



REFERENCE PAPERS

INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 89

CULTURAL PROGRESS IN CANADA

Address by Prime Minister Louis S. St-Laurent
to the National Conference on Higher Education
Ottawa, November 13, 1956.

I should first like to congratulate the National Conference of Canadian Universities for sponsoring this national conference on higher education. It may indeed prove to be the most important in this field ever held in Canada.

It is very significant that you should meet to study "Canada's crisis in higher education" at a time when our country is experiencing the highest level of economic prosperity in its history and one of the highest rates of industrial expansion in the world. If such crisis really exists, it reveals that our national development suffers from a serious weakness and that our cultural progress has not kept pace with our industrial expansion.

In the economic field, we have realized gigantic projects through private initiative and appropriate government policies. At the time of Confederation, Canada consisted of several depressed regional economies which were much more directly linked with the United States than with each other. It was said that their political unification had created an artificial economic situation which could be maintained only at the price of great sacrifices. However, the West was rapidly populated, appropriate national policies were applied in the fields of trade and transportation and new resources were developed. Today, we have to recognize that our economic relations with the United States are becoming more competitive and less complementary than they were before. The economic unification of our territory, which seemed artificial not long ago, now appears to have been largely achieved and to have become almost natural. A distinct and strong national economy has been built up in Canada through the strengthening and development of our regional economies and the establishment of complementary trade relations between them which are vital to their respective progress. This admirable accomplishment has largely taken place as a result of private initiative, but it would not have been possible without active government support.

I think it is now time for our cultural development to parallel what has taken place in the economic field.

In the cultural field, our development has been much slower than in the economic field. More often than not Canadians still describe themselves in a negative way by recognizing that they are neither British, nor French, nor American. They become aware more easily of their differences

than of their common features. Thus we often hear it said that the province of Quebec is not like the other provinces. But in this regard it can equally be said that the Atlantic provinces, the province of Ontario, the Western provinces and British Columbia also have characteristics of their own.

We are to a great extent living under a system of cultural co-existence. In this respect we find ourselves in a position much like that which one existed in the economic field. In other words, our country is composed of various cultural areas which do not entertain sufficient relations with one another and which are too exclusively subjected to common influences from outside Canada. Such a situation gives no cause for alarm. Cultural diversity is undeniably a source of enrichment, provided that the different cultural trends can meet. Outside cultural influences are certainly desirable, provided they are neither determining factors nor the only ones simultaneously influencing all sections of the country for in that case the sources of our cultural life would cease being Canadian.

If we are to avoid such a possibility, we must get to work and try to relive on the cultural level our experience in the economic field. Our collective effort should then rest upon three fundamental principles.

In the first place, in the cultural field, we must aim at strengthening our regional cultures, particularly the two main cultures of Canada, so that they may radiate throughout the country, but we should not attempt to weaken them in order to leave a single and uniform culture. In the second place our cultural development in all its aspects, should, as much as possible, be left to private initiative. In the third place the state must support and encourage individuals and private organizations in the various spheres which are their responsibilities but then under no circumstances must it try to control them and deprive them of their freedom. A few remarks on each of these principles may not be out of place.

It is not only undesirable but impossible to establish one single culture in Canada. Any attempt in this direction would end in failure and would threaten national unity. Canada will have passed an important milestone in its development as a nation when all Canadians are convinced that only through cultural diversity can their country be unified and endure as a separate entity. Once we have grasped this truth, which emerges clearly from our history, our different cultural groups will no longer vainly try to impose their culture on others. Instead they will endeavour to improve their own cultural life and to assimilate what is good in the culture of others and compatible with their own. When we have acquired this outlook and have adopted this attitude we shall have taken another great step on the way to national unity. For the present what is important is to strengthen the two main cultural streams in this country, to promote their expansion and to induce them to meet and to exchange.

In our efforts to promote Canada's cultural growth, it must always be kept in mind that culture resides primarily in individuals, in private groups and in institutions. It is pre-eminently a field which should be left, as much as possible to private initiative. The development of our cultural life will be ensured first of all when we have a sufficient number of scholars and artists who will be able to enrich one another while remaining in touch with the people as a whole, either to educate them, or to draw inspiration

from them - and also when our educational institutions and other private organizations will be fully able to play their part.

However, private initiative cannot, by itself, do everything. The state also has its share of responsibility in this collective effort. It is incumbent upon it to set up certain agencies without which culture could not reach a full measure of self-expression. Moreover the state has a duty to assist and encourage private organizations in their respective fields, without, however, attempting to supplant them. If, as we find, our cultural development lags behind our economic expansion it cannot be accounted for where private initiative is concerned by any superiority of our business men over our scholars and artists; it is due in part to the fact that cultural activities are not as profitable as economic activities and perhaps chiefly because in cultural matters the state has not played the part it has undertaken in the economic field.

There are Canadians who deny the federal government any right to intervene in certain cultural fields, especially in that of assistance to students and to universities by means of bursaries or grants. It is evident that our constitution does restrict the powers of the federal authority in several of those fields. For instance article 93 states that, except in certain special cases, "in and for each province, the legislature may exclusively make laws in relation to education". This provision undoubtedly means that the provincial authorities have the exclusive right to legislate on education, to determine programmes of studies and to specify the system of school attendance which their citizens must follow. Moreover, the interpretation given to our Constitution denies the federal government the right to resort to direct taxation within a province in order to raise revenue for provincial purposes.

On the other hand, the federal government has the absolute right to levy indirect taxes for any purpose, and the power to impose direct taxes, provided that they are intended for the Consolidated Revenue Fund of Canada. Out of these monies it can with Parliament's approval, offer gifts or grants to individuals, institutions, provincial governments or even to foreign governments. This is a royal prerogative which is not in any way restricted by our constitution.

As stated by Chief Justice Duff in the Reference to the constitutionality of the Unemployment Insurance Act in 1936:

"It cannot, therefore, we think - and we do not think this was disputed on the argument, although we do not desire to put what we have to say upon any suggested admission - at all events, it cannot, we think, be disputed, even with plausibility, that, in point of strict law, Parliament has authority to make grants out of the public monies to individual inhabitants of any of the provinces, for example, for relief of distress, for reward of merit, or for any other object which Parliament in its wisdom may deem to be a desirable one. The propriety of such grants, the wisdom of such grants, the convenience or inconvenience of the practice of making such grants, are considerations for Parliament alone, and have no relevancy in any discussion before any Court concerning the competence of Parliament to authorize them".

The present Chief Justice of the Supreme Court expressed the same idea in the following terms:

"...it is evident that the Dominion may grant sums of money to individuals or organizations and that the gift may be accomplished by such restrictions and condition as Parliament may see fit to enact. It would then be open to the proposed recipient to decline the gift or to accept it subject to such conditions".

And, in the Privy Council, as reported in the same Reference, Lord Atkin, handing down the court's decision, said this:

"That the Dominion may impose taxation for the purposes of creating a fund for special purposes and may apply that fund for making contributions in the public interest to individuals, corporations or public authorities could not as a general proposition be denied".

I have heard some people say and there are others who have even written in newspapers with large circulations, that so doing would constitute a fraudulent misuse of funds.

They said it, for instance, about family allowances, but they do not say it in all cases for it is by virtue of the same right that the federal government is able to make equalization payments to provincial governments, to help finance hospital construction, technical and vocational training or conservation of certain natural resources, even though legislative responsibility in these fields belongs exclusively to provincial legislatures. It is this same power which enables the federal government, if it sees fit, to offer bursaries to students, or grants to universities. Such assistance can well be granted without "making laws in relation to education"; otherwise, private individuals and industry, who certainly do not have the right to enact such laws, would not be able to offer assistance to education.

In fact, this same royal prerogative is also enjoyed by provincial legislatures. That is why the Quebec government, under Mercier in 1890, was able to make a grant of \$10,000 to the University of Toronto and, more recently under Mr. Duplessis, to provide the sum of \$50,000 to the University of Ottawa. The Quebec government certainly cannot enact legislation with regard to education in Ontario nor in any other province outside Quebec; and yet it had the right to offer those gifts. At the same time there was no suggestion on the part of the Ontario government that this was an invasion of its rights. On the contrary the Ontario Minister of Education, in his annual report for 1905 expressed his gratitude to the Quebec government for the action it had taken in 1890. Moreover in later years the government of Quebec has made substantial grants to institutions situated in other provinces for secondary education.

Therefore, the federal governmental has the right to offer financial assistance in all fields of culture, and it rests with the federal government to decide the purposes for which it is offered, and who is to benefit from it. In other words, these problems are a matter of national cultural policy in respect of which the federal government also has responsibilities.

The development of a national policy in the cultural field was initiated a long time ago. This policy consisted of the creation of national institutions which were felt necessary for the cultural life of the nation, and of the provision of financial assistance to individuals and organizations engaged in certain cultural activities.

The oldest federal institution in this field is the National Museum which dates back to 1842. Then followed the Public Archives, the National Gallery, the National Research Council, the Historic Sites and Monuments Board, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, the National Film Board and, more recently, the National Library. All these agencies have already, or will get in the near future, suitable accommodation and will be better able to reach the objectives for which they have been established. A Royal Commission is investigating our policy in the field of radio and television and it is expected to present its recommendations at the beginning of 1957.

The first programme designed to provide federal assistance to individuals and organizations in the cultural field was initiated in 1917 by the National Research Council. It consisted of offering scholarships to graduate students in the natural sciences and grants to universities for the provision of equipment and other facilities. In 1917 there were practically no university groups doing an appreciable amount of scientific research. It is probably not an exaggeration to say that the support provided by the Council has been largely responsible for the development of scientific research in Canada over the past 40 years. During that period the federal contribution has amounted to approximately \$25 millions, and all universities having science or engineering faculties have participated in the programme. More recently, the Defence Research Board and the Atomic Energy Control Board have initiated similar assistance in related scientific fields. The Federal Departments of Agriculture, of Labour, of Fisheries and of Transport also give annual grants to universities for specific research activities or for extension work. The University training programme organized by the Department of Veterans Affairs still involves each year a substantial sum of money.

Under the National Health Programme inaugurated in 1948 by the Department of National Health and Welfare in collaboration with all provincial governments, additional training facilities were provided at several Universities. The cost of this programme is met from funds provided by the federal government to the extent of \$500,000 annually. Approximately \$75,000 a year is also provided to Canadian Universities as tuition and other fees for trainees specializing in various health fields. The research activities at the Universities, particularly in the field of public health, are supported through the Programme with an annual amount of approximately \$800,000.

As far back as 1913, substantial assistance was given to the provinces under the Agricultural Instruction Act. After World War I, further aid was given the provinces to stimulate the development of technical schools for other industries. During the thirties the programme was broadened to include various forms of youth training. These earlier developments were followed during World War II by the passage of the Vocational Training Co-ordination Act. Under this act the Minister of Labour is given authority to enter into agreements with the provinces for any period of time to provide financial assistance for the construction and operation

of technical, vocational and training schools as well as for other types of training. The current Vocational Schools Assistant Agreement was entered into with the provinces in 1945 and provided for a total contribution from the federal government of \$30 million. I am happy to say that all provinces participated in this programme and that it was never suggested that the programme was unconstitutional or that it interfered with provincial autonomy.

The annual grants to universities were approved by Parliament in 1951. In 1952, the Canadian government decided to use the blocked funds held in France and in the Netherlands to provide scholarships for Canadians to study in those countries. The government asked the Royal Society of Canada to take the responsibility of selecting the candidates, and in the last four years about thirty scholarships have been awarded annually.

Finally, special grants have been given by the federal government to some private museums, and annual grants have been made to several voluntary societies such as the Royal Canadian Academy of the Arts, the Canadian Writers' Foundation and the Royal Society of Canada.

This brief description shows that an extensive national cultural policy has been gradually developed by the Canadian government, although many Canadians may feel that, in certain sectors, it has been too modest and timid. I want to emphasize at this stage that this policy has always respected what I consider to be the fundamental requirements of our collective effort to develop our cultural life. The policy has been aimed at strengthening and developing our main cultures without attempting to impose either of them upon any Canadians. It is based upon the principle that private initiative had the main responsibilities in most aspects of our cultural development. It has provided financial assistance to individuals, voluntary organizations and institutions in order to support them without attempting, however, to control their activities. Finally, this policy has also included the setting up of several public agencies which were deemed essential for the development and the adequate expression of our cultural life.

These fundamental principles of our national cultural policy are strongly supported by the Canadian people, as the hearings of the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences have shown. I read the report of that Commission very carefully and I am convinced that those principles have also inspired all its recommendations. The Commission paid very few compliments to the Canadian government but, if I am not mistaken, it did not criticize the general objectives and orientation of our policy. It recommended, however, that this traditional policy be strengthened and extended to new fields of cultural activity.

Since the publication of the report of the Commission, several of its recommendations have been implemented. Others have had to wait; but my colleagues and I have reached the conclusion that the time has now come for their implementation.

You will probably recall that the Massey Commission had recommended that the several existing functions of the National Museum be separated and expanded, and that an historical museum be established.

The government examined this matter and concluded that the scope and functions of the National Museum should be broadened in order to strengthen our national life. As a result, two Museums will be created in the near future. One will be called the "Canadian Museum of Natural History". It will take over and expand research into the natural sciences and the natural science exhibitions of the existing Museum. The second one - to be called in English the "Canadian Museum of Human History" and in French, "Le Musée de l'Homme du Canada" - will portray the development, history and activities of man in the Canadian environment. This Museum will also embrace the National War Museum. Both new Museums will have a challenging role; it will be to portray the natural and human resources of the whole Canadian nation as it develops and moves forward. The public will be able to see these portrayals in central museums and by exhibits travelling across the country; in this way our people may get a better understanding of the factors which affect materially and spiritually the development of every sector of the nation.

The Royal Commission also recommended that annual grants be offered to support the work of the universities on the basis of the population of each of the provinces and, within each province, to each university in proportion to the student enrolment. These grants were provided by Parliament in 1951 and each year since on the basis of 50 cents per capita.

I have already explained why the federal government had the right to offer such assistance. I feel that it is not only its right but its duty to do so. It is now widely known that all Canadian universities are going through financial difficulties which prevent their adequate development. They need new accommodation and new facilities very badly, and university teachers are not adequately paid for their most valuable services. Moreover, our universities can rightly claim that they render essential services to the nation as a whole and to the Canadian government in particular. As the Massey Commission pointed out, the universities are now the recruiting grounds for a great number of positions in the federal civil service and in the commissioned ranks of the armed forces.

Rather than providing financial assistance to universities, the federal government could, as some people might suggest, set up its own colleges to train future public servants. Some other countries have done so, and we in Canada already have service colleges which provide personnel for the commissioned ranks of the armed forces.

The setting up of colleges would undoubtedly cost the government, and therefore the Canadian taxpayers more money than would the provision of reasonable assistance to universities for their services. Moreover, that course would be undesirable for another more serious reason. If we want to preserve our democratic way of life, and if we want to prevent the public service from becoming a bureaucracy, it is essential that the public servant should be drawn from and well integrated into the community in order that he may understand and appreciate its human problem in the light of his own experience. He should really feel that he is the same kind of a Canadian as those whose community affairs he is helping to manage. He would not be well fitted for that role if he were to be isolated from the community and from the other students of his generation during the period of his training.

I have visited some countries where the personnel of the government and of the civil service constitute a class regarded as somewhat above the hoi polloi of the general public. I think our brand of democratic institutions is better suited to our way of living and I hope that brand will long continue to be preferred to any ivory tower set up.

And I wish to add that I have no intention of posing as a benefactor of our universities and other cultural organizations. I happen to be the head of a government that does not manufacture the money it spends. It digs down in the pockets of all the Canadian taxpayers to get it, and we of the government are merely trustees on behalf of all those Canadian taxpayers. The proposals I am putting forward, I look upon as a good sound investment of the taxpayers' money and so do my colleagues.

My colleagues and I feel that the annual federal grants to universities should be continued and increased and we are prepared to recommend to Parliament at the next regular session that they be doubled.

As you know, according to the present formula, these grants are distributed by the Federal government directly to individual universities recognized as such by the Provincial governments. In the province of Quebec, the authorities saw fit to allow this aid to be accepted for the first year only, because they feared that this was a first steps towards encroachment on the exclusive jurisdiction of provincial legislatures in the field of education. It was also feared in certain circles that the Federal government might interfere with the freedom of universities. That was certainly not our intention nor the intention of Parliament nor do I think it could happen.

In order to dissipate these fears and to make it abundantly clear that we do not intend to tamper with the freedom of any individual institution, we are proposing to hand over the monies voted by Parliament each year for that purpose to the National Conference of Canadian Universities which would divide it up and distribute it. In this way, the Federal government would have no contact with any individual institution. We think that this system will prove a sufficient guarantee for all our universities which should be completely free from any kind of interference. If the N.C.C.U. decides to assume this new responsibility, we will ask for authority to enter into an agreement with the Conference in order to carry out this arrangement.

We propose to hand over the money to the N.C.C.U. to be allocated as if all eligible institutions were to accept their share of the total amount. If any one of them should feel that it cannot accept this assistance for the time being, we would propose to provide in our agreement with the N.C.C.U. that the money allocated to that institution be held in trust for it until it sees fit to ask for it. In this way, no institution would be penalized in the future for a previous refusal of the grants, and there would be no unjust discrimination against any group of taxpayers in Canada in this respect.

You will also recall that the Massey Commission made a very important recommendation with regard to the establishment of a Canada Council for the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences. According to that recommendation, the functions of the Council would be to stimulate and to help

voluntary organizations in the fields of the arts, the humanities and the social sciences, to devise and administer a system of scholarships in these fields, to foster Canada's cultural relations abroad and to perform the functions of a national commission for UNESCO.

My colleagues and I have considered this proposal very carefully -- some of our critics would even say that we have studied it for too long -- and we are now prepared to recommend the creation of the Canada Council to Parliament at its next regular session.

We want this Council to be as independent as possible from the government. We are in favour of government support for the arts, the humanities and the social sciences but without government control. Moreover, we expect that, if the Council is constituted as an independent body, private individuals and industries will be disposed to make contributions to the financing of its activities because they also have responsibilities in this field. In order to achieve this objective, we will ask Parliament to approve an endowment of \$50 million for the Council in order to enable it to finance its activities from the annual income to be derived from the investment of that capital.

We would also propose to add another function to those envisaged by the Massey Commission for the Council. It would consist of making capital grants to universities in Canada equal to 50 per cent of the cost of specific building or capital equipment projects, with appropriate regard to the population of each province. For that purpose, we would recommend another appropriation of \$50 million to be given to the Council and to be thus distributed by it over a period of ten years. According to reliable forecasts, it is estimated that our universities will have to devote more than \$350 million to capital expenditures during the next ten years and we feel that it is our duty to assist universities to meet this urgent need and to encourage others who may be also dependent on the services of universities graduates to do likewise.

We hope that this contribution of \$100 million to the Canada Council, the increase in the annual grants to universities and the continuation of our other programmes in the cultural fields will be viewed as a substantial recognition by the Canadian government of the great contributions that our universities, our humanists, our scientists and our artists are making to the proper development of our great country. We do not consider for a moment that our assistance should be looked upon as the true measure of the value of all the immense services which are being provided through the universities or of the extent of their pressing needs. We are confident that all provincial governments will continue to increase the important contributions they are already making in these fields. We know also that individuals and private industry are well aware of the crucial problems that Canada has to face at this stage of our cultural development. Through the N.C.C.U. and the Canada Council, adequate channels will now be provided to make assistance available and through them we hope many others will find it convenient to do their share.

I have already spoken at considerable length, but before an audience such as this, if I were to sit down without some sort of a peroration, you might feel I had entirely forgotten what I was taught in college about the proper structure of short speeches.

So I drafted a short peroration and I feel I should inflict that too upon you. Here it is.

My colleagues and I are convinced that these proposals will contribute to the filling of a gap in our national way of life and will help to solve "Canada's crisis in higher education".

I have already indicated that in our view our cultural progress has lagged behind our industrial development. We are not, however, the only country to suffer from that imbalance. The French philosopher Henri Bergson, in 1932, noted the same disequilibrium throughout the whole world and I think some lines of his analysis are worth quoting:

"In endowing us with an intelligence that is fundamentally inventive, Nature had really prepared us for an extension of our capacities. But machines run by oil, coal and electricity, converting into motion potential energy accumulated over millions of years, have given to our area an extension so vast and a power so formidable, so disproportionate to its size and strength, that surely nothing of this kind had been provided for in the structure of our species.... Now, in this body that has grown out of proportion, the soul remains what it was, too small now to fill the body, too feeble to control it. Hence the gap between them; hence the formidable problems in the social, political and international spheres, problems which are many manifestations of that gap and which give rise today to so many disorganized and ineffectual efforts at solutions... The overgrown body awaits an extension of the soul."

I think you will agree that indeed, the world today needs abundant sources of intellectual and moral energies. Canada wants to be one of those sources, and it has already begun to be one of those sources in several international organizations. With that purpose in mind, we must further develop and enrich our own national soul; we must achieve in our country that broader outlook and that deeper insight into the things of the mind which will enable us better to deal with the problems of the present. And that requires us to take into account the experiences - yes even the mistakes - of the past generations since the beginning of man's social development. We must acquire a better appreciation of the dazzling possibilities for future generations when the practice of the fundamental principle of good human relations, "love thy neighbour as thyself" will be regarded not only as a command to be obeyed but rather as a privilege to be enjoyed and to be treasured beyond the importance attached to the possession and control of mere material things, however useful those things may be to satisfy the needs of the material side of our human nature. If we diligently seek the development of the nobler side of our human nature, may we not hope, like he who really seeks the kingdom of his Sovereign Lord and His justice, that all those material things shall be added unto us.

RP/A