

A Truly Canadian Policy

The following article by the Honourable Paul Martin, Secretary of State for External Affairs, was published in the Paris newspaper Le Monde on December 12, 1967 :

Canadians are questioning themselves with honesty about the future of their country. This is a time-honoured custom. From the very beginning, geography, internal dualism and the massive influence of our neighbours to the south have seemed to make Canada's future problematical; nevertheless, for 100 years, Canada has grown and asserted itself thanks to the steadfast determination of its two main communities. Throughout its entire existence, Canada, the product of a daring political idea and a creative compromise, has been in a state of permanent invention. Thus, in this centennial year, while anxiety mingles with our feelings of pride, Canada is trying harder than ever to discover and create its future image. The incredible strides which French-Canadian society has made and which delight us all represent for Canadians less a problem than a magnificent chance for growth. Thanks to the painful but promising dialogue which has been taking place for years between the French-speaking and English-speaking communities in Canada, Canadians are on the way to coming to terms with one another. At the same time, they are providing themselves with safeguards to protect their respective identities and to give these identities full expression.

For many years, the Canadian Government has been trying to draw up an external policy which would represent Canada's internal reality as accurately as possible. This policy would, in effect, be deceptive if it did not distinguish the permanent characteristics of the Canadian personality and if it did not first address itself to the countries in the best position to support its development. For Canada — I am giving a very simplified picture — this reality can be reduced to certain basic elements : two main cultures, French and English, which are offshoots of Europe and whose defence and development alike require Europe's assistance; an immense territory whose scattered population is spread along a boundary almost 4,000 miles in length; an expanding economy, abundant natural resources whose development calls for a constant influx of capital and human resources; and, finally, the proximity of the United States, whose economic and cultural influence represents both a contribution and a challenge to Canada.

In order to show how the Canadian reality is translated into Canada's external policy, I intend to emphasize the two factors which seem most important to me : biculturalism and Canada's North American affinities.

In its search for a distinct personality to express abroad, Canada is fortunate to begin with a great advantage. The presence of two of the world's greatest cultures, shared by men of every race on every continent, gives Canada an