

THE ATTENTION GIVEN TO CANADA AND THE UNITED STATES  
IN EACH OTHER'S SCHOOLS

I -- SUMMARY

About the only attention that Canadian history or geography receives in schools in the United States is compressed into a couple of weeks -- usually at the grade 5 or grade 6 level. Canadian schools do little better by the United States. There appears to be very little inaccuracy, in the sense of presenting wrong facts; but there is considerable inaccuracy in the sense that the treatment in each case appears to be brief, superficial (almost cavalier) and directed by the myths which abound in the folklore of each country as is!

It is unlikely that the situation will be improved by merely increasing the number or quality of the kinds of things that we are now doing. The basic problem is that neither country is really convinced that the other is foreign or that there exist any fundamental and interesting differences between the two cultures. Almost every citizen in each country appears to be convinced that he already knows all that matters about the other. He does not; but his smugness is the chief obstacle to instilling any desire for adequate knowledge that will lead to accurate understanding.

There are many things which can be done to improve the volume and effectiveness of the attention which the subject gets in the schools of these two nations. However, most of the actions that can be taken are likely to have very little lasting effect or to hold long-term interest for those involved, unless they are related to a much more fundamental program designed to change the attitudes described above. What is needed appears to be an all-out public relations program designed to convince each country that the other is foreign -- perhaps by highlighting differences for a while,