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TOWARD JUSTICE, AMITY, CO-OPERATION AND UNDERSTANDING AMONG PEOPLES

Speech by the Honourable Mitchell Sharp,
Secretary of State for External Affairs,
at the Brotherhood Banquet of the Beth
Emeth Bais Yehuda Synagogue, Toronto,
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...There is a cynical view of foreign ministers and those who engage in international affairs. I recall to your mind, for example, the famous definition of the ambassador as an honest man sent abroad to lie for the good of his country. Plato, himself, conceded that government leaders should have the privilege of lying, either at home or abroad, for the good of the state.

So you will see why, as a foreign minister, I feel so honoured to be asked to be among those who seek to promote justice, amity, co-operation and understanding among peoples. It is a rare tribute, and one that I shall always cherish.

You can well believe that, in carrying out their duties, foreign ministers, however well intentioned and however dedicated they may be to the promotion of justice, amity, co-operation and understanding among peoples, are often faced with moral dilemmas and difficult choices. This is true even of the Foreign Minister of Canada, one of the most fortunate of countries, free from foreign occupation, internal revolution and involvement in foreign wars.

How can this country best promote justice, amity, co-operation and understanding among peoples?

My relatively short experience in this office has taught me at least one thing, and that is that it is not sufficient simply to be in favour of these good things or to make eloquent speeches in favour of them.

I do not know of a single country, or a single foreign minister, that does not profess support for justice, amity, co-operation and understanding among peoples. As we all know, wars are nearly always justified as a means of attaining at least one of these worthy objectives.

The truth of the matter is that, while nation states and their leaders may be perfectly sincere in their protestations of goodwill towards mankind in general, they do not have identical interests. Conflict of interest is of the essence of relations between states just as it is of the essence of relations between individuals and groups. That is the starting-point of any realistic approach to human affairs.

Canada does not have interests identical with those of the United States or with those of Britain or France, or of the Soviet Union. Our respective national interests come into conflict at many points and are bound to do so and, the closer the relations, the more the points of conflict. Thus it is inevitable that, as the world contracts by reason of improved communications and grows more populous, the conflicts of interest between states will become more numerous, but let us hope not more serious.

We see the same thing going on in relations between people within states as their populations grow. The closer people come into contact with one another the more they come into conflict. Cities are more turbulent than the countryside.

This is not intended to be a pessimistic forecast of rising international and internal strife. Not at all. Conflicts need not become matters of strife; indeed, the aim of all men of goodwill is to do everything possible to ensure that conflicts are resolved peacefully and amicably.

I make these general observations rather for the purpose of drawing attention to the nature of the problem of promoting justice, amity, co-operation and understanding amongst the peoples of the world. As I have said, it is not sufficient to favour these worthy objectives. Let us take it for granted that everyone is in favour in principle and move on to consider how to deal with the specific points on which there may not be such unanimous agreement.

To illustrate. The whole world is deeply shocked by the civil war in Nigeria. Canadians are foremost in their desire to see that tragic conflict brought to an end. What stands in the way? Certainly not any lack of support for the principles of justice, amity, co-operation and understanding. Our ears ring with eloquent and fervent pleas in the name of humanity. Both sides claim that theirs is a just cause.

What has stood in the way of a peaceful settlement has been a fundamental conflict of interest. Nigeria wants to maintain the integrity of the state. Biafran leaders have insisted on independence. Until that conflict is resolved the war will go on.

Or consider the situation in the Middle East, which is so near to the hearts of many of you in this audience. Nowhere is there a better illustration of the fundamental and dangerous conflicts intensified by mutual distrust and suspicion that can exist between states and between peoples. Even the right to exist of the state of Israel has been challenged in the name of justice, notwithstanding its membership in the United Nations. These Arab-Israeli differences exist and somehow or other they must be resolved; otherwise peace cannot be secured in that troubled area.

Canada has actively supported the efforts of the United Nations to resolve this conflict, and has shared fully the burden of responsibility which has resulted from these efforts. Yet the problem - and the danger - is, if anything, greater than before. It is for this reason that we must continue to encourage the patient efforts of Ambassador Jarring, to which it is my hope that the current talks among the permanent members of the Security Council in New York will make a constructive contribution. In the meantime, we should hope that both sides would avoid statements and actions which could only inhibit and delay the achievement of a settlement.

The same is true of the East-West confrontation in Europe. There is little to be gained by deploring that confrontation. It rests upon a serious conflict of interest between states that has not been resolved. The existence of NATO and the Warsaw Pact is a symptom of that conflict, rather than a cause.

As I have said, conflict of interest is of the very essence of relations between states, as it is of relations between individuals and groups. The task confronting mankind is to find ways of resolving these conflicts. Without strife and without resort to the threat of violence.

It should not alarm us that there are conflicts of interest among Canadians. There are bound to be, and it is healthy that there should be because conflict can be a stimulus to constructive action. Conflict between union and management is often a stimulus to better working conditions and more efficient production. Conflict between political parties is often a stimulus to social advancement. The kinds of conflict that are futile and destructive and unnecessary are those that arise between white and coloured, between Jew and Christian, between Protestant and Catholic, between French- and English-speaking, conflicts founded on ignorance and prejudice.

Your association has dedicated itself to seek by educational means to promote justice, amity, co-operation and understanding among people differing in race, religion or nationality. I congratulate you for having recognized the key importance of education. Conflicts based on ignorance and prejudice are the most intractable, the hardest to resolve, and it is only by the slow, difficult but sure process of education that we can do this.

As I have said, it is inevitable that states come into conflict and the closer their relations the more the points of conflict. It may seem paradoxical but it is nevertheless true that, the closer and friendlier our relations have become with our great neighbour the United States, the more numerous have been the points of conflict. Similarly, the fewest points of conflict arise between Canada and countries with which we have the least to do.

It is something like a man and his wife. The longer they live together and the more children they have the more they have to argue about, even if it is all friendly.

What complicate international relations enormously are conflicts that arise not because of real differences of national interest which can be assessed and resolved but because of mistrust and suspicion. And the tragedy is that the deliberate inculcation of mistrust and suspicion has become an accepted instrument of international politics.

This is why it has seemed to the Canadian Government that one of the things this country can do in international affairs is to help to break down the barriers and the isolation between nations that give rise to mistrust and suspicion, just as your association by its very existence helps to break down these barriers between individuals of different race, religion or nationality. That is why we are negotiating to exchange diplomats with the Chinese Government in Peking. We hope to help to bring those hundreds of millions of Chinese people more effectively into the international community. Perhaps others will follow our example. This is why, in Europe, Canada is actively seeking in appropriate fashion to develop contacts between the Communist and Western worlds - cultural contacts, trade contacts, co-operative projects, so that the necessary basis of confidence can be built up to allow for détente and the establishment of better and saner political relations between the world's two great power centres.

It is well to recognize, of course, that efforts to promote understanding will sometimes be resisted. There are those who prefer isolation, and even some who, as I have mentioned, deliberately create mistrust and suspicion to advance their ends. There is little doubt that one of the reasons for the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia was the fear that the barriers were breaking down too rapidly, that the infection of freedom was spreading in Eastern Europe.

This is an illustration of one of the moral dilemmas facing nations and foreign ministers. How far is one justified in promoting justice, amity, co-operation and understanding if in so doing one is to invite repression of the very people one is trying to help?

The lesson of Hungary is one that will not soon be forgotten. Were the Hungarians misled into believing that Western support for their cause was more than moral support?

All foreign ministers, of all countries, are accused of being mealy-mouthed, of not speaking out boldly on behalf of the causes that are dear to the heart of some of the citizens of their countries and even to their own hearts. It is an occupational hazard from which, so far as I can see, there is no escape. Condemn, they are urged - take the issue to the United Nations - break diplomatic relations - enforce sanctions - retaliate. There are occasions, very few though, when this is an effective course to follow. But in international affairs, as in domestic affairs, discretion is more often the better part of valour and it is usually more useful in the end to proceed with patience and forbearance in pursuit of justice, amity, co-operation and understanding among peoples.

The international community is not like a gentleman's club that can expel a member who offends the code of the majority. Severance of diplomatic relations with a country does not make it disappear; it continues to share the globe with the rest of us. In nearly every case it is better to continue contact than to break it off, thereby giving up whatever opportunity there might be to influence the course of events there.

The international reputation of a country depends on its effectiveness. One essential element of effectiveness is to speak and act within the limits of one's powers. There are Canadians who, from time to time, call upon their Government to take a public stand on some issue that Canada cannot influence. To do this is simply to make a noise and at the same time to diminish our credibility in the international community. The effect is very much the same if Canada, or any other member, brings a resolution to the United Nations that has not the least possibility of gaining a reasonable measure of support. The reaction is that the member concerned should have been able to foresee what would happen. By going through the motions such a country will be judged either uninformed or imprudent. Its international influence will be reduced, its capacity to act effectively on some other issue lessened and the finding of a genuine solution may be jeopardized.

As you will have gathered, I do not have easy answers, for there are none. The search for peace and harmony among men is a never-ending search. All I can say is that it must be pursued even more relentlessly than ever before, because the consequences of failure to make progress could be so appalling.

As I see it, there are two directions in which we must move. The first, perhaps the most important in the long run, is to break down the barriers of prejudice and ignorance that divide men needlessly. This you understand. It is your objective. The second is to develop means for the settlement of international disputes and conflicts without war. There is no country which has given and continues to give more support to this objective than Canada. But I would be less than frank if I did not say that progress is slow and halting and sometimes there is none at all. Nor is this surprising. It is a reflection of the fact that mankind has not yet developed a world view or the means of bringing such a view to bear. But gradually, inexorably, all the forces of science and technology are moving us in that direction. Today we divide the air-waves among the nations; we make inter-

national laws about the use of space and the ocean-bed. All of these arrangements require nations to limit the exercise of their national sovereignty. Let us hope that, in due course, it will come to be accepted that nations agree to abide by international decisions on political questions and to forego the use of force.

Canada will spare no effort in working toward this end at the United Nations and in all the contacts we have with other nations and groups of nations. Order in the world depends on many things but first and foremost on the prevention of war. This is Canada's first and greatest objective in foreign policy. It depends too on the eradication of poverty and the achievement of a reasonable standard of living for all the world's peoples. Canada made rather a late and uncertain start in this field, but we have moved quickly from that start and hope to move even more quickly in the future. I look with confidence to the time, not so far off, when Canada will play a leading part in international development, not in absolute terms, since we do not have the massive resources controlled by the super-powers, but in our imaginative use of the resources we do have, in our readiness to try new things, to listen to new ideas, to look beyond the horizon to a new day.

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