



Statements and Speeches

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ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT OF CANADA'S RELATIONS WITH THE USA

Notes for an Address by the Honourable Joe Clark, Secretary of State for External Affairs, to the Institute for Research on Public Policy, Ottawa, March 24, 1985.

It is unusual for us in Canada to have occasions when our academics participate in gatherings such as this and share their views with government officials on the shape and nature official policies might take in the future. I know that this is a normal activity in the United States, so much that it is difficult, at times, for outsiders to appreciate where government ends and where academe begins. I would hope that we in Canada could have a little more of that particular American practice.

In organizing conferences such as this, the Institute is making an important contribution to the quality of debate on public policy in Canada. In democratic societies there can be no higher goal than that of encouraging participation in both the political system and in policy formulation. In Canada, we have a different problem than in the United States; there, the participation in the electoral system is unusually low. The participation of all segments of society in the policy formulation process, however, is unusually high.

In Canada we have the opposite. Electoral participation is high while policy formulation tends to operate on a much more restricted basis. During the last election, one of our important promises was to broaden the consultative process. We believe that a serious source of disunity in Canada has been the sense that whole regions, cultures and economic communities, such as labour unions, have felt themselves excluded from any genuine influence on public policy. The sense of exclusion of nationalist Quebecers from centralist Ottawa is well known. In my own region, the lasting damage of the National Energy Program was not in its measures, which can be changed, but in the dramatic proof it offered that the West could not influence national policy vital to its interests. As a new and national government, we want to ensure that Canadians who felt alienated from the political process — regionally, culturally, economically, or as individuals — are given every opportunity to participate fully.

Since last September, the new Government has devoted a lot of energy to this purpose. We have entered into discussions with the regions of Canada who had felt excluded from the national process. Our policy of participation in the decision-making process has led to reconciliation and the settling of old problems.

Our working papers have been prepared to deal with different areas of government policy. In these papers, there is a framework for certain questions and options around which public debate can be centred. These papers, as well as the comments of Canadians, will be the major elements that will guide our policy in international relations, defence, immigration, health and welfare, employment, commerce, economic development and energy.

In foreign policy, I will be publishing a Green Paper which will focus upon the real interdependency
