

Sensible handling of issues needed to manage Canadian-American relations

Management of the Canadian-American relationship "comes down to a commitment by both sides to the sensible handling of complex issues in an environment of change", recently appointed Canadian Ambassador to the United States Allan E. Gotlieb told the sixth biennial conference of the Association of Canadian Studies in the United States. Mr. Gotlieb spoke to the association at Michigan State University in East Lansing, Michigan prior to taking up his post as ambassador in Washington, D.C.

"In these circumstances a premium is placed on flexibility, a pragmatic approach to the use (or non-use) of institutions, and a heavy reliance on traditional diplomatic and conciliatory methods," said Mr. Gotlieb in his address, which focused on the management and issues of the Canada-United States relationship.

Little government interference

Mr. Gotlieb told the delegates to the conference that "one of the more remarkable characteristics of the (Canada-U.S.) relationship is the extent to which neither government nor their 'mechanisms' are involved in it". He said that the countless number of personal and commercial contacts that take place daily across the border are made without government participation and reflect the common values and interests of the Canadian and American people.

"Even when governments do become involved," he said, "the tendency has been not to erect elaborate administrative edifices, but to conduct relations in a straightforward pragmatic fashion. Formal bilateral structures are not common, and this is perhaps surprising in view of the extraordinary array of issues which the two federal governments deal with."

In his address, Mr. Gotlieb said that the "economic centre of gravity" has changed in both Canada and the United States. Central Canada has begun an "awkward period of adjustment from its traditional role as the economic engine of the nation," he said. "The resource developments in the west and east are reducing the relative clout of Ontario and Quebec just at the same time when these provinces' main U.S. markets in the midwest and northeast are declining. To meet this combination of enormous opportunity and difficult adjustment, Canada has set about obtaining greater control over her own economy," said Mr. Gotlieb.

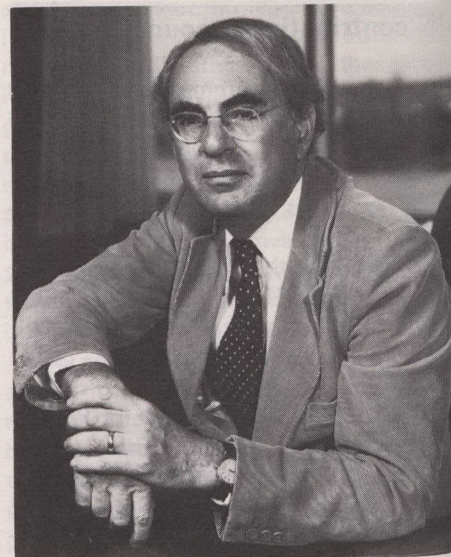
Mr. Gotlieb made the point that this effort does not mean that the Canadian government has instituted a new policy in Canadian-American relations. "The fact is that in Canada as in the United States, the private sector has been and will remain the driving force behind economic development," he said. "Nonetheless, Canada's growth will entail a significant degree of public sector involvement. Indeed, this sort of partnership between the public and private sectors has been a common theme in Canadian history; there is no discontinuity," added Mr. Gotlieb.

Public-private partnership

There are many examples in Canadian history of the partnership between government and private sectors. "...Traditionally, Canadians have expected their federal and provincial governments to act in fields of broad public endeavour when circumstances warranted. Usually, however, such activity has meant encouraging the private sector, not limiting its opportunities. Canadians are comfortable with a situation in which both public and private sectors have a role. This is probably because our experience has shown that, for Canada, this partnership, by and large works reasonably well," Mr. Gotlieb told the delegates.

He added that he was skeptical that basic political attitudes in both the U.S.

Allan E. Gotlieb has been appointed Canada's Ambassador to the United States, a position that he is taking up this month. Mr. Gotlieb, in his capacity as Under-Secretary of State for the Department of External Affairs, served as Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau's representative at the Economic Summit held in Ottawa this past July. He joined the Department of External Affairs in 1957 and took up the position of Under-Secretary of State in 1977. Mr. Gotlieb has also served with the federal Departments of Communications, and Manpower and Immigration. He is a Canadian member of the Permanent Court of Arbitration and has served as Director of the Export Development Corporation, as Governor of the International Development Research Centre, and of the National Film Board of Canada.



Canada's new Ambassador to the United States Allan Gotlieb.

and Canada were diverging in a fundamental and permanent fashion. "The conventional wisdom that our two countries are moving into a period of inevitable confrontation because there is now a greater ideological distance between them has been over-emphasized. The fundamental fact — the deep reality — is that both Canada and the United States are exceptionally diverse, pluralistic societies with profound and irradicable traditions of free expression," said Mr. Gotlieb.

He pointed out that the U.S. government had intervened directly into its economy, where it felt circumstances warranted, to protect American industry. "To generalize, therefore, about long-term trends and tendencies is to engage in an exercise of guesswork and speculation," Mr. Gotlieb said.

"...The Canadian government for its part is continuing to engage in some aspects of the country's economic development in a clearly delineated fashion, particularly in the energy sector where a number of significant modifications in Canadian legislation have recently been introduced. In this sense, there is a divergence of approach," said Mr. Gotlieb.

He added that in a bilateral relationship as large and complex as the Canadian-American one, "even this degree of difference is causing strain".

"The bottom line for the United States is that Canada will be a more capable, economically stable partner. The Canadian experience may, however, require on the part of Americans a calm assessment of their longer-term national