



CANADA

# STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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## THE CANADIAN FOREIGN SERVICE

Comments by Mr. Marcel Cadieux, Ambassador  
of Canada to the United States, at Fletcher  
School, Boston, on March 14, 1972.

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The foreign service is the instrument through which a government represents itself abroad. I propose to interpret "foreign service" broadly to encompass all civilian government activities abroad, although I shall focus on the function of the career foreign service within such activities. A government's strategy or broad policy framework is represented in national aims or goals as postulated from time to time. In the years ahead, the foreign service will, I suspect, concern itself more with the broad area of tactics than with the formulation of policy. Long gone are the days when diplomats created policy on their own -- the memoirs of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century diplomats, while interesting and often entertaining, are largely irrelevant as guides for action today. The ease of foreign travel and the speed and security of communications have changed the role of the foreign emissary, but I should emphasize that it has not diminished his importance. The key word is change.

Diplomacy has been called both an art and a science -- among other things. It purports to come in a variety of forms -- new, old, active, quiet, dollar, open, nuclear, -- and no doubt we shall hear of additional types in the years ahead. In essence, it is negotiation, and the objective of any one serving his country abroad is the protection of his country's interests -- ensuring that actions taken by other countries will be, it is hoped, beneficial to but at least not injurious to those interests.

The present, to those living through it, always seems to be either a "period of transition", which may be a euphemism for not having any clear idea where we are headed, or a "watershed" consisting of one or more historic decisions or events. In retrospect, historians have little difficulty in distinguishing periods of transition from watersheds, although no one would deny their capacity for argument about the significance of one or the other. In dealing with the present, the problem is complicated not only by the lack of perspective and the involvement in current events but by the fog of rhetoric that surrounds virtually all policy statements. On basic goals most countries -- at least those with democratically-elected governments -- are in broad agreement.

Where there are differences is in the means of achieving those goals -- that is, in the broad sense, in tactics. As I said earlier, it seems to me that tactics are what the foreign service will be primarily concerned with in the future. If you accept that, then perhaps you will agree that the role of the foreign service has changed rather than diminished in importance.

Well, where does Canada, and the Canadian foreign service, fit into all of this? Canada is a small country and, though we are better off than most other countries, when it comes to the matter of power we are definitely not in the big leagues. We are, however, entering into a period where the postwar centres are shifting. The pre-eminence of two nuclear super-powers is likely to remain without serious challenge in the strategic area for this decade at least, but there are new and vital power centres developing in the Far East -- both China and Japan; South Asia is really no one's "sphere of influence"; and, clearly, the possibility of the current phase of European integration, leading to greater cohesion as an independent power centre, is an element of signal importance. The major international issue will clearly continue to be world security and the means of reducing and, one hopes, eliminating the causes of international tension. That will be a long and difficult job, requiring patience and dedication and involving the leaders of major countries. There will, however, be ample scope in the new multi-polar environment for smaller powers such as Canada to contribute to negotiations leading to a safer world.

This international focus at the highest level on security questions will not diminish the great importance of a host of other issues. In the Canadian foreign policy review published in 1970, it is stated that foreign policy is the extension of domestic policy into the foreign environment. That gives a key to what working in the Canadian foreign service of the Seventies is likely to be about. It will increasingly be concerned with problems that affect the lives of people directly -- economic security, the quality of life, education, problems of the environment. Many of these problems have a global dimension, and are of concern to people and society generally as much as they are to nations. With the great increase in travel, in informal exchanges among professional groups -- scientists, economists, engineers, educators --, the international scope of such problems is underlined. I am sure, in your studies here, you are reflecting about how the many political, social and economic problems might be tackled internationally in the future. If peaceful change in the international environment is to be achieved, it may well come from below -- from continued expansion of the kinds of informal exchange I have been talking about, through which a genuine and comprehensible community of interest could develop to provide the underpinning of solutions of major security issues.

Canada is struggling not only with the many and familiar problems of modern society, social, economic, and political, but is also struggling with the working-out of a viable and genuinely acceptable relationship between two major groups -- French-speaking and English-speaking -- based on equality of status, opportunity and influence, and this is clearly reflected in Canada's foreign policy. Some want other solutions -- separation, for example -- but they are clearly in the minority. I do not wish to be presumptuous, but it seems to me that the Canadian experience in trying to work out a harmonious

and beneficial relationship between two large linguistically and culturally distinct groups within a democratic framework has relevance not only for other countries where the population is not entirely homogeneous but also for the conduct of friendly relations among states.

A country's foreign service is really only a reflection of the country itself. During the postwar decades, Canada enjoyed a preferred position. We had emerged from the war materially unscathed and militarily, economically, stronger than ever. Our relative power in the world community was far greater than it had ever been, and this was reflected in the active part played by Canada through its foreign service in contributing to European recovery and the establishment and development of multilateral bodies such as the United Nations and NATO. It was, however, not a position that could be sustained. The rehabilitation of Europe, the growth of Japan, the re-emergence of China and the independence of colonial territories have all contributed to making the world of today far different from what it was only a decade or so ago. Accordingly, the Canadian foreign service has had to adapt to the new world situation and the Government's perception of Canada's place in it. I should like, therefore, against the hastily-sketched background I have given, to focus on the make-up of the Canadian foreign service, particularly those elements that, if not unique, tend in total to make it somewhat different from other foreign services.

First of all, the Canadian foreign service is relatively new. An illustration of this is that there is no shelf of memoirs or personal reminiscences equivalent to the various "Farewells to Foggy Bottom" written by United States foreign service officers. Even if such a library of Canadian memoirs existed, the content would probably not be very dramatic, because Canadian diplomats in the two decades after the Second World War tended to work diligently but quietly out of public view trying to find solutions, to act as the "honest broker" between competing powers. This role has been categorized in the recent foreign policy review as that of the "helpful fixer" and is a role dismissed as no longer relevant.

The Department of External Affairs was set-up by an Act of Parliament in 1909. Its mandate was described in sufficiently broad terms to permit an empirical approach to the development of the Department's functions within the Government. The service only really began in the 1920s, and then in a rather halting way. The expansion of representation to major countries continued until the outbreak of the Second World War. The really significant expansion began after the War, and at present Canada is represented in well over 100 countries. One result of this rapid expansion in recent years has been a general lowering of the average age of members of the foreign service. There are at present about 725 foreign service officers, about 500 in the Department of External Affairs and 225 in the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce. With regard to the Department of External Affairs, approximately 55 foreign service officers were recruited in 1971, somewhat more than 10 per cent of the total strength, and a like number is anticipated for the current year. Apart from 1970, which was a year of particular austerity, the average intake of officers over the past six or seven years has been between 35 and 40. You will appreciate that, despite resignations, retirements and so on, such relatively large intakes over a short period into a numerically small service inevitably result in a general lowering of the average age of the service.

A second factor of some importance is that the Canadian foreign service is "career rotational". The normal entry is at the training or probationary level, which has an upper age-limit of 31. The majority of entrants are in their mid-twenties and enter the service directly from university, often with postgraduate training. The classification system was recently changed, with a reduction in the number of officer levels from ten to the current five, plus a training level. This reduction in the number of levels, combined with broad pay-bands, provides management with flexibility in the employment of its personnel and tends to obscure marginal differences in rank. Rates of pay will be based on performance rather than automatic progression based on years of service through specified pay-bands. It seems that officers determined to make a career in the foreign service have the opportunity, through outstanding performance, of moving ahead quickly, since the sole criterion for advancement is merit.

The fact that the service is "career" is perhaps best illustrated by the fact that the number of appointments to senior positions from outside the service is small. There have, of course, been such appointments over the years, but these have been exceptions that prove the general rule. The percentage of such appointments is nowhere near as great as that within the United States system. Ambassadors do not, for example, submit their resignations automatically when a new Government takes office. The prime virtue of this system is that it provides recognizable goals for capable young people entering the foreign service. It permits officers to decide after some years of experience of the life and work in the foreign service whether they wish to continue on to seek known goals or to seek careers elsewhere in the public service or in private life.

The service is also rotational -- i.e., officers are expected to serve both at home and abroad and the tendency seems to be towards roughly equivalent time in the two environments. Service in Ottawa involves work throughout the public service, not just in the Department of External Affairs. The number of secondments from the foreign service to other Government departments and agencies -- and more recently to universities -- has steadily grown. Secondment of public servants into the foreign service for two- or three-year terms is expected to grow. This is a reflection of the wide variety of domestic interests to be served abroad for which exposure to the totality of Canadian Government operations is both necessary and valuable. Since the Canadian foreign service is simply a part of the wider public service and not a distinct body established by legislation, as is the United States foreign service, foreign service officers in Ottawa are under precisely the same terms and conditions as those working in other government departments. This serves as a useful cathartic for those who might otherwise become obsessed with the status and perquisites of the diplomatic syndrome -- not nearly as impressive, by the way, as the popular press would lead one to believe.

A third factor is integration of all Canadian Government activities abroad. The foreign policy review to which I referred earlier provided a conceptual framework for thinking about policy that illustrated the interrelationship of policies and programs. Because of this interrelationship, the means of implementing policy must be co-ordinated. The Government thus decided that steps should be taken to integrate foreign operations in a systematic way.

I do not propose to go into detail, but in essence a system of "country programming" has been established with the head of post, the ambassador, designated as the manager of Canadian operations in a particular country. This may all sound pretty obvious, but the tenacity of Government departments in holding on to their own personnel and in regarding members of their departments serving abroad as representatives of their respective departments and not of the Government as a whole should not be underestimated. In essence, we are in the process of instituting a system of programming in which each post abroad has clearly-defined objectives (which it has a part in establishing) and is provided with the personnel and resources to achieve them. The difficulty of programming foreign relations is, of course, accepted (unforeseen events, changes in policy or emphasis, can require rapid shifts in priorities and in how personnel and resources will be employed), but for day-to-day operations the development of clearly-understood objectives is desirable, not only from the point of view of providing a basis for judging how scarce government resources are being used but also as a means of appraising the performance of personnel in meeting the objectives. This attempt to develop a policy-programming system in the foreign service is proceeding pragmatically, with no preconceived ideas as to its absolute utility to foreign affairs operations, which are often more qualitative than quantitative.

A fourth factor of significance to the development of the Canadian foreign service is that we now have collective bargaining. As a result of legislation adopted in 1967, collective bargaining was instituted throughout the public service. Foreign service officers, accustomed to negotiating on behalf of their Government, suddenly found themselves involved in negotiations with the Government on the terms and conditions of their employment. There was a good deal of soul-searching about how to adapt to the collective-bargaining situation. Ultimately, it was decided to establish a professional association, which, in accordance with the legislation, was recognized by the employer (the Government) as the sole bargaining agent for the foreign service officers of the Department of External Affairs and the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce. It was not an easy time, since many FSOs considered themselves to be members of a dedicated profession prepared to work 24 hours a day, if necessary, to achieve whatever results were required either at home or abroad. The idea of working a precise number of hours and in certain circumstances being paid for overtime required some getting used to.

The fact that the service is so small caused other difficulties. For example, the legislation required the exclusion from the collective-bargaining process of those designated by the Government as managers. This resulted in the exclusion of a large number of officers, generally the more senior ones, serving as heads of post abroad or as supervisors at home. A number of anomalies occurred and still do. For example, many Canadian missions abroad are very small, with an ambassador and perhaps only one or two other officers and support staff. When the ambassador is away from the post, an officer, often relatively junior, takes over as manager and then reverts to his normal role when the ambassador returns. Within the Department in Ottawa, responsibilities tend to go very far down the line on the many complex issues with which foreign service officers deal. It is really not practicable to have rigid and, in fact, artificial distinctions between management and non-management.

A further point of some interest is that, through managerial exclusions, the pool of officers available to form the executive of the staff association is small and with a majority of young junior officers. The possibility of the association becoming a divisive factor within the service, representing not the service as a whole but only the more junior element, is a matter of concern to the whole service. It has been generally accepted that an adversary relationship between management and the general body of officers (all potential managers) would be detrimental to the service. Nevertheless, the collective-bargaining process itself imposes a certain separateness, which has required careful handling. In any event, the implications of collective bargaining in the foreign service are still being studied, and we have been working in a pragmatic way to fulfil the requirements of the Government's collective-bargaining legislation, and thus far the mutual-education process of management and the association has, I think, been of benefit to both. The Government itself has been re-examining the collective-bargaining environment and a Government study released in 1971 made a number of recommendations based on an examination of experience since the legislation was adopted. One of the study's recommendations was that the foreign service group in its entirety should be excluded from the collective-bargaining process. No decisions have yet been made, but I think the recommendation itself illustrates that the difficulty of applying a trade-union technique to a professional career foreign service has been recognized.

Another important fact about Canada to bear in mind that affects the foreign service is that Canada is a federal state. There are many such states in the world. What is peculiar to Canada is that, internally, power and jurisdiction are strictly divided between the Federal Government in Ottawa and the ten provincial governments. Compared, for instance, to the states in this country, the provinces of Canada have considerably more power and influence in national affairs. This division of jurisdiction provides room for vigorous and endless political arguments between the national and the provincial authorities. Although the Fathers of Confederation in 1867 envisaged a strong Federal Government, the influence of judicial interpretations of the Privy Council in London in subsequent years tended to favour the provinces, and this relative power tended to increase. As might be expected, disputes between the two levels of government have focused on the sharing of the tax pie. The game is for the provinces to induce the Federal Government to raise taxes - the unpopular part - and to let them, the provinces, spend the proceeds as they like - the popular part.

Externally, this division of jurisdiction also has consequences. In matters coming under provincial jurisdiction, the Federal Government is not in a position to bind the provinces through international agreements unless the provinces concur. Furthermore, there has been some controversy as to whether the provinces have in external affairs some jurisdiction of their own. As a federalist I have no doubt myself that, essentially, Canada is one country and the Federal Government has the monopoly of jurisdiction. This view has been contested by some governments, particularly that of Quebec, and has led to some complications in our relations with certain other countries. For the foreign service it is vitally important that the areas of jurisdiction be understood and that co-ordination on matters in the foreign affairs field of interest to both levels of government be careful and as complete as possible.

Finally, and perhaps the most important factor, the Canadian foreign service as a reflection of Canadian society is a bilingual service. Canada has two official languages, English and French, and Canadian Government departments are required to serve the public in the language of its choice. It has always been recognized that knowledge of languages in addition to one's native language is a useful attribute for persons in the foreign service. The Department of External Affairs has for many years, even before the recent legislation was passed, been in the forefront of the effort to enhance the position of French as a language of work in the public service. Much of the correspondence between Canadian missions abroad and the Department has for many years been conducted in either English or French, depending on the wishes of the originating officer. The management of the service also led the way in trying to ensure that, in general, the proportion of French- and English-speaking Canadians in the service would be roughly equivalent to their proportion of the total population. This was done in accordance with the basic tenet of the foreign service that admission and promotion should be solely on merit. In the early days, it required a considerable effort on the part of the Department to encourage able young French-speaking Canadians to join the Department in Ottawa, since Ottawa was far less amenable to bilingualism than it is today. Nowadays, following the adoption of the Official Languages Act, the Government is spending a great deal of time and money in providing language-training programs in English and French, and the Department of External Affairs has expanded its own already substantial activities in accordance with Government policy. A recent development was the designation of certain divisions in the Department as French-language units -- that is, all work within such units would be carried out in French. There are several units within each department in the Government and the objective is to encourage the development of French as an equal language of work. I think you will appreciate that a prerequisite for working in the often complex area of foreign affairs is dedication to accuracy. For officers to be able to work accurately in two languages is a good deal more demanding than simply being able to converse in them.

The factors I have outlined to you combine to make work in the Canadian foreign service stimulating and rewarding. The Canadian Government is working in a pragmatic way to determine the right scale and focus for Canada's involvement in an increasingly interdependent world. The foreign service as the primary instrument for executing Government policy in the external environment is contributing to the progressive definition of that scale and focus as a reflection of Canadian society as a whole.