



Scott

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Ref No: DOIA 2223-0804

Dear Scott

Thank you for your request of 18 October 2022 under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), via FYI.org.nz:

I would like to request copies of all speech notes, talking points and presentations (e.g. PowerPoint slides) prepared for the participation of Immigration New Zealand Assistant Deputy Secretary Catriona Robinson in last week's New Zealand Institute of Intelligence Professionals Conference.

Our Response:

Please find the information within scope of your request attached as Appendix One.

Please note that I attended this conference in my private capacity, and not as an employee of the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment. Any views in the material are expressed in a personal capacity and are not representations made on behalf of the Ministry.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

If you wish to discuss any aspect of your request or this response, please contact inzoias@mbie.govt.nz.

Yours sincerely,

Catriona Robinson
Associate Deputy Secretary
Immigration New Zealand



Remarks on the occasion of election as a Fellow of the Institute of Intelligence Professionals

13 October 2022

Catriona Robinson

E mihi ana ki te rangi

E mihi ana ki te whenua

E mihi ana ki te mana whenua: ki Te Taranaki Whānui ki te Upoko o te Ika a Maui, rāua ko Ngāti Toa. Tēnei te mihi.

E ngā Rangatira – ko Tā Kim, ko Mark, ko atimira Larry LeGree – ka rere aku mihi ki a koutou. Ko Mike M: ngā mihi rawa atu! He tino pai te kite i a koe.

Ko Dan - tēnā koe. He whakamihī mō tō pōtitia.

Ko Marika – nui te aroha mō ō kupu atawhai.

Nō reira; ngā mihi, ngā mihi, ngā mihi nui ki a koutou katoa.

Firstly thank you all so much for your warm welcome. I am truly delighted and humbled to have been asked to join NZIIP as one of its small number of Fellows – and as its first woman Fellow – and so pleased to have been asked to give you a few thoughts of my thoughts this evening.

Marika, thank you for your great oration to introduce me. I'll admit that I was a little pensive when Jack said that NZIIP was going to go back to former colleagues to find out a little more about my background and gather some stories from the olden days – but evidently either he didn't know who to ask, or you and my friends and colleagues were kind and didn't roll out the worst of what they could have said!

The theme of this year's conference, I understand, is *Established and Evolving Voices in Intelligence*. As I organised my thoughts, it was a useful exercise to test myself on which I thought I was – an established voice, or an evolving one. What follows is a set of loose reflections on that theme: reflecting on the benefits of being 'established', rooted, knowledgeable and confident, and the benefits also of being open to change and growth, new ways of thinking, and new kinds of partnerships.

I started as an intelligence analyst with the NZIC in 1996. The fall of the Berlin Wall, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War was within very recent memory for a number of my colleagues. For people who 10 years before had felt the solidity of the profession that they had chosen, the absolute rightness and value and direction of the work that they were doing, the 90s were an unsettling time. What was the value of an intelligence agency when the game of spy vs spy no longer needed to be played? Who would want our intelligence if not other intelligence agencies?

Some agencies, especially overseas, started to shed staff at around this time. Colleagues talked later of this time as one of trauma, when people were scared for their jobs and a generation was whittled away leaving a big management gap ten years later. But I was coming in on a rising tide as my agency turned its attention to new horizons, found new customers and started up new endeavours. For me the 90s were a time of new horizons, when anything seemed possible.

I hadn't meant to have a career in intelligence, and I certainly didn't mean to stay as long as I did. But I fell over this job at an agency I'd never heard of, thought I'd give it a go, and I stayed for almost 2 decades. Because intelligence is enormously and endlessly fascinating! I did so many amazing things, went to some really cool and amazing places and also to Canberra,¹ and met so many wonderful people, among whom are some of my oldest friends.

Being ambitious, I was watching the top tiers of leadership to see what I could learn, and I realized a couple of things. Firstly, the very senior layers were all comprised of people who'd been in the organization for most or all of their careers. Many of them had had a career in the military prior to moving to a civilian role. Nothing against the military, some of the public servants whom I esteem most are serving military officers, but there was a certain sameness to leadership at that time which isn't healthy for any organization.

They knew a lot about their craft and its history, but they weren't necessarily well set up for fresh or adaptive thinking. Also it didn't look like they were going anywhere. On the odd occasion they might swap jobs with each other, but there was very little room or opportunity for anyone else to have a go at those roles. But then over the top of them, into the Chief Executive role, was usually posted an outsider. Knowledgeable and experienced as they might have been, no-one was getting promoted out of the senior tiers into the top job.

So I saw this combination of little refreshment of the senior leaders, those in place not taking or getting opportunities to go out, learn new things and come back, and then top leadership coming in and having to learn what can be quite an arcane discipline pretty swiftly in order to be effective as the Government's chief adviser on their discipline.

So it seemed to me, and I still think this, that as intelligence professionals especially when we work in more sensitive areas, we would well benefit from the same movement of water through our pool as other public sector disciplines do, ie having people moving out and back in again. Particularly for those who have a leadership responsibility, be it organizational leadership or thought leadership.

¹ I apologise for this undeserved slight on Canberra, a classy and dignified city which I greatly enjoy visiting. It was simply an easy target to try to get a laugh.

So the longer I stayed, the more evident it was to me that people who stayed for a really long time in the agency – not the deep specialists so much, but certainly those who aspired to leadership roles, suffered. There wasn't much opportunity to get fresh thinking, not much motivation to engage with people outside our own circles, and not that many opportunities for talented people to move up, that wasn't good for them, and it wasn't good for the agency.

And I worried that I too was risking stagnation. That staying in my comfortable place in an organisation I knew really well as the most established of establishment figures wasn't healthy for me and absolutely wasn't going to make help me keep getting stronger and adding more value.

So I moved to DPMC as the Director of National Security Systems, setting up the new national security architecture. That gave me for the first time real involvement in the full panoply of the all hazards all risks national security landscape in NZ, from counter-terrorism and armed conflict and cybersecurity through to ebola and earthquakes and infrastructure security. In working closely alongside the ODESC agencies, and supporting the Chief Executives of New Zealand's national security agencies as they got to grips with how we were going to arrange New Zealand's national security arrangements for the 21st century, I embraced the opportunity too to work closely across the gamut of the work of New Zealand's intelligence professionals including those in new and growing sectors.

I remember a former Minister dismissing the findings of our national security risk analysts that the single greatest national security risk to New Zealand – in terms of impact on people, impact on the economy and impact on the national psyche – was a pandemic. And many people struggled even to imagine how intelligence could or would play a role in managing such an event. I think we all have a very much better idea now! A great example of how established thinking about the utility of intelligence crowds out the 'what could be'.

I spent 5 years in that role, and as with the NZIC I could have stayed there for much much longer. The subject matter was massively interesting, my colleagues in DPMC were amazing, we were all enthusiastic about the work that we'd been asked to do to improve New Zealand's national security arrangements and the difference that we could make.

But once again I started to get worried about 'roosting' behaviour. After 5 years in a role which I had designed and moulded, there's always that risk of going – this role is like this because I made it like this for a reason, and therefore not recognising if or even that it could usefully change and be different and still successful.

Now here I am at MBIE, as a customer. I don't direct the activities of intelligence professionals, the products which our intelligence teams produce don't impact my day to day life, except when they do

and then oh boy do they have a major impact. I am I hope an intelligent and informed customer, and a supportive friend of the intelligence profession.

In the last few minutes I'll reflect broadly on some of my enduring truths about being an intelligence professional and some areas where evolution is happening, or could be healthy.

So first – the value of intelligence. Why do we need it, and is there still any use to the profession of intelligence in 2022, when seemingly anything we want to know is available at the other end of a phone?

Well yes, of course there is! And you believe that too or you wouldn't be in this room tonight. To quote David Omand, the point of intelligence – irrespective of its source – is to enable action to be optimized, by reducing ignorance. Intelligence analysts tell those responsible for taking decisions what they need to know – usually what they have said they want to know, but at its best also what it hasn't occurred to them yet that they will need to know.

And I think that over the last 25 years the public servants of NZ generally have become more attuned to its value and have become better users of it. The scale of reference has been expanding. As the Internet empowers increasingly large data sets increasingly available to more people, I see a rise in appreciation for people who can make sense of it. We've seen an expansion of intelligence functions throughout more of government, first as groups of people within agencies who could use intelligence derived from and by others to assist with their own work, then increasingly building own functions. And intelligence as a discipline has expanded into all kinds of areas.

I see too increased recognition that the value of intelligence lies in the use we make of it – intelligence is a facility that we need access to if we are to act sensibly, but that requires too a readiness on the part of customers to demand that it must be useable.

There was a prescient comment made by the UK's Science and Technology Committee in 2015, discussing the 'near miss' of the ebola scare that year: "Surveillance on its own without the capacity, willingness and leadership that allow you to respond is not stamp collecting but it is not far from it". I think as collectors, analysts and users we all know this to be true.

In respect of secret intelligence in particular: it can be invaluable, obviously - it provides access to information that another party is trying to keep you from knowing and, where you get an even greater advantage from knowing it anyway, without them knowing that you know.

What I might call the Establishment view of the power and value of the secret agencies and those who work for them used to be that they are different and special by virtue of the unique things that they do and the secrecy in which they must do them.

I think that society, but also the intelligence agencies themselves, have evolved away from that view that they are unique and special by virtue of existing, that they are endowed with magical, mystical qualities because of the secrets that they have access to and the obscurity in which they operate. We all recognize that they're not special *because* they're secret, but because the secret information that they provide can at its best be a game-changer. That is, we expect them to stand or fall, like everyone else in the intelligence community, on the quality of the information that they supply, the analysis that follows, and the practical useability – ie the so what and the what next – of their products. Which is exactly how it should be.

Which hopefully also means that the rest of us are also evolving to become better customers and users of those products. Because of course there is a price to be paid when information is secretly collected and needs to be compartmentalised. The more secrecy there is, the fewer the people applying their brain to the questions of so what and what now, and the fewer opportunities there are for action. This is an area where we all need to keep working diligently, to be better customers and consumers of secret intelligence, understanding where it genuinely adds value, asking for it and using it, while being intelligent about where we *don't* need it.

Nowadays I also see us paying very much closer and more careful attention to the concerns of civil society. Back in the day – well first of all there was the comfort of secrecy, no-one has ever heard of us and even if they have how dare they critique what we do or why we exist. Then there was the phase of: they don't understand, and that's not their fault, so the remedy is to teach them so as to bring them over to our way of doing things, ie we just need to change their minds. Nowadays, I see a genuine humility in the secret intelligence agencies, a recognition that there are areas where it is us who don't understand and might usefully listen to and understand the experiences of others. I see people throughout those agencies genuinely talking about an organizational culture in which it is a normal thing to embrace transparency, to listen before speaking and think before launching into self-justification, and to be humble about their discipline.

And for clarity, the core thing that I haven't seen change in the last 25 years has been the absolute integrity of those entrusted with those secrets and their commitment to their responsibilities in safeguarding them.

Moving on, then, to thinking about the intelligence community writ large – which to me when I started in 1996 meant basically the 2 secret agencies, the NZDF and maybe a bit of Police and not much else, but which of course today is very very much more than that.

On reflection it may have been much more than that even then – one of the downsides of working for a secret agency, and I wonder whether this might still be the case today, is that I didn't get out

much, I didn't get much of a chance to interact with colleagues beyond my own immediate sphere of reference, or beyond my own echo chamber.

I resonate with something that I once read about intelligence being characterized by an "epistemic community", defined as a network of professionals who share a specialized expertise and knowledge in a particular field and derive a sense of shared identity through shared practice.

That definitely sounds like my experience in the NZIC. I derived a deep satisfaction, validation, sense of belonging to something amazing beyond simply what was available in my own organization or even own nation, by virtue of being a member of this singular community.

But, I joked – and it was only half a joke – that I was more likely to be prepared to share something sensitive and important with a colleague from Australia than with a colleague from say Fisheries. That underlines the real strength of the bonds which the epistemic community creates, that's a value, of course it is. But it's also worrying.

It underscores how careful we all need to be not to let our natural attachment to our own community and preference for hanging out with and engaging with people like us stifle the other contacts that we need if we're to keep our own and our organisations' thinking fresh. It's that need to keep working on *evolving* our relationships, and bringing in new and evolving voices, alongside celebrating the strengths of the established.

The good news is that I think we're doing that. This Institute is a great example – set up by one of the senior leaders from the NZSIS 14 years ago, with the first patron the then head of the NZSIS and the first conference opened by the then Prime Minister and minister for the intelligence agencies – but now look at it, and look at all of you here. A power for the evolution of intelligence in New Zealand and a membership which spans every sort of intelligence function across public, private and civil society.

When I look around our intelligence community I see intelligence and ops sitting alongside each other, working together on shared problems. And I see the intelligence community engaging openly, frankly and regularly with communities and stakeholders far beyond what they might once have thought were normal or appropriate.

In conclusion, then, I think we all know that the value of the discipline of intelligence is an enduring one. They call it the second oldest profession – certainly, those charged with the security of the nation have always found that they need their intelligence advisers close at hand if they want to make the best decisions about action based on the best available information.

I, for example, do certainly regard myself as an intelligence professional – and I am honoured and humbled that you think so too. I haven't actually had my hands on raw intelligence for a really long time; I probably wouldn't recognize what many of you do any more. But I'm still part of the intelligence community, part of the cycle – without people like me, who understand intelligence and its value, rely on it to inform decisions about the action that they'll take and ask intelligently for what they need, then we risk wasting the using valuable resources that we expend on intelligence for no good purpose.

And it has long been my belief that the intelligence agencies and the intelligence profession in general – just like every other profession – suffer if stagnation is allowed to creep in. We all get refreshed, reinvigorated, and we are better intelligence professionals through the opportunities that we look out for and that we seize to do different things with different people, through the collaboration that we have with others, the exchanges that we have with people beyond our own disciplines and ways of thinking, and being open to engaging thoughtfully and constructively with very different views about the work that we do, the value it has and the harm it can cause, and through having people coming and going through the community.

In other words, what I urge all of you, even the most established of establishment figures among you, to think 'evolving' – and seek out and listen to the evolving voices around you. We're all better off when we do that.

With that – thank you so much again. I wish you a very good night, and all the best in your intelligence careers.