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Speech by the Honourable Paul Martin, Secretary of State for External Affairs, to the Faculty of Law, University of Ottawa, December 4, 1967.

It is the undoubted responsibility of the government in a democratic society to provide leadership in the conception and implementation of foreign policy. This responsibility is an extension of the role played by the government in all areas of public policy.

But in a democracy, foreign policy cannot be the sole prerogative of government. The public has an integral part to play. As Mackenzie King once wrote, "where there is little or no public opinion, there is likely to be bad government, which sooner or later becomes autocratic government".

Tonight I should like to discuss the role of the individual in relation to government in the development and execution of Canadian foreign policy.

The Canadian public - both individually and collectively - is becoming increasingly knowledgeable and articulate on international issues. It was not always so. Even in the recent past, the interest of Canadians was limited, and where it did exist, was concentrated on one or two traditional issues which affected us directly. In the period before the Second World War, for example, André Siegfried, the French observer of Canadian society, could comment that, "in so far as the Canadians are concerned, collective security (a major issue in the League of Nations at the time) is only a conviction de luxe". There were opportunities for discussion but debate was desultory and detached. Canadians thought that they could afford to look at their country as a "fireproof house"; that they could call Europe disdainfully a "continent which could not run itself"; that they could give their attention only to imperial and North American relations.

The change in public attitudes and knowledge since 1945 has been dramatic.

There are many reasons: First of all we learned hard lessons in the Second World War about interdependence in a rapidly changing world. We see the shortsightedness of trying to avoid realities and responsibilities. Second, having secured our status as an independent country in the inter-war period, we have been able, in the past 20 years, to develop an independent foreign policy

on global issues. Third, communications technology has exposed us to the views and problems of other countries around the world. Television, in particular, has given us an image of the world which we cannot ignore. The prospect, for example, of live coverage of war through satellite communications cannot help but affect Canadian attitudes toward international conflict. Fourth, Canadians individually and in groups have become involved in the international process to an unprecedented extent. For example, expanding foreign trade has taken Canadians as buyers and sellers beyond traditional markets to deal with all parts of the world. Our diplomatic service, which maintained seven posts abroad in 1939, now has more than 80. Other government officials travel to establish contact with their counterparts in innumerable subjects of foreign policy. The arrival of immigrants in the hundreds of thousands annually has created personal contacts with scores of countries. Postwar affluence has made Canadians as tourists among the most travelled people in the world. Our aid programmes since 1950 have sent almost 4,000 Canadians to far-away lands as teachers, experts or advisers. And, finally, Expo 67 has played a big part in putting Canadians in touch with "Man and his World". In sum, this great number of personal contacts has laid the basis for wide public involvement in foreign affairs. Increasingly, Canadians care about world problems as in the past they cared only about domestic problems.

I am particularly pleased with the mounting interest of French-speaking Canadians in Canada's external relations. The Government has given practical expression to this interest in many ways -- for example, through support for the conception of "francophonie", that is, "developing closer links and more exchanges, particularly in the cultural and related fields, with those countries which, like Canada, share the heritage of French language and culture". Indeed, a full division in my Department is now looking after this important subject in collaboration with other official bodies.

It is the policy of the Canadian Government to give full expression, in its international relations, to the bilingual and bicultural character of our country. The development of our ties with the "francophone" countries, which we have pursued vigorously over the last few years, represents a new and valuable dimension of Canadian diplomacy. We wish to participate actively in any effort to find an effective framework for further co-operation among francophone states.

If your interest in foreign policy has developed only since coming to university as students, these changes may not be apparent to you because, for some time now, Canada has had a strong role to play in the search for international peace and security, the advancement of our national interests and the improvement of international living standards.

Public concern is a natural development in a democracy. It is also a necessary development. The Canadian Government welcomes the surge of interest and participation by the citizens of the country in foreign affairs.

It is the right of free citizens to express their views in a field which is as important to them personally as any domestic area. In fact, the relations between states encompass many of the activities of government at home, such as trade, finance and cultural activities, so that, in some ways, foreign affairs

represent an extension of domestic concerns. There is nothing remote about foreign relations.

Another reason for public interest in foreign policy is that, unless a reasonably large group of citizens without particular axes to grind expresses concern about foreign-policy issues, governments could be excessively influenced by special interest groups whose approach is narrow.

Of course, a price is paid in a democracy for the involvement of the public in foreign policy -- it is not, however, a high price given the importance of this involvement. The price is what James Reston, the American columnist, has described as playing an "open hand" in the poker-game of international negotiation with authoritarian societies whose card-hand is kept closed. Public debate at home can restrict the flexibility of negotiators in their discussions with other countries.

It is worth noting that "wide interest" among the general public should not be interpreted as universal interest. Surveys in other democratic and developed countries have suggested that only about 25 per cent of the adult population sustains an interest in international issues. Even with education programmes, the percentages do not seem to have risen greatly. Thus it would be Utopian to expect the entire population to be vitally interested and knowledgeable on foreign policy on a continuing basis. To quote an astute British observer of the international scene (Max Beloff), "the problem of the modern foreign minister, seeking legislative and popular support, is often how to get people to absorb more information rather than to keep information from them".

But this does not preclude deep concern on a particular issue at a particular time -- for example, the war in Vietnam. In all probability, the poll taken across the country last summer which indicated that foreign policy topped the list of important problems for more Canadians than any other single issue reflects the deeply-felt concern among large numbers of Canadians about the continuing conflict in Vietnam.

The Government shares this concern and has been working in every possible way in the international effort to end hostilities. Unfortunately, all attempts that we and others have made to find a feasible "de-escalation equation" -- that is, a mutually acceptable pattern of steps to be taken by both sides more or less simultaneously -- has not succeeded in winning the agreement of the parties concerned.

As a result of our diplomatic soundings over the past year and a half, we have become convinced that the key to de-escalation and the creation of an atmosphere in which talks could take place is the cessation of the bombing of North Vietnam.

There is, of course, no absolute guarantee that a suspension of the bombing will necessarily and immediately bring about a beginning of talks. It seems to us, however, that if the bombing were suspended unilaterally, an entirely new situation would emerge in which considerable international pressure might be brought to bear on the North Vietnamese to enter into negotiations or preliminary talks, especially since they and their friends have placed such heavy emphasis on this point. An inflexible position on the part of the North Vietnamese in the context of a situation in which the bombing had stopped would place a serious responsibility on them for a continuing impasse in this tragic war.

Calling publicly for a cessation of the bombing, we have made it quite clear that the obligations for restoring peace are reciprocal and that it would be totally unrealistic to place the whole burden of responsibility for making essential concessions on only one side, namely the United States. Unless the decision to suspend the bombing were to lead to some tangible concessions by North Vietnam, the chances of any resultant talks producing fruitful results would certainly be diminished and the danger of a reversion to military measures, perhaps on an intensified scale, would have to be taken seriously into account.

I should hope and expect that North Vietnam itself would see the force of this argument and that those countries which have particularly close relations with North Vietnam would also use their influence constructively in the interests of peace so that a beginning to a peaceful settlement could be made.

There are two points which I consider essential in the relationship between public and government. The first is that any citizen who has views on foreign policy should have an easy opportunity to discuss them publicly and to communicate them to the government. The second is that the government should ensure that the public is brought into its confidence, is provided with information and is given a chance to increase its knowledge about foreign affairs. I think that both these conditions are being met in Canada. Thus, in an area such as foreign aid, the Government, having set out goals which we hope Canada can reach in four or five years, is working to ensure that public opinion will accept and endorse the financial programmes required to meet the needs of less-developed countries. Canadians are responding to the policy of rapidly expanding foreign aid and seem increasingly aware of the opportunities for Canada in development assistance.

Individuals affect Canada's foreign policy in two major ways. First, they participate in person-to-person or group-to-group activities, such as trade or tourism, which in turn have implications for official policy. Second, the public influences government policy by the presentation of its views on various issues through personal discussion, the communications media, lobbying and other methods. Although the effect of any of these methods is difficult to establish with precision, there is no question in my mind that public views on international matters are an important factor in the evolution of government policy. Without abdicating its responsibility to give a lead to the public, the Canadian Government is both aware of, and responsive to, public opinion.

If public opinion is free, comment on government policy will be critical as well as commendatory. This is to be expected. In the Canadian context, critical comment is seriously studied in the Government's own review of foreign-policy questions.

Let me give a specific example. We regularly re-examine our defence commitments to determine whether they serve Canada's national objectives. Partly as a result of a healthy questioning by some Canadians, we have recently re-assessed with special care the grounds for participating in collective security arrangements. The conclusion which we have reached is that we should continue at the present time to make an appropriate contribution to collective defence arrangements in NATO. But the point which I want to make here is that the Government is alive to public concern on an important subject such as collective defence and is prepared to give serious consideration to the views of individual Canadians on it.

Discussion of the role which individuals can and must play in the development of Canadian foreign policy leads naturally into consideration of the rather special position occupied by members of the academic community.

University professors traditionally, and university students more recently, have taken an active part in the Canadian foreign-policy debate. Many members of the university community have made thoughtful and valuable contributions to the development of our external relations. It is recognized, of course, that the university community and those charged with day-to-day responsibilities have a different approach and outlook on foreign policy. In my view, however, the formulation of foreign-policy ideas by both government and academics must be carried out with two points in mind: first, that foreign policy is a complex and continuous process and, second, that Canada is not alone in the world. The views and positions of other independent countries must be taken into account in the formulation of our policies. These two points are not always given sufficient importance.

Canada cannot afford a dialogue of the deaf, or even of the hard-of-hearing, between the Government and the university community on foreign policy. We must encourage an interaction of the two -- each with its own role and contribution.

In an effort to foster increased contact of a positive kind, we established an Academic Relations Section within the Department of External Affairs earlier this year. The Section has been examining various means by which co-operation between the universities and the Government can be extended.

The activities of the Section are aimed at development and expansion of a stimulating and mutually-beneficial environment in which the universities will be able to make a positive contribution to our efforts to maintain and develop further a foreign policy which serves the interests of Canada and the world. We have already taken steps to have more Departmental officers available for discussions of foreign policy with university audiences, and we hope that the universities will increasingly give us the benefit of their growing expertise in international relations and area studies.

Another proposal, at present under consideration, is the suggestion that experienced foreign service officers be periodically released for temporary attachment to universities, perhaps along the lines of university sabbatical arrangements. This would have the double advantage of making the officer's experience in the practical conduct of Canadian foreign policy available to faculty and students, while exposing him to the ferment of ideas found on university campuses and giving him time to do research and reading away from the pressure of day-to-day problems.

Our policy is not intended to stifle criticism. Nor do we want university students and professors to pull their punches.

On the contrary, we hope that even more ideas will be suggested by the universities as an increasing contribution to Canadian foreign policy.

After four years as Secretary of State for External Affairs, I am convinced that the interplay of government and individual in the development and conduct of Canadian foreign policy has been constructive and, on the whole,

harmonious. Our national debate on foreign affairs has led to policies which have served the country's interests and reflected a broad consensus in all parts of Canada. The dialogue between the individual and the government, in all the ways I have described, must continue in the future -- not only continue, but grow. In foreign affairs as much as in domestic affairs, our free and democratic society depends on it.

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