

PUBLIC RELATIONSHIPS AND

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The relationship between Canada and the United States is deeper and broader in its bilateral implications than between any other two countries in the world. It is a relationship unique among nations. With every country, either directly or indirectly, Canada has a public relationship — one of embassies and consulates, agreements and pacts, aid programmes and trade — governed by the protocol and the formality of international diplomacy. In Canada-United States relations this is only the tip of the iceberg.

Historical Bonds

North Americans have been sharing a continent since the end of the last glaciation about ten centuries ago. Long before treaties, tariffs, taxes, immigration procedures and customs regulations were established to defend the 8 530 km political border, people were using shared resources; travelling the east-west, north-south waterways; fishing the border lakes and holding summit meetings. In its essence nothing has changed — only grown vastly more complicated. An investigation into family history or corporate structure, into vacation plans or product research, into marathon runners or bird populations exposes this inextricable relationship.

Not that Canada-United States relations have always been amicable. In fact, most of colonial history was fraught with conflict between the emerging nations as each sought to establish a way of life and government in accordance with its ideals and loyalties. Between the first adventurous migrations across the Alaska-Siberia ice bridge and the Planter and British Empire Loyalist movements, the North American continent was regarded as a single "country", open and ready for the taking. The American Revolution ended this illusion of unity and marked the first delimitation of the border. From that point onwards, people would emigrate instead of migrate.

The War of 1812, the years of "manifest destiny" characterized by American expansionism in North America, the purchase of Alaska, the rapid settlement of the west and the successful boundary negotiations with Great Britain kept Canadians wary and apprehensive of American intentions. Only when the global conflict of World War I forced attention away from purely continental preoccupations did the era of modern-day collaboration and friendship begin.

A second global conflagration 21 years later and the continuing unstable world dynamics made it obvious that joint collaboration was not an option, but a necessity.

In a recent speech at a conference sponsored by the Institute for Research on Public Policy, the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. Joe Clark, made these remarks:

"In one sense, we are all more North American than we are either American or Canadian. Many of the forces that make countries and peoples unique operate on a continental basis in North America. I believe most Canadians and Americans accept that and have little difficulty in dealing with the consequences.

There is, however, one significant caveat. Canadians appreciate the unique and distinctive life that we have created for ourselves on the top half of North America. We do not and will not accept policies and programmes that alter the fundamental nature of the Canadian community. Most of the serious continuing problems in managing the relationship between Canada and the United States can be traced to that issue."



Cultural Cousins

The tendency of Canadians to see the United States as culturally homogeneous is a legacy of the melting pot concept, one which Canadians regarded as slightly inferior to their own more culturally diverse mosaic. In the abstract, Americans were perceived as brash, boisterous, gregarious children, rushing in where angels feared to tread, and naively surprised when their advances were rebuffed or their assistance met with less than gratitude.

Many Americans, while acknowledging Canada's ethnic diversity, considered them as a group to be cautious, moralistic, stodgy and a bit dull.

Waves of immigration have inundated various regions of the United States and ended forever the idea of a homogeneous all-American culture; and both nations now take pride in the richness and abundance of cultural expression.

Twenty million Canadians, 80% of Canada's population, live within 160 km of the American border across which passes television and radio programming, newspapers, videos, books, popular music, live entertainment and 10.9 million tourists a year.

Assuming an even distribution of the American population, 14.8 million Americans live within 160 km of the Canadian border and represent only 6.25% of the population of the United States. So, despite a common European heritage and large ethnic populations, it is not surprising when this lopsided arrangement makes Canadians feel somewhat protective of their cultural integrity.

Notwithstanding the dramatic increase of filmmaking in Canada for the world market, the use of Canadian sites and performers, and the success of television programmes such as *Seeing Things*, there are far more cultural influences from south of the border than can easily be counteracted by Canadian programming quotas.

It may not be necessary. The linear distribution of Canada's population, and the harsh reality of a northern climate have created a ruggedly individualistic people who yield to outside influences sparingly and grudgingly. Regionalism, while making economic progress unequal and difficult, is Canada's cultural saviour.

Economic Symbionts

Two situations create the most widespread anxiety about Canadian cultural and political integrity: the plethora in Canadian media of made-in-America entertainment, and the crablike *pas de deux* of economic interdependence. In 1984, Canadian exports to the United States reached \$85.6 billion while American imports totaled \$68.5 billion, leaving Canada with a surplus of \$17.1 billion. Merchandise trade, however, is not the whole picture.

The total balance of payments which includes trade-in-services, dividends and royalties, and travel and tourism has historically operated to the benefit of the United States. However, in 1983, American payments to Canada exceeded Canadian payments to the United States by \$1.97 billion. Indicators for 1984 put these payments \$6.09 billion in Canada's favour, an increase of 67.7%.