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OUR UNIVERSITIES AND CANADIAN FOREIGN POLICY

Translation of an address by the Prime Minister, Mr. L.S. St. Laurent, at Laval University on the occasion of the Centenary celebrations, Quebec, September 22, 1952.

...This evening when, with the participation of impressive foreign delegations, you are crowning a year of celebration in which Laval's role in our Canadian civilization has been so often and so justly praised, I should like to say in a few words how certain lessons lavished by Laval on our youth may equally well inspire with profit the international action of Canada, assist her in finding its deeper meaning and serve our objectives of world peace. I am sure that, in so doing, I am remaining true to the line of thought of our founder, Bishop Laval, who, as history tells us, was filled with the missionary spirit, a spirit of charity which knew no boundaries and would not be impeded by differences of race or tongue.

When I was Secretary of State for External Affairs, I once attempted to define the underlying principles of our Canadian foreign policy. I made this survey for a study group of another great Canadian university, the University of Toronto, whose chancellor is Canada's Governor General and who, in the other sector of our national culture, is pursuing a work similar to that of Laval.

I said then that a Canadian foreign policy which, during the period of its elaboration, did not take into account the requirements of national unity and of our historic association in the Commonwealth of British nations, would be unacceptable to Canadians. Once I had posed these two essential conditions, I added that this policy was being worked out at present primarily in terms of a conception of liberty and the defence of liberty shared by all nations of the West. I believe that these remarks apply equally well to our position in 1952. And there would be no reason for returning to the subject today if this were not a particularly appropriate opportunity for noting the support which our Canadian universities are giving, in proportion to their means, to that policy to which all the citizens of this country are deeply committed.

Our universities, like those of the great nations which are so brilliantly represented here, are sources of national inspiration. I can, all the more, pay tribute to this role since I have just come back from a trip to several provinces of the country where I had the pleasure of meeting people who belong to university circles. The youngest, like the oldest, universities know how to respond to the needs of the various classes in which their influence is felt, without betraying in any respect the traditions which they inherit from their English and European origins. I am not so far removed myself from my years of teaching law at Laval that I do not realize how difficult it can be at

certain times to reconcile the requirements of unbiased academic teaching and those of the practical applications of that teaching to contemporary problems. This causes a struggle between two currents to which equal attention must be given.

The modern university is a school of higher learning, but it remains true that this learning, for most of those to whom it is to be transmitted, is not an end in itself. It is meant to serve in their daily lives and should therefore be practical enough to enable them to follow a successful career. But it should also be founded on theoretical principles sufficiently unprejudiced and sound to give guidance and light in the planning of any action which students will have as citizens.

St. Augustine indicated, it seems to me, the solution for these problems, which are fundamentally problems of moderation and judgment, when he wrote, fifteen hundred years ago: "In essentials unity; in matters about which it is legitimate to harbour doubts, liberty; and in all things, charity".

In essentials, unity, St. Augustine has written. Now we know what essentials are for the man of 1952. There are certain very broad principles on which rests the spiritual community of the Christian West and against which stands an authoritative dictatorship in which the human person no longer counts. When we compare the ways of life on either side of the Iron Curtain and look for the irreducible differences which divide them, we arrive inevitably at the conception of liberty: liberty for man to believe in God and to fulfil his religious duties; liberty for the citizen to have a personal political opinion and to be able to express it without his life, property and career being threatened; freedom of association for the progress and protection of the rights of his profession or union.

We in the Christian West have succeeded, after long and costly experiment, in reconciling this liberty, which one of your most outstanding sociologists said comes from God just as authority does, in a happy balance with the necessities of authority itself.

It is in this successful balance that the superiority of our democratic system over the totalitarian systems is best expressed. And it will be to the undying honour of the great English and French law schools, the spirit of which our universities are perpetuating in America, to have worked out principles which sanction and protect that balance between liberty and authority.

If therefore Canadian participation in international politics takes as its first rule to maintain, support and defend a conception of liberty which is radically different from that of our opponents, the role of our universities regarding the basic points of our foreign policy is easily deduced from this first observation.

It is the university faculties, of course, which train the men charged with the perfecting and detailed study of this policy, as well as with the choice of the means of implementing it in the most adequate manner. But it is also the universities which by sending out regularly into active life generations of well-trained minds, prepares for this policy the reception and prestige which it must have within the country if we wish it to be truly representative of the nation and effective abroad. A role of leadership, interpretation and propaganda, in the most unprejudiced sense of the term.

The contribution of our universities to the maintenance of a healthy system of external relations is not limited to this single fundamental point. I reminded you a few moments ago that, in our opinion, no decision may be taken in foreign policy and no change made in our system of relations with other nations if that decision or change is likely to affect seriously the moral unity of Canada.

Whereas in other nations more homogeneous than ours the government, in formulating its foreign policy, has to consider only the differences of opinion which may exist among different classes of citizens, we must take into account the particular mode of thought and feeling and the traditions of the two component races. The requirements of inner unity, of unity in essentials, to use again St. Augustine's expression, condition our attitude in matters of foreign policy.

Now what institutions can contribute better than universities to the forming of a liberal Canadian mind? They are the meeting-place for the chief spiritual movements of the free world. Their teaching is far enough removed from daily cares not to be hampered and narrowed by the restrictions, not to say the pettiness, which those cares sometimes involve. The unity of thought which universities can help to create in our country in spite of all sorts of special conditions, without forgetting of course the geographical conditions which tend to divide our population, must be a broad unity absolutely distinct from uniformity, and a unity in which all trends, legitimate aspirations and recognized rights can exist harmoniously side by side. In short, it is unity of feeling and will in essentials. I know that all our Canadian universities, young and old alike, assist by their teaching in achieving this basic unity, and that they help in this way to give the Government of the country that firm platform on which it can build a foreign policy that is representative, coherent and effective.

This is not an occasion on which to recall in detail what Canada's relations with foreign countries have become. There is none the less at the present time an aspect of our foreign policy that I wish to mention, precisely because of the inspiration with which our universities, thanks to their Christian traditions, can infuse in it.

In that tension between the U.S.S.R. and us which mere negotiations seem powerless to lessen, the only two actions which seem to be left to the Western nations for the safeguard of peace are, first of all, the strengthening of a common defence-system in whose shelter free life may continue, and secondly, economic assistance from the more-greatly favoured nations for the benefit of those which are less so. We form part of that peaceful North Atlantic Alliance which, as each day demonstrates to us a little more clearly, is successfully holding in check the military forces of Communist imperialism. So much for immediate defence. We are also participating, and to an appropriate degree, in the plan for economic and technical assistance to the Asiatic nations whose masses of people would fall a ready prey to Communism if they received no help in raising their standard of living. So much for long-range defence.

These two objectives of our foreign policy are imperative. But I wonder if, beyond the immediate purposes of the military defence of the free nations and the economic recovery of the less favoured peoples, we perceive with sufficient clarity and proper conviction the idea of charity, of true love for our neighbour which should inspire such international action. This brings me back to the quotation from St. Augustine: "In all things, charity".

It is necessary, indeed urgent, that we should make the sacrifices that are indispensable to our liberty and that of the nations which are saying no to Communism. It is also urgent that we co-operate in raising the standard of living of less favoured nations. But besides the reasons of practical interest that we have for doing so, there exist certain higher reasons which are too often unheeded or unknown.

Are we sufficiently conscious of the true meaning of our daily prayer "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven"? We know what His will is for our conduct on earth; it was revealed to us by the founder of Christianity Himself in His conversation with the young Jewish lawyer: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." And we know, from the rest of the conversation, the parable of the good Samaritan, the man of a race scorned and spurned by the Jews, whom one must recognize as one's neighbour on earth.

It is not one of the tasks of the universities to shed light upon that moral and Christian aspect of our political action and to explain its meaning and its universal and Christian value?

My colleague, the Secretary of State for External Affairs, recalled very rightly this moral basis of the present policy of the Western nations when, speaking last June in the House of Commons about European unification, he said that "beyond the community of interests in military and economic matters there are amongst these free European states a common culture and common traditions which cannot be overlooked by a group of nations for which individual and moral values are at least as important as material ones."

In concluding this address, I should like, as Prime Minister of this country, to express gratitude to all the official and university delegates from abroad that are here this evening for the honour which they do us in taking part in this celebration of Laval's centenary. I wish especially to extend to the President of the French Republic, through His Excellency the French Ambassador who is his delegate here, the greetings of the Government and people of Canada. Laval is an institution of French origin, and how could France offer us a gift more worthy of her civilization than such a university. To all the other foreign delegations, I express my compliments and thanks.

S/C