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THE FOUNDATION OF CANADIAN POLICY IN WORLD AFFAIRS

An address by Right Hon. Louis S. St. Laurent,
Secretary of State for External Affairs,
Inaugurating the Gray Foundation Lecturship at
Toronto University, January 13, 1947.

I. INTRODUCTIONa) The Purpose of the Gray Foundation

No one can fail to be affected by the poignant circumstances in which this lectureship has been established nor by the symbolic significance of this occasion in the life of our country. I need hardly say how deeply moved I am at having been asked to inaugurate it and how great a responsibility I feel rests upon me to start on the right course a series which I am confident will be one of great moment in the academic calendar of this university.

I am sure that, as the occasion of the Gray lecture recurs, it will take on an ever increasing significance in the life of this institution. It will remind you, in the first place, of a great act of faith on the part of one of your members, John Gray. He was called upon to give his life in one of the darkest episodes in history. He so firmly believed in the future of mankind that he made provision for others to continue the life of scholarship which he had been called upon to surrender.

You will be reminded also of the faith which the Gray family has had in the future of this country. I should like to say in the very beginning to Mr. George Gray that the interest which his two sons, Duncan and John, showed in their fellow Canadians of French origin was entirely worthy of the commemoration he has given it. The actions of this family are symbolic of the determination of an ever increasing number of individual French and English speaking people in Canada to live together as one nation. John Gray in particular set himself the task of learning the language and the traditions of both cultural groups and he sought also to know the ways of his countrymen of French extraction where they live simply in their own homes.

I am glad that John Gray found his experience in living with a family in Quebec rewarding. I am glad also that when his father and his brother Duncan joined him there they too were received with hospitality and confidence. The family of Félix Premont with which they stayed was typical of the Quebec countryside. It was frugal and hospitable. Its traditions lay deep in the fields and forests of this country which its members had occupied for many generations. It reached out eagerly the hand of friendship and understanding to those who came from other parts of Canada to visit there

and study the basis of its life. It is encouraging to learn that so much good has come from this meeting of two families. I am sure that it is as much upon the basis of many such encounters, entered into with confidence and developed with patience and imagination, as it is upon the actions of men in public life that the true foundations of national unity must lie.

I am told that in the comment which he frequently made on his experience in Quebec, John Gray expressed the wish that he might devote his life to bringing about a more united Canada. No young man could have set himself a higher or more noble objective than that. As events turned out, he gave his life for a different purpose. The safety of his country was threatened. At that moment, the freedom, without which the unity he cherished is meaningless, was in danger. It is for those of us who now enjoy the consequences of his sacrifice to achieve and maintain his ideal of a united Canada. He would gladly have made this the object of a richly promising life. We must not disappoint him.

b) The War Record of the University

You will be reminded also, when this lecture is given each year, of the enviable record of this university in the war. This is a record written in the heroic deeds and sacrifices of your staff and students who, in every corner of the world, engaged in the conflict. It is written also in the scientific and other research by which the university contributed to the common cause.

I do not think I should let this occasion pass without remarking on the way in which the universities of Canada made their resources available to the nation during the war. The universities were left themselves to decide the methods by which they would integrate their activities with those of the nation during the war. They took the initiative that was expected of them. They made their decisions with consistent wisdom. I think I may safely say that in almost every instance their judgment in these matters was confirmed by the national authorities to whom their plans were submitted. At the same time, they were able in a very high degree to sustain the intellectual life of the country through years when our major pre-occupations were in other and less constructive activities. The result has been that scholarship in Canada has suffered much less severely on account of the war than might otherwise have been the case. The universities have been able also to undertake with conspicuous success the enormous burden of the post-war period. They have opened their doors to thousands of returning students eager for the intellectual opportunities which were denied them when they were on war service. I feel that the Gray lecturship symbolizes in a very cogent manner the combination of heroic service in the field of battle and continuing devotion to the inner values of scholarship. It is a combination of which the universities may well be proud.

c) The Need to Examine the Basis of Canadian External Policy

From what we know of Duncan and John Gray it is clear that they had a high ideal for this country. So also did the thousands of young men from this and other universities who turned aside from the peaceful and constructive pursuits which are the normal interests of our youth and went willingly to war. I think we must now inquire what it is in the life of

this nation which they cherished so greatly and which we must protect and nourish in our policies. In particular, we must consider the role in world affairs which they would wish us to play. During the war in which they fought, there was won for this nation an enviable reputation as a military power. There now rests with us the opportunity to show the same degree of competence, the same readiness to accept responsibilities, the same sense of purpose in the conduct of our international affairs.

For this reason I propose to make this lecture an enquiry into the foundations of Canadian policy in world affairs. I think this is in keeping with the purposes of the Gray lectureship. We in Canada, of English and French origin, have embarked on the joint task of building a nation. One aspect of our common enterprise is our external relations. The subject is one of special interest to me because of my present responsibilities in the Government. The founder of this lectureship has said - "If we discover and dwell upon what binds us together, we shall accept our differences as the members of a true family accept their differences without losing sight for a moment of the things which hold them together in a vital unity". It is in keeping with this spirit that I propose to discuss the background of our external policy.

A policy of world affairs, to be truly effective, must have its foundations laid upon general principles which have been tested in the life of the nation and which have secured the broad support of large groups of the population. It is true that differences of opinion about foreign policy must continually be reviewed in discussion and debate inside and outside of Parliament. Such discussions, however, can result in constructive conclusions only if they take place against the background of a large measure of agreement on fundamentals.

It may be objected that we are not old enough as a nation to have worked out such agreed principles. But let us not forget that much which forms the basis of our agreement in that respect is the result of circumstances over which we have had little if any control. The century old struggles between France and England, their rivalry in the New World, the Battle of the Plains of Abraham, the Treaty of Paris of 1763, the revolt of the Thirteen Colonies, the wave of more liberal thinking unleashed by the French Revolution, the geography, the climate, the kind of natural resources of our country all tended to create conditions for our ancestors and tend to create conditions for our own generation which lead to almost inevitable results. They have forced French-speaking and English-speaking men and women to live side by side as members of the same community. They have inspired them to work together to obtain an ever increasing measure of self-government; they have tempered the resistance of the metropolitan government to this healthy development; they have made natural and easy the creation of an economy productive of large surpluses of certain kinds of commodities and lacking in certain other kinds and thus dependent in an extraordinary degree upon exchange and trade to get some benefit out of the surpluses and to secure the commodities not available from our own production.

We are now within close range of two significant anniversaries in the life of this nation. It is almost

exactly a century since the decision was taken that the affairs of this part of the world should be conducted upon the principles of responsible government. For a hundred years, therefore, French speaking and English speaking people living in the valley of the St. Lawrence River and the Great Lakes, together with their fellow countrymen elsewhere across this continent have been engaged upon the experiment of building, on their own responsibility and under their own direction, a modern nation. It is, as it had to be, a nation constructed on the foundation of two cultures and two languages. A century ago the Canadian people in winning responsible government staked their future on the political principles which had been defined in Lord Durham's famous report. They staked their future equally on a denial of Durham's assertion that the country could not survive with two cultures. They said that this could be a free country, notwithstanding that it had also to be a country with both English and French culture. For a hundred years now they have been shown to be right.

The second anniversary of which I would remind you is that of "Confederation" eighty years ago. It was then that the challenge was accepted to build into a single state the scattered communities which stretched across the northern half of this continent. We have therefore been working together on this task of nation building for some considerable time. It is not too soon to look back and determine what principles have had to be and have become generally acceptable throughout this country in the conduct of our relations abroad. When we have defined these principles, we may examine the manner in which we have habitually embodied them in our relations with other states where our associations are especially close. We may also consider them with respect to the international organizations of which we are or have been members.

II. THE BASIC PRINCIPLES

a) National Unity

The first general principle upon which I think we are agreed is that our external policies shall not destroy our unity. No policy can be regarded as wise which divides the people whose effort and resources must put it into effect. This consideration applies not only to the two main cultural groups in our country. It applies equally to sectionalism of any kind. We dare not fashion a policy which is based on the particular interests of any economic group, of any class or of any section in this country. We must be on guard especially against the claims of extravagant regionalism no matter where they have their origin. Our history has shown this to be a consideration in our external policy of which we, more even than others, must be perpetually conscious. The role of this country in world affairs will prosper only as we maintain this principle, for a disunited Canada will be a powerless one.

b) Political Liberty

Second amongst the ideas which shape our external policy I will place the conception of political liberty. This is an inheritance from both our French and English background, and through these parent States it has come to us from the whole rich culture of western Europe. It is a patrimony which we ourselves have enlarged by working out on our own soil the transition from colony to free community. These are days in which the vocabulary of political thought has been so debased that there are many familiar coins that one hesitates to lay on the counter. I make no apology, however, for speaking to a Canadian audience of political liberty because I know that

this phrase has content for us. I know, also, that we are all conscious of the danger to our own political institutions when freedom is attacked in other parts of the world. In the complex series of events which twice in a generation has led us into war, we have been profoundly influenced in our decisions by the peril which threatened the democracies of western Europe. From our joint political inheritance, as well as from our common experience, we have come as a people to distrust and dislike governments which rule by force and which suppress free comment on their activities. We know that stability is lacking where consent is absent. We believe that the greatest safeguard against the aggressive policies of any government is the freely expressed judgment of its own people. This does not mean that we have ever sought to interfere in the affairs of others, or to meddle in situations which were obviously outside our interest or beyond our control. It does mean, however, that we have consistently sought and found our friends amongst those of like political traditions. It means equally that we have realized that a threat to the liberty of western Europe, where our political ideas were nurtured, was a threat to our own way of life. This realization has perhaps not been comprehended or expressed by every group and every individual in the country with as much clarity and coherence as, looking back on the events, we should like. I have no doubt, however, that for the young men of our Universities who fought in this war, it was a part of our national inheritance which they well understood.

c) The Rule of Law in National and International Affairs

In the third place respect for the rule of law has become an integral part of our external as of our domestic policy. The supremacy of law in our own political system is so familiar that we are in constant danger of taking it for granted. We know, however, that historically the development of this principle is a necessary antecedent to self-government. The first great victory on the road to freedom was the establishment in early modern times of the principle that both governments and peoples were subject to the impartial administration of the courts. Only then could the further step be taken by which the people gave their consent to the laws by which they were governed.

Within the past decade we have been reminded by the hideous example of the fascist states of the evil which befalls a nation when the government sets itself above the law. Beneath the spurious efficiency of such a state, we have perceived the helpless plight of individuals who have been deprived of the primary right of an impartial administration of the law.

We have seen also the chaos which is brought to world affairs when lawlessness is practised in the field of international relations. The development of an international code of law is still in its early stages. The past decade has done much to delay and distort this growth. I feel sure, however, that we in this country are agreed that the freedom of nations depends upon the rule of law amongst states. We have shown this concretely in our willingness to accept the decisions of international tribunals, courts of arbitration and other bodies of a judicial nature, in which we have participated. There can be no doubt that the Canadian people unanimously support this principle.

d) The Values of a Christian Civilization

No foreign policy is consistent nor coherent over a period of years unless it is based upon some conception of human values. I know that we live in an age when it is fashionable to speak in terms only of hard realism in the conduct of international affairs. I realize also that at best the practice of any policy is a poor approximation of ideals upon which it may be based. I am sure, however, that in our national life we are continually influenced by the conceptions of good and evil which emerged from Hebrew and Greek civilization and which have been transformed and transmitted through the Christian traditions of the Western World. These are values which lay emphasis on the importance of the individual, on the place of moral principles in the conduct of human relations, on standards of judgment which transcend mere material well-being. They have ever influenced our national life as we have built a modern state from East to West across this continent. I am equally convinced that on the basis of this common experience we shall discern the same values in world affairs, and that we shall seek to protect and nurture them.

e) The acceptance of International Responsibility in Keeping with our Conception of our Role in World Affairs

There is a fifth basic principle which I should like to mention before considering the background of our relations with particular countries. That is willingness to accept international responsibilities. I know that there are many in this country who feel that in the past we have played too small a part in the development of international political organizations. The growth in this country of a sense of political responsibility on an international scale has perhaps been less rapid than some of us would like. It has nevertheless been a perceptible growth; and again and again on the major questions of participation in international organization, both in peace and war, we have taken our decision to be present. If there is one conclusion that our common experience has led us to accept, it is that security for this country lies in the development of a firm structure of international organization.

I have been speaking of certain general principles which I think underlie the conduct of our external policy. These are principles which have been defined and articulated in the practice of relations with other countries over many decades. In this application of our principles, too, we have reached certain general conclusions on which we are all agreed and which serve as a guide to policy.

III. THE PRACTICAL APPLICATION

a) The Commonwealth which we Ourselves have Fashioned for Achieving the ends we Desire in world Affairs

We have never attempted to define in precise terms our relations with the Commonwealth. They are nevertheless a basic consideration in the external policy of this country. In discussing them I will recall two aspects of this relationship concerning which I am sure there will be no disagreement. In the first place the Commonwealth is a form of political association which is unique. There has never been anything like it before in history. There is no parallel to it in the contemporary world. It is the only case on

record of a Colonial Empire being transformed to an association of free nations by experiment, by compromise, by political evolution. I have no doubt that, whatever its future, it will be regarded by the historians of another age as one of the great constructive political achievements of our time. The other fact that I would call to your mind is that the Commonwealth is in a very real sense an achievement in which Canadians can take special pride. We Canadians, perhaps more than any other of its members, have contributed to its development. We have regarded it as an instrument which, in co-operation with like-minded people, we could use for our common purposes. It has, therefore, the vitality of a living, functioning organism which has been and which can continue to be used for good, according to the wisdom and foresight of our policies.

It is now only twenty years since the term "Commonwealth" came into popular use as a result of the Declaration which was adopted by the Conference of 1926. Even in that short period the meaning of the word has changed. There are already important differences between the Commonwealth of today and that described in Lord Balfour's famous statement. Even while this change was taking place however, there has been a further compelling demonstration of the fact that we are members in an association of free nations, capable of common action in an emergency, greater and more striking than that of any formal military or diplomatic alliance that the world has ever known.

Even though they are not precisely defined, the principles on which we act in regard to the Commonwealth may be clearly discerned. We seek to preserve it as an instrument through which we, with others who share our objectives, can co-operate for our common good in peace as in war. On the other hand, we should continue to resist, as in the past, efforts to reduce to formal terms or specific commitments this association which has demonstrated its vitality through the common understanding upon which it is based. We should likewise oppose developments in our Commonwealth relations which might be inconsistent with our desire to participate fully in the task of building an effective international organization on a wider scale.

Within the Commonwealth, our relations with the United Kingdom have, of course, a very special value and significance. We shall not forget in our history, the imaginative collaboration of British and Canadian leaders who, a century ago, laid the political foundations for the modern Commonwealth. Nor can we fail to be influenced by the fact that our political institutions are those of the British Isles, and that we now share with other parliamentary democracies the responsibility for preserving and developing this system. We shall not forget either the peril in which we shared, together with other Commonwealth countries, but especially with the United Kingdom during the dark days of 1940. This was an episode which threw in dramatic relief the measure to which we have common interests and the degree to which we are alike concerned in the establishment of a world order based on principles of freedom.

b) The United States - the Settlement of International Affairs by Negotiation and Compromise

It is not customary in this country for us to think in terms of having a policy in regard to the United States.

Like farmers whose lands have a common concession line, we of ourselves as settling, from day to day, questions that arise between us, without dignifying the process by the word "policy". We have travelled so much of the road together in close agreement that by comparison the occasions on which our paths may have diverged seems insignificant.

There has, however, been more to our relations with the United States than mere empirical neighbourliness. For the century during which we have been building this nation, we have kept company with an adjoining state vastly more powerful, more self-confident, more wealthy than we. It is a state with purposes and ambitions parallel to ours. One by one, the major areas of disagreement have been reduced. Our common border has long since been defined to our mutual satisfaction. The people of this country have taken a final decision to remain outside the United States. There is no longer any body of opinion in this country which looks towards annexation. The people of the United States on their part, have come to a parallel conclusion that they will not extend their boundaries beyond their present limits on this continent. On both sides the fact has been accepted that there shall be a free and independent federation in the northern part of this continent. None of this has been achieved, however, without reflection and forethought, nor will it be maintained without constant watchfulness. I do not say this because I think there is the slightest intention on either side to move away from the present happy state of relations. I say it merely because even the simplest relationship between human beings requires the constructive action of both parties. The relationship between a great and powerful nation and its smaller neighbour, at best, is far from simple. It calls for constant and imaginative attention on both sides.

Defined more precisely, our policy in regard to the United States has come with the passage of years to have two main characteristics. On the one hand, we have sought by negotiation, by arbitration, by compromise, to settle upon the basis of mutual satisfaction the problems that have arisen between us. As I suggested a moment ago, this has been far more than the unimaginative clearing away of parochial questions. It has succeeded precisely because it is based on the determination of both nations to conduct their affairs, as a matter of policy, on this basis. The other aspect of our relations with the United States which I shall emphasize is our readiness to accept our responsibility as a North American nation in enterprises which are for the welfare of this continent. In support of this assertion, there is a long and creditable record of joint activity. In making it, however, I must add that it has never been the opinion of any considerable number of people in Canada that this continent could live unto itself. We have seen our own interests in the wider context of the western world. We have realized also that regionalism of any kind would not provide the answer to problems of world security. But we know that peoples who live side by side on the same continent cannot disregard each other's interests, and we have always been willing to consider the possibility of common action for constructive ends.

(c) France - a Tradition of Common Interests

With France also our relations rest upon principles that have emerged clearly from our history. We have never forgotten that France is one of the fountainheads of our cultural life. We realize that she forms an integral part of the framework of our international life. We have so much in common that, despite the differences between the French political

system and our own, we cannot doubt for a moment that our objects in world affairs are similar. We in this country have always believed in the greatness of France, even at times when her future seemed most obscure. During the war, we were confident that France herself would play a major role in her own liberation. We gave our support to those leaders of the French people whom the French themselves were prepared to follow. We are aware of the heavy burden which invasion twice in a generation has laid upon France. We shall support her recovery not merely out of sympathy, but because we know that her integrity is a matter of great consequence to us.

d) The Support of Constructive International Organization

I shall not endeavour to discuss in detail the question of our relationship with other states. Rather, I shall turn now to our attitude towards international organizations. As I suggested when I was discussing the general principles which underlie our policy, we have been ready to take our part in constructive international action. We have, of course, been forced to keep in mind the limitations upon the influence of any secondary power. No society of nations can prosper if it does not have the support of those who hold the major share of the world's military and economic power. There is little point in a country of our stature recommending international action, if those who must carry the major burden of whatever action is taken are not in sympathy. We know, however, that the development of international organizations on a broad scale is of the very greatest importance to us, and we have been willing to play our role when it was apparent that significant and effective action was contemplated.

We have already given good evidence of this willingness by the record of our international activities since the war. We sent a strong delegation to the Conference at San Francisco, and I had every reason to be gratified with the delegations which accompanied me to the first part of the General Assembly in London and second part in New York. We were elected to membership on the Economic and Social Council, and have tried to show by the attention we have paid to that body the measure of importance we attached to its creation. We have taken part in the formation of the World Bank and Fund, of the Provisional International Civil Aviation Organization, of the World Health Organization, of UNESCO, of the International Refugee Organization, of the Food and Agriculture Organization and of the projected International Trade Organization. We have continued to support the International Labour Organization, as we did before the war. We have played a prominent part in the work of the Atomic Energy Commission and of the Peace Conference in Paris. This list is not exhaustive, but it indicates the measure of our activity. We have not found it easy to provide delegates and advisers for all the conferences which the task of creating a new structure of world organizations has required. I think, however, that we may take pride in the work of our representatives, and that if you had observed them at any of these gatherings, you would have seen them doing competent energetic and constructive work. I think you would find, also, that they had regularly won the respect and confidence of their colleagues from other countries.

In economic as well as political affairs we have put our shoulder to the wheel of post-war reconstruction. Our contribution to UNRRA was more than 150 million dollars, and Canadian food and equipment have been shipped into devastated areas all over the world. We supplied goods freely to our

allies during the war under Mutual Aid Legislation, and we have since provided export credits on a vast scale to help in rebuilding the economic life of Europe and of China. We have done this as a matter of policy, because we believe that the economic reconstruction of the world must go hand in hand with the political reconstruction. We are aware, too, that economic revival is a matter of great importance to us. We are dependent on markets abroad for the large quantities of staple products we produce and cannot consume, and we are dependent on supplies from abroad of commodities which are essential to our well-being. It seems to me axiomatic, therefore, that we should give our support to every international organization which contributes to the economic and political stability of the world.

e) The Development of an Effective Diplomatic Service

Seen in the light of these historic developments, the recent expansion of the diplomatic service of this country is a natural development. We are preparing ourselves to fulfil the growing responsibilities in world affairs which we have accepted as a modern state. We wish the Commonwealth to be an effective instrument of co-operation, and we have, therefore, appointed High Commissioners in the capitals of every Commonwealth country. I am glad to say that within recent weeks this process has been completed with the appointment of a High Commissioner to India. I earnestly hope that through his mission there and through the High Commissioner for India in Canada, who will soon be appointed, we may experience the same informal and helpful co-operation which has been characteristic of our relations with the Commonwealth countries.

We have also multiplied rapidly our diplomatic representation in foreign countries. Before very long, we shall have provided ourselves with diplomatic representation in the capitals of every major country in the world. We have not taken this step merely through a desire to follow a conventional practice, or to advertise ourselves abroad. We have done so because our geography, our climate, our natural resources have so conditioned our economy that the continued prosperity and well-being of our own people can best be served by the prosperity and well-being of the whole world. We have thus a useful part to play in world affairs, useful to ourselves through being useful to others, and to play that part we must have our own spokesmen amongst our neighbours.

It is not only in our foreign service that this expansion is taking place. We are trying also to construct a Department in Ottawa which will build upon the activities of our representatives abroad. Our own national interests compel us to take a creditable part in the international conferences which are now determining the nature of the post-war world. We are, therefore, constructing a service which can provide strong and well informed advisers for the delegations which we must send to these gatherings. This is no easy task. It will, of course, make demands upon our financial resources. I am strengthened, however, in my determination to recommend the continuation of this policy because it is no transitory experiment. It is the natural result of a long historic process, and I feel that it will be supported by all sections of our people. And that is as it should be. Canadian policy in its external relations should not be allowed to become a matter of party political controversy at home. Of course the government in office must take full responsibility for each one of its actions as well as in Canada's external relations as in the conduct of purely domestic Canadian affairs. But in its external relations the Government in office should ever strive to speak and to act on behalf of the whole of Canada and in such manner as to have the support

of all the Canadian peoples regardless of party affiliations at home.

IV. CONCLUSION

A few moments ago I said that we must play a role in world affairs in keeping with the ideals and sacrifices of the young men of this University, and of this country who went to war. However great or small that role may be, we must play it creditably. We must act with maturity and consistency, and with a sense of responsibility. For this reason I return in conclusion to the point at which I began. We must act as a united people. By that I mean a people who, through reflection and discussion, have arrived at a common understanding of our interests and our purposes. In this Lectureship you have at your disposal an instrument which can help us greatly to achieve this end. You may be confident that, as you plan the Gray lecture from year to year, you will be contributing to that mature conception of our national interest which is the characteristic of a united people.

A former High Commissioner for the United Kingdom in Canada, Mr. Malcolm MacDonald, speaking to a Canadian audience before his departure, referred to Canada as "a unity, a harmony, a nation - a people with national sentiment pursuing national aims." He added these words; "there is a sanity, a wisdom, a true statesmanship about the Canadian outlook and policy in international affairs which is uncommon."

These are words of great praise. In repeating them to you may I add a comment about them which I have made previously: "May Canada never be less deserving of them than she has been during these few recent troubled years."

(17.2.47)