



# Statements and Speeches

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No. 75/31

## CANADA'S STUDIES PROGRAM ABROAD

A Speech by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Allan J. MacEachen, at the Inauguration of the Chair and Centre of Canadian Studies at Edinburgh University, Edinburgh, October 21, 1975.

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That the first chair and centre of Canadian studies in Britain should be in Scotland is in no way surprising. There are the strongest of ethnic and cultural bonds between our country and this region of the United Kingdom.

I myself represent Nova Scotians of varied Scottish ancestry in our Parliament, but there are also: the French-speaking descendants of the Fraser Highlanders in Quebec; the descendants of Scottish settlers of Glengarry in Ontario; the Selkirk immigrants to Manitoba; the Hebrideans who peopled the south of Saskatchewan; the Glaswegians who dug the first coal mines on Vancouver Island -- in all more than two million Canadians who claim Scottish forebears and who form the country's third-largest ethnic community.

Many of the ships that for two centuries carried Scots westward across the Atlantic would bring back not only timber for the great shipyards of the Clyde, salt fish, fine furs and abundant wheat, but Canadian students bound for the Scottish universities -- St. Andrews, Glasgow, Aberdeen, and particularly Edinburgh.

Quite apart from its high academic standards and intellectual celebrities among the faculty -- then as now --, there was another circumstance about Edinburgh University that appealed quite naturally to the sons and daughters of Scottish-Canadians: this was what the *Commonwealth Universities Year Book* discreetly refers to as "the economy of its lodgings".

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Scottish immigrants and their children returning from Scottish universities brought to Canada the legendary respect of the Scot for the practical benefits of education. But they also brought with them the Scottish respect for human values, the ready sense of humour, the habit of modesty and warm neighbourliness, and a quiet determination to build a nation devoted to the pursuit of equal access to security and dignity for every individual citizen. The Scottish influence had a profound impact on the early development of Canadian education systems -- indeed, I suppose it is more to our Scottish ancestors than to any others that we owe the fact we have long enjoyed in Canada the kind of comprehensive school systems that are still in dispute in parts of this country. From our Scottish ancestors we have learned to relax and enjoy comprehensives.

Canadians acknowledge this debt in many ways -- in the thistles and St. Andrew's Crosses that adorn the coat-of-arms of many of our universities, in the continuing links between teachers and scholars, in the growth of Scottish studies in Canada -- as well, I suppose, as in the continuing support of the distillery business, and the continuing disapproval of this habit by some in our Presbyterian congregation!

Two Nova Scotian historians, MacLean and Campbell, have summarized the influence of Scotland on Canada as follows:

"The attitudes of the students in the old land toward education were carried with them and congealed in this new society; the lad of the crofter or tradesman was not turned away from Edinburgh University, nor was he kept out of institutions of higher learning in Nova Scotia because of class distinction."

While the seeds of Scottish education spread rapidly across Canada, the new soil in which they grew inevitably altered the texture of the flower. In a predominantly Scottish area of Nova Scotia -- Pictou County --, the school curriculum at the turn of the century included calisthenics and military drill, vocal music, hygiene and temperance, moral and patriotic duties. Today I imagine that, of that list of subjects, only calisthenics and, perhaps, hygiene survive! Still, the Scottish tradition forms part of the educational bedrock upon which the study of Canada, its institutions, its history, geography, economy and literature have developed.

It is evidence of the maturity of our Canadian nationhood today and the inherent value of Canadian studies that the University of Edinburgh has integrated those studies into its own academic program.

We in Canada are deeply complimented by the expanding attention being paid to the study of our history and current affairs at this university. It is as good evidence as any I can think of that we have truly achieved our independence and established our own modest but unmistakable identity in the world.

To many of you in these ancient lands, where national identity has for centuries been so familiar that you seldom think about it, it must seem a little strange that establishing our own distinctive identity is so important to Canadians. It is hard to explain that wish, but it is there. It exists in much the same way as one elder finally realized the reason for church union in Scotland existed. During the debates in the presbyteries, he at last withdrew his opposition in these words: "I think the scheme of union is impractical, ill-considered, unjust, and indeed absolutely idiotic -- but there is no doubt it is God's will."

If a distinctive Canadian identity is not necessarily God's will, it is certainly the will of most of any Canadian politician's constituents today; and this is one of those occasions that suggest that perhaps we have established the Canadian identity abroad more clearly than we realize at home in Canada. In selecting as its first objective the support of a new chair and centre of Canadian studies here in one of Britain's most dynamic and honoured centres of learning, the Foundation for Canadian Studies in the United Kingdom has created a prominent focal point for the encouragement of Canadian studies in other British universities and in universities in other European countries.

It is difficult for any Canadian to discuss Canadian culture before an audience like this one facing me today. The difficulty begins in the problem of defining the meaning of culture. You British have had it so long that today you simply enjoy it, you know you have it, and the definition doesn't matter. We Canadians didn't have it, we think we're beginning to have it (though we're not sure we should enjoy it), and we're still trying to define it.

Your *Concise Oxford Dictionary* is not much help, either. Its definition of culture is as follows: "tillage; rearing, production (of bees, oysters, fish, silk, bacteria); set of bacteria thus produced; improvement by (mental or physical training); intellectual development". Perhaps improvement by mental or physical training and intellectual development come as close as possible to describing the new interests that seem to be occupying the attention of Canadians more today than in the past -- when tillage, rearing and production tended to be our main preoccupations.

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Nevertheless, allow me, by way of conclusion, to say a few words about the wider context of this endeavour -- namely, Canada's foreign cultural relations. Cultural interest and activity in Canada are enjoying a period of unprecedented vigour. From a base in universities and institutions of higher learning, for a long time almost their sole repositories, cultural programs have spread to other sectors of society and become more universally accessible. This has led to the decision of my Government to support cultural activities in a number of areas, so that we now have, for example, a policy of support for the performing arts, a museums policy and a policy of support for the production of feature films in Canada.

It was plain that this growth and diversification should be reflected in the foreign policy of our Government, so as to project on the international scene the breadth, depth and creativity of Canadian cultural activities. Accordingly, the Government has approved in principle a five-year plan for broader cultural relations with other countries.

The objectives of Canada's foreign cultural policy, subjected as we are to the generally welcome but somewhat too pervasive influences from the United States, are to maintain and strengthen our British and French connections, to sustain our participation in the institutions of the Commonwealth and La Francophonie, to diversify our cultural exchanges towards selected countries in Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America. For the selection of activities to be undertaken or promoted, we have chosen three criteria.

First, we plan to establish cultural contacts with more countries and to assist Canadian intellectuals and artists in establishing and cultivating stronger ties with their foreign counterparts.

Second, we are attempting to supplement the conventional types of exchange with programs in new areas, where the number of requests for assistance we receive bears testimony to a growing need in Canada, such as more exchanges of teachers in the academic field and more youth exchanges at the cultural level.

Finally, we have borne in mind the findings of important international conferences on cultural exchanges, such as the UNESCO conferences in Helsinki and Venice, which have clearly emphasized the importance of exchanging people, as opposed to simply trading cultural goods. In our view, it is the promotion of contacts with other artists and other audiences that will strengthen relations between different peoples and cultures and ultimately lead to the production of works meeting contemporary expectations.

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An important dimension of this five-year plan is the development of Canadian studies abroad. The project we are launching today is very much a part of this program. So, too, is our support for the efforts of British academics to develop a network of Canadian courses in other British universities. In one or more of the fields of geography, literature, history, economics, political science and sociology, actual or potential interests exist at the Universities of Birmingham, Cambridge, East Anglia, Leeds, London, Oxford, St. Andrews, Strathclyde, Sussex and Warwick.

I have referred on another occasion to the role of Professor Wreford Watson in relation to Canadian studies at this university; but this catalytic role has a national dimension as well. He is the first President of the British Association of Canadian Studies, which was formally launched only last month at the University of Leeds.

This is the first year that a Canadian studies program overseas has been supported by our Government. In addition to Britain, other countries now included in this new public affairs element of Canadian foreign policy are France, Japan and the United States. Next year, this program will be extended to Belgium, Germany and Italy. The Canadian studies component of our five-year plan for expanding cultural relations with other countries is to be developed through the exchange of professors, the support of joint research opportunities, the encouragement of inter-university communications, the provision of Canadian books and learned journals and the organization of conferences and seminars.

You may well ask what the Canadian Government hopes to achieve by this wider projection of Canadian cultural interests and activities on the international scene. I suppose most of all we see this as a new way of testing the qualities of our own achievements as a nation. We believe there are valuable mutual benefits to be gained when countries share not only their separate cultural experiences, at as many levels of "people-contact" as possible, but also their cultural judgments and critical analyses, favourable or otherwise.

The most important answer to that question, of course, must come from Canadians themselves -- our artists, our writers, our performers, our scholars, our scientists, our thinkers, and all others in every national community who support and enjoy their works.

We in Government are aware that culture is not something created by an act of Parliament -- not even the Parliament at Westminster! It flows from the minds and the spirits of the individuals who make up a society, a nation. Institutions, governmental and otherwise, can offer encouragement and open new opportunities for cultural

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endeavours; but only individuals can create those works that go into the formation of a nation's cultural heritage.

It would be rhetoric of the most high-flown order to suggest that Canada's cultural, as distinguished perhaps from political and economic, achievements are about to overtake those of Britain. We have not had the centuries of accumulated experience, for one thing.

But I do believe we can realistically hope that, out of the immense variety of historic materials we have inherited in Canada from this European continent, we may gradually continue to make our own contribution to the cultural heritage of mankind, one that will endure in its own right by its excellence.

If only a few such Canadian achievements are identified or encouraged by the new institution we are ordaining here today, Canada will once more have sound reason to renew its sense of gratitude and good fortune for enjoying our common heritage.

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