

CHAPTER II

AN EVOLVING FRAMEWORK

If cultural relations are to play a dynamic role in Canadian development in the years ahead, it will be necessary to fashion an effective and efficient framework for these relations. It is the object of this chapter to examine the framework that is presently evolving to advance Canada's international interests in this field. Before this can be done, however, a suitable definition of culture must be developed, since it is the definition of culture which sets the outer limits on the framework.

Definition of Culture

There is nothing quite like the fascination and frustration which comes from the problem of defining "culture." For culture is an elusive term which is not easily pinned down. A team of academics, intent on clarifying the meaning of culture, recently discovered well over 200 separate definitions of culture, ranging all the way from arts to civilization. Obviously, culture is not only an elusive term, it is also an elastic term - a term that can be stretched in many different directions to suit different situations.

In its most natural form, culture is most commonly defined as "the arts." From the standpoint of Canada's cultural relations, this definition is too narrow, since it precludes relations in many other important cultural fields - such as education, science, the mass media, recreation, sports and the crafts - which also have a fundamental bearing on Canada's cultural presence in the world. Stretched to its most extreme form, culture is most commonly defined as "a way of life" or "civilization." Here, everything that a country produces is a manifestation of its culture. In this sense, all relations are cultural relations, since they are all expressions of a country's creative accomplishments. While this may be true in a broad, philosophical sense, it is of little help in a specific, operational sense, since it completely obliterates the distinction between the political economic, social and cultural dimensions of international relations.

How are we to solve this riddle? The most effective way, and the way that is most suitable for purposes of analysing Canada's international cultural relations, is to define culture in terms of a series of specific "cultural sectors." For instance, the "artistic culture" can be used to identify a unique sector of Canadian life. Not only does the artistic culture have its own unique problems, institutions and products, but also it is part of the larger complex of Canadian culture. In much the same way, it is possible to think of the educational culture, the scientific culture, the crafts culture and so on - each as distinct entities in their own right as well as fundamental contributors to the larger picture of Canadian culture.

The advantage of defining culture as a series of separate but interrelated sectors is that these sectors can be expanded or contracted at any time to suit changing conditions and fluctuating requirements. For example, at the present time, the following sectors of culture would most conveniently comprise a suitable definition of culture for purposes of developing Canada's international cultural relations. This definition is sufficiently broad to represent the creative vitality and