



Statements and Speeches

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CULTURAL DIPLOMACY: A QUESTION OF SELF-INTEREST

An Address by the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. Allan Gotlieb, to the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, Winnipeg, November 12, 1979

It is a great pleasure for me to be with you today — both as a native of Winnipeg who has rather too few opportunities to revisit the city and as a sometime academic who is not averse to delivering a lecture, particularly when he has in the classroom as a captive audience the University Presidents of Canada. While I have met many of you on other occasions, I am grateful to the AUCC for providing this opportunity to meet you as a group and for having chosen such a splendid location for your conference.

As should be clear from the general approach I will be taking, in these remarks academic relations are set in the larger framework of cultural relations. There is a hint of bureaucratic necessity in this, but I do think that the creative spirit characteristic of both fields provides sufficient kinship to allow me this liberty.

It is in the nature of the subject that much has been and will be written and said about the function and purpose of international cultural relations. All of you will have your own ideas and no policy will satisfy entirely even a major portion of the Canadian cultural community, a particularly disparate beast.

My object here today will be to try to convince you that Canadian cultural policy in its foreign dimension is an integral part of foreign policy, that although Canadians have been slow to appreciate this important and essential reality, the penny has indeed dropped and we are acting accordingly. The Canadian public, but more particularly the academic and artistic communities, have a vital role to play in ensuring that the manifold benefits of an enlightened cultural diplomacy are secured.

To begin with, I might review the principal criticisms of the cultural policies of the Department of External Affairs. While it has been claimed that there are as many critics of our policies as there are artists, poets, musicians, singers, dancers, athletes, academics, authors or playwrights, this is not quite the case. We do nevertheless engage in a healthy dialogue with a number of critics whose principal "observations" can be grouped into three categories:

- a) government support for cultural participation in the international environment is inadequate in terms of the amount of money and the direct assistance provided;
- b) such assistance as is provided could better be furnished by private individuals or institutions;
- c) cultural policy has nothing to do with External Affairs.

Regarding the first criticism, it is largely self-cancelling in that there are almost as many people who feel we devote too much time and too many resources (financial
