



# Statements and Speeches

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## **CULTURAL DIPLOMACY: A QUESTION OF SELF-INTEREST**

An Address by the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. Allan Gotlieb, to the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, Winnipeg, November 12, 1979

It is a great pleasure for me to be with you today — both as a native of Winnipeg who has rather too few opportunities to revisit the city and as a sometime academic who is not averse to delivering a lecture, particularly when he has in the classroom as a captive audience the University Presidents of Canada. While I have met many of you on other occasions, I am grateful to the AUCC for providing this opportunity to meet you as a group and for having chosen such a splendid location for your conference.

As should be clear from the general approach I will be taking, in these remarks academic relations are set in the larger framework of cultural relations. There is a hint of bureaucratic necessity in this, but I do think that the creative spirit characteristic of both fields provides sufficient kinship to allow me this liberty.

It is in the nature of the subject that much has been and will be written and said about the function and purpose of international cultural relations. All of you will have your own ideas and no policy will satisfy entirely even a major portion of the Canadian cultural community, a particularly disparate beast.

My object here today will be to try to convince you that Canadian cultural policy in its foreign dimension is an integral part of foreign policy, that although Canadians have been slow to appreciate this important and essential reality, the penny has indeed dropped and we are acting accordingly. The Canadian public, but more particularly the academic and artistic communities, have a vital role to play in ensuring that the manifold benefits of an enlightened cultural diplomacy are secured.

To begin with, I might review the principal criticisms of the cultural policies of the Department of External Affairs. While it has been claimed that there are as many critics of our policies as there are artists, poets, musicians, singers, dancers, athletes, academics, authors or playwrights, this is not quite the case. We do nevertheless engage in a healthy dialogue with a number of critics whose principal "observations" can be grouped into three categories:

- a) government support for cultural participation in the international environment is inadequate in terms of the amount of money and the direct assistance provided;
- b) such assistance as is provided could better be furnished by private individuals or institutions;
- c) cultural policy has nothing to do with External Affairs.

Regarding the first criticism, it is largely self-cancelling in that there are almost as many people who feel we devote too much time and too many resources (financial

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and personnel) to cultural promotion as there are those who believe we don't do enough. Nevertheless, as it becomes increasingly evident that the economic difficulties currently experienced throughout the world are likely to be the norm rather than the exception in the foreseeable future, justification for all public expenditure becomes the more important.

I do not believe that we Canadian taxpayers should be supporting cultural programs abroad simply for their own sake, for the sake of the individual whose work is being supported, or indeed for any more abstract principle of national glory or self-image.

In answering the question of why then I favour continuing our program of promoting international cultural relations (and, indeed, modestly expanding it as Government austerity programs and other priorities permit), I will also be answering the third criticism which suggests that cultural policy and foreign policy are distinct or indeed separable. Of course, they are not. Cultural policy is inexorably linked to political, economic, commercial and industrial policy, and is a vital aspect of overall relations between countries and between peoples.

An irreverent colleague of mine has suggested that the cultural aspect of foreign policy is nothing more or less than the first base bag in the day-to-day game of geopolitical hard ball. You can't pretend it isn't there. You can't sneak past it without stopping to assess your position from its vantage point, and you can't bring home the winnings of the game unless you build upon its potential. The winnings are, of course, the advantages which accrue from mature and mutually satisfying bilateral relations between countries.

Cultural relations promote better understanding between people and nations. They allow one country to begin to know and appreciate the makeup of another, and it is on the basis of such understanding that long-term mutually beneficial relationships between countries thrive. Cultural diplomacy is the mortar with which the foundations of stable international relations are made. On the basis of regular government-sponsored exposure to another cultural background, trust and understanding can often flourish, leading to the development of a multiplicity of interpersonal and corporate relationships.

Let me give you a specific example.

Since before the Second World War, Canada has tried to increase not only the volume but, more importantly, the quality of our exports to Japan. That is, we have endeavoured to increase the Canadian value added to the products we export. For years we gleefully imported Sonys and Toyotas, calculators and heavy machinery, but sold only rocks and logs. Why? The reasons are, of course, complex but many relate to a fundamental lack of understanding of each others' needs and aspirations. Is it any wonder that the Japanese seek to buy mainly our raw materials when often we are perceived as little more than prospectors and lumberjacks? There is nothing to be ashamed of in the image of Canada as a land of forests and wheatfields, Indians, Eskimos and Mounties. But it is vital to Canadian commercial and industrial interests

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that we impart to our Japanese customers an understanding of Canada and Canadians which will enable us to show them that Canada is not one vast pool of limitless resources nor are Canadians the fat cat energy guzzlers we are perceived to be. Already such perceptions are changing. There is much greater travel by businessmen and tourists alike between the two countries. Improved communications make broad knowledge of important events in each other's countries more readily available, but there is an important role for Government-sponsored cultural exchanges in the furtherance of understanding. All other industrialized countries and many developing countries have demonstrated an appreciation of the returns to investment in the promotion of such mutual understanding. Those who have neglected it have done so at their own peril. Interesting to note: Australia spends most of its international public affairs funds in one country — Japan.

Beginning only 10 or 15 years ago, Canada launched a relatively aggressive program of cultural promotion in Europe and we are still involved in developing this program. The Canadian Studies program in Germany is an important recent illustration. There is no doubt that we have achieved notable successes, and there are few Western Europeans who still perceive of Canadians as unsophisticated latter-day frontiersmen living, in the words of a distressingly popular French song of the early Sixties, in their "cabane au Canada".

Given the close cultural attachment of most Canadians to the European continent, the cultural values of the countries of Western Europe and, increasingly, Eastern Europe, and the way Canada is perceived there affect many aspects of Canada's international relations. Cultural and academic exchanges with European countries will remain among our most fruitful and among the most critically important for individual artists and academics. It might, however, become harder to justify Government promotion or financing of such undertakings. The level of mutual understanding is high and capacity for private maintenance of cultural exchanges is considerable. While I believe our programs should continue, there is a dilemma. In other parts of the world, Canada has been remiss in making itself better known.

Too few Canadians are aware that Venezuela is Canada's fifth largest customer (fourth if the U.K. and West Germany are subsumed into the European Communities) and, more importantly, Canada's largest offshore market for manufactured goods. Many know we depend heavily on Venezuela for oil supplies, but are they aware that that country is Canada's third largest supplier of imports (after the U.S. and the European Communities)? When is the last time the Winnipeg Ballet performed in Caracas? The long-term market potential in Venezuela for just the sort of highly finished goods we want to export is enormous. The same considerations apply to the newly emerging industrialized economies of Brazil and Mexico, as well as to certain other countries of Latin America. Latin America has not of course been entirely forgotten: the Grands Ballets Canadiens visited ten countries in South America a couple of years ago and there have been other exchanges. Nevertheless, the fact is that our opportunities in the field of cultural diplomacy are not sufficiently exploited nor do we have the financial amplitude to align new priorities with new interests without danger of weakening important existing priorities.

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The same argument applies elsewhere in the world. In Asia, which received 9.26 per cent of Canadian exports last year (as opposed to 10.56 per cent to Western Europe), the market potential of Indonesia, Korea and India, to name but a few, is enormous. In order to exploit this potential, Canada must be better known and understood, and, above all, must exhibit a genuine interest in broadening and deepening existing relationships.

The potential is there, as are the channels of communication and the human resources. The political will is manifestly present, the private sector interested.

Inasmuch as such potential for revitalized political and commercial relations can be enhanced by stepped-up, more narrowly focused, non-academic cultural programs, so also is there enormous benefit to be derived from increased levels of academic interest and exchange. Here there is a role for the Government and, perhaps, a more important role for Canadian universities. Governments' budgets will be limited for some long time, as indeed will your own. We can begin to realign our priorities.

Perhaps the next contribution towards endowment for a Chair in Canadian studies should not be at a major university in the industrialized world, but rather in some of the less travelled areas to which I have just referred.

For its part, the Canadian academic community does participate directly in the promotion and constructive exploitation of Canadian interests abroad. The considerable international reputation of CIDA, CUSO/SUCO and a number of Canada-based international volunteer organizations bear witness to the quality of their contribution. Over the past 20 years Canadian teachers, advisers and technicians have developed a wealth of knowledge and experience throughout the Third World as they worked under contract to the Canadian International Development Agency. Perhaps more attention should be paid to this pool of accumulated experience. No doubt the public and private sectors dealing with the projection of Canada's international image could benefit from regular consultation with returned CIDA and CUSO/SUCO volunteers.

It is particularly heartening to hear of imaginative projects such as Michael Oliver's plan to revitalize Makerere University in Uganda. I understand his intention is to send Canadian academics on short-term assignments under AUCC and CIDA auspices to bolster the infrastructure of the university that was once the pride of East Africa. Such initiative is extremely welcome.

In discussing the effective promotion of knowledge of Canada and Canadians abroad, I have unfortunately had to refer to the contributions from the academic world, the Canadian cultural establishment, the private and the public sectors as if these were totally distinct environments. It is encouraging to see that the barriers between these various parts of Canadian society are beginning to dissolve. There are some important recent examples within the federal bureaucracy. Grant Reuber, the newly appointed Deputy Minister of Finance, has moved freely from the academic world to Ghana, where he managed an important project for CIDA, to the Bank of Montreal and from there to the federal bureaucracy. Similarly, Jim Gillies has moved easily from univer-

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sity life to a CIDA project in Kenya, to his present position as senior policy adviser to the Prime Minister.

Exchanges between universities and the public sector — and here I admit to a personal interest in the Department of External Affairs — are not, of course, uncommon. I have only to mention such names as O.D. Skelton, F.H. Soward, George Glazebrook and Bert MacKay as academics who have enriched the Department in mid-career; balanced in turn by Douglas LePan, John Holmes and George Ignatieff, who have taken up academic careers after years spent in the Foreign Service, and René de Chantal who has moved from one to the other and back a few months ago with his appointment as Minister in charge of Cultural Affairs at the Embassy in Paris.

**Francophone-Anglophone perception of cultural diplomacy**

Shortly after I joined the Department of External Affairs, in the early Sixties, I had a conversation with Douglas LePan about what was at the time for Canada the somewhat novel idea of establishing an international cultural program. Doug expressed some surprise that it was actually going to happen: he believed that the disparate grouping of people who have come to be called Anglophones in Canada shied away from any official involvement in cultural policy due to an innate feeling that such was really not the stuff of foreign policy; that somehow international cultural relations were not sufficiently hard-edged to warrant their concern. He then ascribed the fact that we seemed prepared to move forward to French-Canadian impetus in the Department, noting that French Canadians seemed to have an innate grasp of the intrinsic importance and utility of the cultural connection. There is no doubt whatsoever in my mind that he was correct in his perception. Subsequent events have borne him out. French-Canadian officers in External Affairs have always been more attracted than their Anglophone counterparts to the cultural, public-information and academic areas of Departmental activity, where their contribution has been fundamental to the success of these programs. Indeed, if there is a better understanding in the Department of External Affairs today of the importance and potential impact of the cultural aspect of foreign policy, it is due in large part to certain visionary and predominantly French-Canadian foreign service officers. I would like to pay special tribute to Marcel Cadieux, Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs from 1964 to 1970, who in my opinion was the chief architect of Canadian foreign cultural policy.

**Development of domestic cultural institutions**

All the same, many Canadians have long considered cultural diplomacy to be of secondary or tertiary importance to "the real thing" — political and commercial exchanges; in short, a luxury which, when budgets permitted, allowed the shrouding of our baser international purposes with a veneer of civilized behaviour. This gloss is, moreover, sometimes seen as the first "frill" to be sacrificed at the altar of financial restraint. An on-again, off-again attitude towards international cultural relations does not really make good sense, and if we in Canada come to this realization somewhat belatedly, we now at least find ourselves in good company.

In a recent study commissioned for the Department of External Affairs on Canada's International Cultural Relations, Mr. Paul Schafer summed up the French experience in international cultural relations as follows:

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The lessons of French diplomacy in this field are many: the teaching of language; the dissemination of information and knowledge about French civilization; the administration of programs; the negotiation and execution of agreements; the operation of schools, institutes and centres abroad; and effective planning for the future. However, what shines through all this is the French desire to reap the advantages of international cultural relations and to acquire the specialists, counselors and attachés — often through secondments from the private sector — to translate these advantages into hard realities. Without doubt, France's commitment to cultural diplomacy has already paid, and continues to pay, handsome dividends.

Mr. Schafer also notes that about 70 per cent of the budget of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs goes to the Directorate-General for Cultural, Scientific and Technical Relations.

While the French do indeed have great faith in the intrinsic cultural worth of the French Language and system of education, their carefully orchestrated promotion of French culture abroad is pursued in the confident assumption that such policy pays. The financial well-being of their cultural industries provides ample proof. Similarly, it was not the mass conversion of the British establishment into Groupies which resulted in the Beatles being awarded OBEs. Increased standards of living and education in the industrialized world have resulted in a dramatic increase in the demand for cultural consumables. Canada has only begun to participate in this market. Most industrialized countries and many developing countries have created elaborate institutional machinery with which they pursue the same objectives.

The Alliance Française was founded in the nineteenth century, and shortly thereafter various organizational changes in the French Foreign Ministry were brought about to further the coherent promotion of French language and culture abroad. The foundations for both the British Council and the Goethe Institute were laid in the 1930s and while both, along with the French administrative machinery for cultural promotion, have had neo-colonial motives ascribed to them, they have survived a transition to more enlightened (and more subtle) times. These institutions and their homologues in Sweden, Italy, Holland, Israel and the U.S.S.R., to name but a few, are fundamental pillars of each country's foreign-policy establishment. Within these countries it is no longer necessary either to explain or justify the existence of such apparatus, although they are not totally immune to the rites of periodic bureaucratic and budgetary blood-letting. Canada, for the most part because of the particular constitutional realities that make such centralized co-ordination impossible, has, of course, no similar vehicle for international cultural self-expression and promotion — no instrument for the homogenization of a Canadian image. The result has been a somewhat diffuse cultural identity and probably a less well-defined international impact. Nevertheless, the very lack of cohesion of our international image allows separate cultural communities within Canada to form closer ties with regions of the world for which they have a particular affinity, and the totality of the impact might accordingly be just as strong.

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**Privatization  
of certain  
support  
functions**

I have still to tackle the question of whether we in the Department of External Affairs are best suited to, and capable of, executing these policies. You are all aware of the new Government's interest in privatization. I would suggest – and at the same time stress that this is an extremely preliminary and personal suggestion (as its implications have yet to be given consideration either by officials or by Ministers) – that there may indeed be ways in which certain of the international cultural relations programs currently being conducted within the Department of External Affairs might usefully and indeed profitably (though not necessarily in monetary terms) be undertaken by the private sector. I am thinking here principally of the time and effort my Department spends in arranging major international tours (symphonies, ballet and theatre companies and even exhibitions) and of the considerable skill and reputation of Canadian impresarios. Were we to rely more heavily on private planning and organizational facilities for such tours, I believe that we might gain in freshness of approach. New ideas would offset an anticipated loss in cohesiveness throughout the cultural relations program. Of course, my officials more directly concerned with such tours will examine more carefully than I have here today the costs and benefits of such a shift towards private impresarios. In due course, recommendations will be put to the Secretary of State for External Affairs.

Perhaps a cautionary note is in order. In certain areas of the world, direct assistance from foreign service personnel will always be vital to the success of any such undertakings. I am thinking here particularly of Eastern European countries, China, with whom we have formal agreements, and certain countries in Africa and the Pacific. In most others, however, while our people will always be available to lend a hand with the organization of major tours, the events, once they have been turned over to a private impresario, must indeed remain privately orchestrated at home and abroad.

**Professionalism  
at home and  
abroad**

I should make it very clear that we have no intention of diminishing our direct Departmental support for such events. Rather, if there are advantages to turning over the bulk of organizational responsibility for these incredibly time-consuming undertakings to the private sector, we will do it. As a result our cultural attachés abroad could devote more time to the tasks of cultural liaison between the academic and cultural communities they represent and to which they are accredited.

A word is perhaps in order regarding the selection and recruitment of these cultural attachés assigned to Canadian embassies and high commissions abroad. Through its own recruitment process the Department of External Affairs has hired over the years a number of officers who are extremely sensitive to the vital importance to Canada of cultural diplomacy, and who have the background and training to do the job properly. As but one example, I need only cite the contribution of a professional Foreign Service Officer, Guy Plamondon, (an acknowledged expert in the Canadian visual arts) at our Consulate General in New York. Nevertheless, the regular recruitment process has not been able to provide the Department with an adequate number of highly trained professionals who enjoy the confidence of the Canadian cultural community. Two years ago we established a procedure whereby a special effort is made to recruit such individuals from the private sector for specific assignments abroad. In this manner we chose Gilles Lefebvre (the founder of Les Jeunesses Musicales), who

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headed the Cultural Centre in Paris before returning to headquarters as Director-General of the new Bureau of International Cultural Relations – just created last year. Again, last year we selected Hugh Davidson (who had long been associated with Canada's musical establishment and, most recently, was in charge of the music section of the Canada Council) to be Cultural Counsellor at the High Commission in London. Other examples are the recent nominations of Aline LeGrand (a producer of cultural programs for the French language network of the CBC) to replace Gilles Lefebvre as Director of the Cultural Centre in Paris, and of René de Chantal (who had been Director of the Department's Cultural Affairs Division before becoming Professor of Literature and Linguistics and, most recently, Vice-Rector of the University of Montreal) to the new position of Minister in charge of Cultural Affairs at the Embassy in Paris.

**Spin-offs  
of cultural  
policy**

I have taken too much of your time discussing my conception of the hard edge of cultural diplomacy and its utilitarian advantages. I have done so because I believe this aspect of the conduct of international relations is little understood. I am not sufficiently a Philistine to want to leave you with the impression that I do not consider that academic exchanges, sporting events or artistic displays do not have intrinsic value. What I wanted to put across is the plain fact that they also generate a number of immediate returns.

Once again I'll suggest that the French were the first to perceive and develop the direct and indirect economic advantages. The promotion of the French language through the Alliance Française and Lycée systems, while having a vital impact on French foreign policy objectives, also has created a huge foreign demand for French cultural hardware: books, films, recordings, etc.

The spin-offs from the pursuit of Canadian cultural policy objectives are not, however, insignificant. One of our most successful vehicles for international self-expression is, of course, the National Film Board. Having only recently become a member of the Board, I hope you will forgive me if I wax a little exuberant over the NFB's richly deserved international reputation. Canadian films produced by the NFB were seen by almost one billion people last year: 974 million to be exact, or 42 times the population of Canada. Since its inception, the Board has produced over 3,000 films and received 1,600 awards, including five Oscars. They have appeared in over 60 languages and are distributed in 80 countries throughout the world. This is a remarkable record, particularly in view of a current operating budget of \$38.7 million. An important function of Canadian Embassies abroad is to service this tremendous demand.

The interest in Canadian film-making – largely stimulated by the successes over the past 40 years of the National Film Board – has resulted in the creation of a dynamic domestic film industry in Canada which generated over \$40 million in export earnings last year.

Other areas where knowledge of and interest in Canada have produced tangible dividends are the publishing and the record industries. Canadian exports of records have increased almost five-fold in the past three years to a 1978 level of \$9.4 million.

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while export revenues for Canadian magazines and periodicals have almost trebled over the same period (to \$41.4 million in 1978). While imports in these areas exceed exports, the rate of increase is much slower. Canadian exports of works of art and books and pamphlets have shown modest increases while imports have declined or remained almost static. Clearly Canada has and is seen to have a healthy cultural reputation. Equally clearly, the maintenance of such health makes good commercial sense.

Inter-cultural  
bridge  
building

As more evidence of the importance to broad foreign-policy goals of people-to-people understanding earned through cultural exchanges, I would point to the impact on Sino-Canadian relations of the ice-breaking tours in Canada of ping-pong players, the Shenyang acrobatic troupe, the Shanghai Ballet or, more recently, the Peking Opera, and to visits to China by the Canadian Brass, the Toronto Symphony Orchestra and numerous exchanges between the two countries in the arts, science, education, sports and medicine. A further example of cultural co-operation with China is a recent agreement to take 100 Chinese scholars into Canadian universities. This program is financed in large part by the Chinese themselves with important contributions being made from the provinces and more modest contributions to the administrative costs of the program coming from my Department and that of the Secretary of State.

No Canadian is unaware of the impact on our bilateral relations with the U.S.S.R. of "hockey diplomacy" or of the fact that hockey is one of the most binding common themes in our relations with other East European and Scandinavian countries.

During preparations for the 1976 Olympics in Montreal and the 1978 Commonwealth Games in Edmonton, the issue of *apartheid* in sports brought home to Canadians how inseparably integrated are most countries' political objectives with all other aspects of their international exchanges. The vast amounts of money all countries — not just Canadians, as the Russians are demonstrating — spend on the Olympic Games, is further evidence of the value placed on the broader returns of such events. Viewed in this context, the somewhat naive and sanctimonious protestations regarding the "politicization of sport" are not only unrealistic but downright silly.

Domestic  
impact of  
Canada's  
international  
image

Admittedly I began these remarks with a somewhat contentious premise: that the effective promotion of Canada's cultural identity was not only a fundamental and inseparable aspect of Canadian foreign policy but also that it paid demonstrable dividends in commercial terms. I assumed you all had heard enough of the defiant cries of culture *qua* culture, or bureaucratic catalogues of exactly what your government was doing for you when and where. Paradoxically one of the most important aspects of Canada's international cultural identity is its domestic impact. Canadians take perverse pleasure in ridiculing their much-documented search for identity and definition. That the search is made more easy when Canadian cultural manifestations garner international respect and acclaim is obvious, but what is somewhat less evident is the impact on each of Canada's principal cultural communities of the international successes of the other. For, just as the *Toronto Globe and Mail* waxed ecstatic over the Montreal Expos' dramatic struggle for the World Series pennant, or as the English

Canadians follow Antonine Maillet's second bid for France's much-coveted Prix Goncourt, so French-Canadians react with pride to the critical acclaim with which Michael Snow's recent exhibition was received at the Centre Beaubourg in Paris. Other recent examples of dramatic successes on the international stage in which all Canadians have taken pride are the National Ballet's triumphant performance at Covent Garden this summer and the sell-out performances of Michel Tremblay's brilliant play "Forever Yours, Marie-Lou", which is now on tour in Belgium, France and Switzerland.

The fact that such successes are perceived simply as Canadian — neither French nor English — greatly eases the burden of defining ourselves as one or the other.

I'm sure it is clear from what I have said that in the field of cultural diplomacy, it is the universities that occupy a critical central place. If the principal purpose of cultural diplomacy is to promote better understanding among nations, is there a more essential player than the universities? The answer is most certainly no. Take simply the External Affairs programs. It is the universities that educate the post-graduate students from 18 countries under our scholarship program. It is the universities that are taking the new group of Chinese students about to arrive under the new Canada-China agreement, and it is they who are accepting Nigerian students under a new Cost Recovery Technical Assistance Plan. It is university professors who are working to make the Canadian Studies program in seven countries a success. It is university professors who are working in the Third World under CIDA programs or under AUCC auspices or under Commonwealth Scholarships administered by the AUCC, or under an exchange they have simply arranged themselves. It is the universities who have been educating thousands of foreign students over many years, offering courses in humanities, arts and sciences which broaden the knowledge of Canadians of the changing international world. And there are so many other ways in which you are such critical actors on the international scene — not least in promoting contact with your alumni abroad — for example in the Caribbean where so many of the political leaders are graduates of your universities.

Two things are essential: that the Canadian universities continue to be open and internationalist in the future as they have been in the past; and that the achievement of excellence is their overriding obsession. If these two principles are respected, Canadian universities will remain at the centre of Canada's cultural diplomacy.