Nigeria, Sir John and his Conservative ministry formulated policies that were in consonance with prevailing sentiments across the country. When it was clear that most Canadians supported tariff protection, the government formulated policies that encapsulated this popular sentiment, and came out with a programme it described as the *National Policy*, which proved beneficial to the country and laid the foundation for development and nation-building.

The Canadian experience demonstrates that visionary leadership, not vision documents and slogans, provides the key to unlocking the process of nation-building. The leadership must have a vision of the future it desires for the nation and citizenry. However, actualising that vision; translating what is essentially a mental image into reality is a function of the competence and commitment of the leadership; on the leadership's ability to conceptualize and implement its programmes; and on its ability to weave through the nation's political

process; in essence, on pragmatic politics. Above all, the leadership must accept and abide by the sanctity of the social contract that binds it to the citizenry. It must accept that its primary responsibility is the security and well-being of the citizenry,

from which it derives its legitimacy and sovereign powers. Sir John recognised this and the result was the creation of the Canadian nation. This is the lesson of the Canadian experience, and it is worthy of emulation by Nigerian leaders.