

Building Bridges: The Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan in Canadian Foreign Policy, 1958-1960

By Kylie Bergfalk

In 1959 delegations from all Commonwealth member states met at the first ever Commonwealth Education Conference in Oxford and agreed to create a Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan (CSFP), on the recommendation of the Canadian delegation at the Trade and Economic Conference held in Montreal the year before. The conference affirmed the value of education and decided to expand existing Commonwealth cooperation regarding the supply and training of teachers and provide for 1,000 student places in institutions of higher education across the Commonwealth. The United Kingdom pledged to provide half of these places, Canada promised to take a full quarter of the scholarship students, and the remaining 250 were to be distributed among the other Commonwealth countries.¹ The Canadian plan was established and it would grow as the century progressed.

The dual global context for this conference was the Cold War and the decolonization of the British Empire. By the end of the 1950s, it was apparent that the Cold War was entrenched but the fate of the Commonwealth, the reformed manifestation of the British Empire, was less certain. The new Commonwealth was a diverse association, in race and in geopolitical perspective. Not all of the members - most notably India and its declared neutrality - were willing to unconditionally support the West. This diversity certainly complicated Commonwealth decisions and actions, not to mention unity, but it was also a unique strength. The Commonwealth had been an international institution with global reach and representation from every continent except South America since the end of WWII, before the

¹ George A. Drew, DCER, vol. 26, "Commonwealth Education Conference Assessment by the Chairman of the Canadian Delegation," *Extract from the Memorandum by High Commissioner in United Kingdom*, 6 October 1959.

United Nations was a viable institution.² Moreover, the Commonwealth had a cultural cohesion that the UN could never enjoy. In this context, where the Commonwealth's shared history and values were its greatest assets, the CSFP was set in motion.

The CSFP was not a Canadian program, per se, but it had Canadian origins. What, then, is the significance of the Canadian proposal? Why did the Canadian government and the Department of External Affairs (DEA) decide to initiate the scholarship plan at the Commonwealth economic conference in Montreal? This paper argues that the Canadian CSFP proposal marks an evolution in Canadian foreign policy; it reveals the DEA's growing interest in cultural diplomacy and its recognition that education could serve as a Canadian foreign policy tool. In a world rent by the Cold War dichotomy and the dynamics of decolonization, Canadian participation in the CSFP, particularly, was a product of both the Canadian government's efforts to strengthen ties to the Commonwealth and the DEA's inclination to act on its changing perception of the value of actively shaping Canada's image abroad. This exploration of the Canadian proposal for the CSFP suggests that it was part of a calculated effort to shape a particular, and now familiar, role for Canada in the world, that of a bridge and a middle power.

In this undertaking, several history and political science concepts overlap. This paper sets out to examine the Canadian history of two notions from the niche academic discipline of international diplomacy: public and cultural diplomacy. Broadly speaking, public diplomacy can be defined as “communication that governments and other diplomatic actors make to the general public.”³ For the purposes of this paper, public diplomacy will be framed more precisely as the crafting of a state's image and identity in the minds of foreign populations. Cultural diplomacy is a subset of public diplomacy and typically refers to the use of cultural elements, such as art or education, to project or

² Hector MacKenzie, “An Old Dominion and the New Commonwealth: Canadian Policy on the Question of India's Membership, 1947-49,” *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. 27, No. 3, (September 1999): 82.

³ Geoffrey Allen Pigman, *Contemporary diplomacy*, (Cambridge: Polity, 2010), 121.

manipulate a country's image abroad. This paper is interested in the development of cultural diplomacy in the Canadian context.

Studies of Canadian cultural diplomacy and the CSFP both appear in historiographical literature but thus far no analysis has linked the two. Evan H. Potter's fine survey of Canadian public diplomacy touches on educational programs as cultural diplomacy in its overview of Canadian public diplomacy strategies but its emphasis lies on more recent developments.⁴ Similarly, Hilary Perraton wrote a detailed examination of the CSFP but he neglected to analyze the initial Canadian motive in any depth.⁵ In the same vein, numerous journal articles about the role, development and fate of the CSFP are available, as are studies of CSFP administration in practice. These, too, tend to be most interested in the program's development and successes in recent decades.⁶ This paper aims to begin to fill this gap in the existing literature about Canadian public diplomacy and about the CSFP through appraisal of the Canadian motive for proposing the CSFP.

To that end, there are three important elements of the changing scope of Canadian foreign policy in the 1950s that must be taken into account in order to understand the Canadian motive for proposing the CSFP: Canada's shifting role in the new world order, the DEA's perception of its responsibility for crafting Canada's image abroad, and the expansion of its foreign policy strategy to include education, particularly in the form of the CSFP. How and why did each of these elements of Canadian foreign policy change?

By the end of the 1950s, the Cold War was in full swing and Canada was still negotiating its place in the international order. The British Empire was disintegrating and the Commonwealth was diversifying and de-homogenizing at a rapid rate. Canada was the oldest of the old Dominion countries

⁴ Evan H. Potter, *Branding Canada: projecting Canada's soft power through public diplomacy*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009).

⁵ Hilary Perraton, *Learning Abroad: A History of the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan*, (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009).

⁶ In 2009 *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs* published a special issue dedicated to the history, development and future of the CSFP.

and it found in the Commonwealth an organization where it held comparatively considerable sway, especially in the chaos of the post-war years. Yet, by 1958 the international environment was changing again and Canada's post-war influence was already on the decline. John Holmes in the DEA realized this but both he and Escott Reid were “adamant that their country maintained a degree of influence that would enable it, if the leadership acted appropriately, to build bridges between the developing and developed worlds.”⁷ Neither Holmes nor Reid benefited professionally from their insight or vision but Canadian policy in the subsequent years suggests that at some level it was taken to heart. The CSFP, for instance, can be understood as an attempt to manage or maintain Canada's role in the Commonwealth and on the world stage.

Second, the turning point in the DEA's perception of its responsibility for crafting Canada's image abroad and its rationale for this change are clearly articulated in the 1950 report by the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences, chaired by the Right Honourable Vincent Massey. Near the end of the commission's proceedings, Prime Minister Louis S. St. Laurent broadened its mandate to include an inquiry into “methods for the purpose of making available to the people of foreign countries adequate information concerning Canada.”⁸ St. Laurent's late addition to the commission's directive reveals the beginning of the shift in Canadian thinking about the importance of the maintenance of its image through public and cultural diplomacy.

Prior to the Massey Commission, Canada's public diplomacy had been limited to its efforts to draw immigrants to settle in the west and to its wartime propaganda, which it published through the Wartime Information Board and Radio Canada International during the wars. These efforts were not unintentional, but neither were they part of a comprehensive strategy to shape Canada's image abroad. In 1950 the Massey Commission recommended the development of such a national strategy but it

⁷ Adam Chapnick, *Canada's voice the public life of John Wendell Holmes*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009), 107-108.

⁸ Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences 1949–1951, *Report* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1951), xxi.

would be decades before the Canadian government acted decisively on the commission's recommendations on this subject.⁹ Canada's participation in the CSFP was a step in this direction, though it preceded the serious public diplomacy of the Trudeau era by about ten years, and it was the first time that Canada had intentionally utilized education as a foreign policy tool.

The Massey Commission was vital to the evolution of Canadian public diplomacy and the roots of the Canadian CSFP initiative lie in its conclusions. The commission addressed its foreign policy task in a chapter titled "The Projection of Canada Abroad," in which it argued that Canada's post-war international role and responsibilities obligated it to promote knowledge of Canada abroad through proactive management of increased information and cultural exchanges. The commission summarized the existing private activity in this respect and affirmed the tangible and intangible benefits of an increase in government efforts to shape Canada's image, especially noting that Canada was far behind most Western countries including several with smaller populations and more limited resources.¹⁰ The commission also emphasized the value of reciprocity in cultural exchanges.¹¹ This emphasis on reciprocity would reappear in Canada's CSFP proposition at the Montreal Commonwealth conference a decade later.

The Massey Commission also addressed the matter of educational exchanges directly in its conclusions about the need for development of Canada's image through cultural diplomacy, targeting the lack of provision for such exchanges at the national level. The commission identified four problems with the state of Canadian educational exchanges. First, Canada lacked a single body to assemble information for inquiries about education in Canada from abroad, related to things like the cost of living expenses for foreign students, academic requirements, the availability of scholarships and

⁹ Sean Rushton, "The Origins and Development of Canada's Public Diplomacy," In *Branding Canada: Projecting Canada's Soft Power through Public Diplomacy*, By Evan H. Potter, (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009), 78-82.

¹⁰ Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences 1949–1951, 253-266.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 254.

professorships, and the qualifications and specialities of Canadian institutions. At the time, the DEA handled these questions from abroad but the adequacy and promptness of their answers were hampered by the lack of a comprehensive source of information on these matters. Second, the Canadian government offered no scholarships to students from abroad and the commission worried that this might be taken by the representatives of other countries as either excessive modesty about Canadian educational institutions or as indifference to the reciprocal value of exchanges. Third, the commission noted that this second problem was aggravated by the fact that many scholarships were made available by the governments of other countries and taken advantage of by Canadian students studying abroad. Fourth, and finally, the commission lamented that the lack of funds, information, specially qualified officials and coordination at the national level limited the number of Canadians who could participate in other educational exchanges like international seminars and exchanges of professors and students. It suggested using blocked Canadian funds overseas to facilitate such exchanges.¹² Evidently, the commission's assessment and recommendations did not fall on deaf ears because in ten years' time the infrastructure would be in place and resources would be available for Canada to make a substantial commitment to the CSFP.

Thus, the 1950 Massey Commission marks the turning of Canadian thought to its image abroad and to the uses of education as a foreign policy tool useful for shaping its image. The provisions for aid and training in decolonizing Commonwealth countries facilitated by the Colombo Plan, conceived the same year, would begin to address some the Commission's concerns about Canada's lack of educational exchanges but they fell short of the Commission's vision. The CSFP would go further in fulfilling this vision; it was a direct descendent of the educational policy proposed by the Massey Commission and pioneered by the technical training assistance programs of the Colombo Plan a decade earlier.

Moreover, the Canadian proposal for the CSFP was the realization of the cultural diplomacy goals set

¹² Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences 1949–1951, 261-262.

out by the Massy Commission. Not only was the substance of the plan – educational exchanges – a kind of cultural diplomacy, but the proposal itself sent a message to the world about Canada's nature, values and role in the Commonwealth.

Why did the DEA choose to apply its new appreciation of education as cultural diplomacy to the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan, in particular? The answer to this third question lies in the happy coincidence of factors favourable to the CSFP in Canada's national and international concerns, as well as the plan's appeal to Canadian politicians and bureaucrats on a personal level. Speaking first of the individuals involved in the development of the CSFP in Canada, the plan was pursued in part because it appealed to Prime Minister Diefenbaker's sense of the importance of the Commonwealth in Canadian foreign policy as well as to the nostalgia of many Canadian politicians and DEA personnel who studied abroad in Britain as young men.

The launch of Canada's CSFP proposal no doubt benefited from Diefenbaker's strong attachment to the Commonwealth organization. In the words of Basil Robinson, “if he had a vision of international affairs, it fell within the Commonwealth framework.”¹³ For Diefenbaker, the Commonwealth connection was advantageous with respect to four of Canada's most important foreign policy concerns. First, the Commonwealth provided a broader contextual setting for Canada's links to the United Kingdom and the Crown. Second, it was an important counterweight to the potentially overwhelming influence of Canada's superpower neighbour, the United States. Third, Diefenbaker was keen to develop the Commonwealth's commercial ties. It was a prime venue for channelling technical and economic assistance to the developing Commonwealth countries and, from his prairie-centric perspective, a possible source of new markets for Canadian agricultural exports.¹⁴ Finally, he was enthusiastic about the Commonwealth's potential to bring together diverse viewpoints, spread freedom,

¹³ H. Basil Robinson, *Diefenbaker's world: a populist in foreign affairs*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 4.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 4.

and promote world peace. “While each nation may belong to a different race or colour or religion and may hold different ideas on problems peculiar to its own situation,” Diefenbaker enthused in his memoirs, “in the warp and woof of discussion there is a golden thread of pride in the fact that all belong to a world-wide organization that is dedicated to freedom and, above all, world peace.”¹⁵

Despite the suspicion and friction that existed between Diefenbaker and the DEA, he was inclined to support a scholarship plan that would strengthen these valuable Commonwealth ties and in the CSFP the government and the bureaucracy found a policy that suited them both.

At the personal level, the CSFP appealed to Canadian politicians and bureaucrats on the basis of the nostalgia they felt for their experiences studying abroad in the United Kingdom. The Rhodes Scholarship had a long history of bringing young Canadians, Australians, South Africans and New Zealanders to be educated at Oxford; at its inception, Cecil Rhodes envisioned that the experience would instill in generations of young leaders “the advantages to the colonies as well as to the United Kingdom of the retention and unity of the Empire.”¹⁶ It hardly seemed like a stretch, then, to create a new scholarship program that would serve the same purpose for the rapidly expanding and newly diverse non-imperial Commonwealth. In the 1950s, several influential men in the DEA - including Norman Robertson, Escott Reid, Douglas LePan, and the Liberal leader of the opposition in the House, Lester B. Pearson - were Oxford men.¹⁷ As C. P. Champion makes clear, the Oxford experience was by no means easy for many Canadian students and it forced them to grapple with the difficult issues of alienation and identity, but the Canadians who persevered seem to have come out of the experience better for it. More than that, it instilled in them a new understanding of and respect for the British

¹⁵ John G. Diefenbaker, *One Canada: Memoirs of the Right Honourable John G. Diefenbaker (The Crusading Years 1895-1956)*, (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1975), 230-231.

¹⁶ C. P. Champion, "The Celebrated *Rite de Passage* at Oxford University." In *The strange demise of British Canada: the Liberals and Canadian nationalism, 1964-1968*. (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010), 118.

¹⁷ Champion, 117.

connection.¹⁸ The wealth of their experiences suggested that a scholarship plan would be successful in fostering attachments to the Commonwealth association.

It was probably at the level of national concerns and policy that the CSFP encountered the most serious obstacles that it would face in Canada. Educational jurisdiction presented a minor obstacle; education was a provincial domain. The more serious difficulty for the implementation of the CSFP arose from Canada's perennial francophone debate. How would Canada incorporate its dual identity in its cultural diplomacy? The national context was not entirely prohibitive, however. There were also useful bureaucratic precedents at the national level, primarily through the Colombo Plan, that actually eased the CSFP's inception and enactment.

Legally, education in Canada fell within the jurisdiction of the provinces but this particular obstacle was easy to overcome. There was some precedent for federal involvement in matters of education from the Manitoba schools dispute under the Laurier government and, more than that, foreign policy initiatives fell within federal jurisdiction. The DEA took steps to alleviate this jurisdictional tension in the implementation of the CSFP by including provincial and university representatives in the planning process and in the delegation that attended the first Commonwealth Conference on Education in Oxford in 1959 and subsequent conferences.¹⁹ It did not take long for parallel programs to develop and for provinces and provincial universities to create their own education initiatives, in cooperation with the federal government's foreign policy objectives. For example, in a 1961 extension of a Colombo Plan program, the University of British Columbia acted as an agent of the federal government to provide technical training through an exchange of teachers and students at institutions of higher learning in Malaya and Singapore. An article introducing the program in the

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Perraton, 8.

DEA's monthly bulletin speculated that it would be the first such cooperative program of many.²⁰ This development was promising for both the success of the CSFP, since provincial cooperation was necessary for the foreign students to have somewhere to study, and for the projection of Canada's image abroad through cultural diplomacy. Yet, cultural diplomacy through education would cause a great many problems for the Canadian government as it stepped carefully around the francophone issue and negotiated with Quebec to communicate Canada's dual English and French cultures at home and abroad.

Indeed, the jurisdictional right of provinces to education, even as foreign policy, was most vigorously defended by Quebec. Quebec perceived the federal government's expansion into education through foreign policy as a direct threat to the province's autonomy and the survival of French Canada.²¹ Partly in response to fear of the American cultural influence, Quebec spent the 1950s building cultural ties to France on its own. Artistic and educational exchanges proliferated. At the same time, English-Canadians were increasingly looking to Canada's bi-cultural identity to oppose American influence and beginning to believe that an activist federal government was necessary to preserve the dual cultures.²² The competition between Quebec and the federal government to control cultural diplomacy frequently manifested itself in educational matters. In relation to the CSFP, comments about francophone participation regularly arose during discussion in the House of Commons.

The problem, of course, with the matter of bringing more francophone students to study at French universities in Canada as part of the program was that the Commonwealth did not have very any francophone members from which to draw these students. In 1960, the first year of the program,

²⁰ "Aid for Malaya and Singapore," *External Affairs*, Vol. XIII, No. 1, (January 1961): 144-145.

²¹ David Meren, "Plus que jamais nécessaires': Cultural Relations, Nationalism and the State in the Canada-Québec-France Triangle, 1945-1960," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association/Revue de la Société historique du Canada*, vol.19, no. 1, (2008): 284.

²² *Ibid*, 298.

seven out of 104 CSFP students in Canada studied at French speaking universities.²³ To address this imbalance, and keep Ottawa in command of cultural diplomacy, the Canadian government created the Canadian Francophone Scholarship Program. It was Canada's attempt to balance the CSFP with a unilateral scholarship program directed at the nations of la Francophonie.²⁴ The federal government would continue to grapple with Quebec in the cultural diplomacy arena for decades to come, but ultimately Quebec's objections on jurisdictional grounds did not hinder the development of the CSFP.

Institutional precedent in Canada was an important part of the CSFP's success. It was made possible in a practical sense by the rationale, administrative structure and prior success of the 1950 Colombo Plan that preceded it. Membership in the Colombo Plan was geographic rather than political and, though some Commonwealth countries benefited from it, it was not a Commonwealth plan. Through this plan, Canada was already giving technical assistance and sending some teachers to underdeveloped countries in south and Southeast Asia. The plan had been extended to include Ghana and the West Indies at one point as well, so expanding it further or producing a new but similar plan was not unthinkable. Further, the financial provision for and administrative operation of technical training in the Colombo Plan set a practical precedent for the possible implementation of the CSFP.²⁵ A DEA memo from October 1959 concluded that the CSFP was feasible on account of the existing Colombo Plan technical assistance, National Research Council and Canada Council administrative machinery. This suggests that these precedents minimized bureaucratic resistance to the creation of a scholarship plan in Canada and likely in other Commonwealth nations as well.²⁶ Beyond that, it was clear that a supplementary program like the CSFP would be beneficial because education was an area where the Colombo Plan fell short in its assistance, especially because it was not a Commonwealth

²³ Canada, *House of Commons Debates*, 14 July 1960, (Green, SEA), 1960 Session, Vol. VI, p. 6295.

²⁴ Potter, 140.

²⁵ DCER, vol. 24, "Commonwealth Scholarship and Technical Assistance Proposals," *Memorandum*, 15-26 September 1958.

²⁶ D. W. Bartlett and R. Grey, DEA 50123-B-40, vol. 24, "Extension of Technical Assistance to the Full Commonwealth," *Memorandum*, 15-26 September 1958.

plan so it excluded some newly independent Commonwealth countries.

Finally, Canada's foreign policy and international concerns in the late 1950s created a receptive environment for the CSFP. The CSFP contributed to the strengthening of Commonwealth ties with newly independent countries and this trait was especially valuable in a world marked by the creep of the communist threat. It was also worthwhile as a counter to similar Soviet education programs and their pervasive propaganda. In the Cold War context, the CSFP was an education policy for more than education's sake. It was a weapon in Canada's Cold War arsenal.

At the international level, the 1950s Cold War context provided compelling justification for the creation of an inclusive Commonwealth scholarship. The threat of communism was so pervasive that everything that Canada did on the world stage was measured against the ideals and objectives of its Western allies. Indeed, the Commonwealth itself was seen as a venue for keeping the newly independent former British colonies, especially neutral India, aligned with the West.²⁷ The staunchly anti-communist Diefenbaker government certainly saw the Commonwealth this way; one of the six stated publicity themes for Diefenbaker's 1958 Commonwealth tour was “the importance of strengthening the Commonwealth idea through political and economic action as a bulwark against the threat of Communist imperialism.”²⁸ Commonwealth cohesion was paramount which made measures designed to strengthen Commonwealth ties, like the CSFP, worthwhile and even imperative.

Furthermore, the Cold War was in many ways a war of ideas and a competition between ideologies. Framed as such, the CSFP education initiative takes on additional important implications on the Cold War battlefield. What better way to spread ideas than through education? In a speech to Commonwealth universities in 1958, Foreign Minister Sidney Smith articulated the value of ideas in reinforcing Commonwealth ties, declaring “that the free flow and exchange of ideas has been and will

²⁷ Perraton, 6-7.

²⁸ M. Cadieux, DCER, Vol. 24, “Prime Minister's Commonwealth Tour – Publicity Themes,” *Memorandum from Information Division to Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs*, 11 September 1958.

continue to be one of the strongest bonds among the Commonwealth's members” and arguing that a scholarship and fellowship program would facilitate such exchanges.²⁹ Bringing students from the less developed Commonwealth countries to study in Canada and the other Western countries, where they could witness and experience the benefits of democracy and capitalism for themselves, was potentially pivotal in the battle for their hearts and minds. It is also worth noting that the Soviets had a scholarship plan of their own and that their boasting obscured the reality of its modest size.³⁰ Nonetheless, its existence likely coloured Canada's estimation of the CSFP as an instrument of persuasion.

Canadians also believed that the CSFP could combat Soviet propaganda. One of the plan's early contributors, Canadian academic George Curtis, explicitly identified the expansion of a Commonwealth scholarship plan as a counter to the Soviet Union's launch of the world's first satellite, sputnik.³¹ The existence and potential effectiveness of similar Soviet education schemes provided an easy rationale for the creation of the Commonwealth scholarship plan. In a House of Commons debate regarding the plan in September, 1961, a Mr. Slogan recounted a story about a Nigerian student who went to study in the Soviet Union under a Soviet scholarship plan. With or without the student's permission, the Soviets used a picture of him practising boxing in the gym on a poster with a caption explaining that he had come to the Soviet Union to learn how “to break the chains of slavery in the colonized country from which he came.” Mr. Slogan disapproved of the dishonesty in the fabrication of such propaganda and expressed alarm at the ease with which the communists used education in propaganda to credit themselves and smear the west. He worried that Canada was not making the most of its opportunities to impress upon foreign students the Canadian way of life, manner of thinking and values.³² In essence, he recognized that Canada's nascent cultural diplomacy strategies in education

²⁹ Perraton, 9.

³⁰ Ibid, 27.

³¹ Ibid, 7.

³² Canada. *House of Commons Debates*, 11 September 1961 (Slogan). Session 1960-61, Vol. VIII, pp. 8207-8208.

could be stronger and presented Soviet propaganda and educational scholarship policies to give grounds for and support the CSFP.

Compelling as this Cold War rationale was, Canada was interested in strengthening its Commonwealth ties through the CSFP for reasons beyond the Cold War conditions as well. It seems that Canada's Commonwealth connection justified the creation of the CSFP at almost every turn. The realization of Canada's scholarship plan proposal was supported by the want of educated leadership with skills beyond the scope of existing technical programs in the new Commonwealth countries, the advantages of providing common educational experiences for the next generation of Commonwealth leaders, the benefits of the program's reciprocity for Canadian students, and the warm reception it received from the governments of other Commonwealth countries.

The DEA designed the CSFP with the administrative and leadership needs of the new Commonwealth countries in mind. A 1958 internal memo justified extending Canadian aid beyond technical existence because underdeveloped Commonwealth countries did not need more technicians and engineers but instead required administrators, political leaders, teachers, business executives and other generalists to effectively manage the technically skilled personnel and resources as the new countries established themselves.³³ Even more critically, the DEA recognized that the future and perhaps survival of the decolonized Commonwealth depended heavily on successful economic development in the former colonies.³⁴ Human resources were essential for economic development and Canada recognized an unmet need in the Commonwealth that it could help fill through the CSFP. Canada knew its own and the Commonwealth's capital limitations but in the CSFP it saw an opportunity to utilize the association's surplus of educational and technical training facilities, present to

³³ D. W. Bartlett and R. Grey, DCER, "Extension of Technical Assistance to the Full Commonwealth," 1958.

³⁴ DCER, "Commonwealth Scholarship and Technical Assistance Proposals," 1958.

some extent in all of the Commonwealth countries, to everyone's benefit.³⁵ This rationale and Canada's actions are consistent with a narrative common in the DEA at the time that portrayed Canada as a model former colony and an ideal bridge between the former colonizers and the former colonies.

The CSFP educational exchange would also foster Commonwealth cohesion through the shared political and educational heritage that it would provide to the next generation of Commonwealth leaders. There was some concern that political independence would compromise the carefully maintained bonds and sympathy that Western institutions and administrators cultivated with their Commonwealth country counterparts and the governing elites there. Tellingly, the leaders of newly independent countries in Asia and Africa were being asked to defend Commonwealth membership as a matter of the new national self-interest. A Canadian memo points to the CSFP as a part of the solution; developing world leaders with personal experience of the Commonwealth and the value of Commonwealth ties could defend it with a clear conscience.³⁶ In the experience of developed and underdeveloped countries alike, the leaders' common educational backgrounds were an important element of Commonwealth cohesion.

Lester Pearson, leader of the Liberal Opposition in the House of Commons, articulated another factor in the Canadian estimation of the value of the CSFP for Canada and the Commonwealth when he emphasized the value of reciprocity for Canadian students. When the subject came up in debate, Pearson pointed out that not only would the CSFP bring foreign students to study in Canada but it would also enable Canadian students to study abroad in Commonwealth countries. He hoped that future recipients of the scholarship would take advantage of the opportunity go to parts of the Commonwealth other than the United Kingdom, where there were already many existing arrangements to facilitate student exchanges. He conceded that Canadian students in the less developed countries of the

³⁵ DCER, Vol. 24, *Extract from the Minutes of Meeting of Cabinet Committee on Commonwealth Conference*, 20 August 1958.

³⁶ DCER, "Commonwealth Scholarship and Technical Assistance Proposals," 1958.

Commonwealth might not be exposed to “high level bridges” but stressed that the “bridges of understanding” they would encounter and build in these countries were highly valuable for the students themselves and for Canada.³⁷ The benefit of these atypical Commonwealth experiences for Canadian students was significant enough for Pearson to bring it up on more than one occasion. He was conscious of the wealth of knowledge that older civilizations and cultures could offer Canadian students and he recognized that some of the new Commonwealth members had “a good deal to give in the way of educational exchanges of which we in the western world are not always aware.”³⁸ From Pearson's perspective, the CSFP was valuable for its potential to strengthen Commonwealth ties in both directions. Canadian students abroad would, wittingly or unwittingly, act as citizen ambassadors and expose foreign populations to Canadian culture.

It was also significant for the development of the CSFP that it received a warm reception from the other Commonwealth countries at the 1958 Commonwealth Trade and Economic Conference in Montreal. Britain was amenable to the plan for many of the same reasons as Canada and was willing to take on the bulk of the program expenses. The other Commonwealth representatives expressed appreciation for Canada's proposal and enthusiastically affirmed the value of education in the Commonwealth setting. Lord Home, of the United Kingdom, drew attention to the connection between education and not only economic development but also democratic government; several other delegates from both the developed and underdeveloped Commonwealth countries echoed his sentiments. The meeting concluded in general agreement to take the first steps toward creating a Commonwealth education program along the lines of Canada's scholarship and fellowship plan proposal, but the consensus ended there. There was a great deal of variation in how the gathered Commonwealth

³⁷ Canada. *House of Commons Debates*, 25 March 1960, (Lester B. Pearson, LPC). 1960 Session, Vol. III, pp. 2470-2471.

³⁸ Canada. *House of Commons Debates*, 3 July 1959, (Lester B. Pearson, LPC). 1959 Session, Vol. V, pp. 5407-5408.

countries thought that an education program should be implemented.³⁹

It is interesting to observe how the interests of each country, especially those who would benefit from the scholarship program the most, informed their educational program preferences. Sierra Leone's representative explained that primary education was a higher priority for his country and expressed hope that the final plan might address this urgent need. The Pakistani delegate worried about brain drain and would have preferred to receive assistance in improving its domestic university education system. The delegate from Nigeria hoped that the scholarships would be allocated on the basis of need, considering of course Nigeria's forty million people and dearth of colleges, and explained that what Nigeria really needed was teacher exchanges. The South African representative made it clear that South Africa would prefer that the plan work on a regional basis; it was most comfortable expending resources to assist those in its immediate neighbourhood. The Indian and Kenyan delegates took issue with the Canadians' proposal that the candidates be selected by the receiving countries on the basis of academic excellence; they would have preferred to select the students who would study abroad themselves.⁴⁰

It is clear that every Commonwealth country brought different interests to the CSFP discussion, so what national interests prompted Canada to propose this kind of Commonwealth scholarship plan? What did Ottawa have to gain? The CSFP proposal was an astute public diplomacy tactic in two respects. First, an educational exchange scheme gave Canada the opportunity to influence students from abroad. Ideally, those students would return home with positive impressions of Canada and the west. The reciprocal nature of the plan meant that Canadian students sent abroad could act as citizen ambassadors for Canada as well. Canada could advertise its culture and values to foreign populations

³⁹ DCER, Vol. 24, *Extract from Minutes of Meeting of the Eighth Plenary Session of the Commonwealth Trade and Economic Conference*, 15-26 September 1958.

⁴⁰ DCER, *Extract from Minutes of Meeting of the Eighth Plenary Session of the Commonwealth Trade and Economic Conference*, 1958.

through the experiences and travels of the scholarship recipients.

Second, the DEA's decision to put forward the scholarship plan suggests that it was conscious of Canada's changing role in the diversifying Commonwealth and that it was actively seeking to position itself as a generous and principled leader in the Commonwealth setting. Canada was not seeking to usurp the British seat of dominance but it did take it upon itself to present the scholarship plan and it was the second largest contributor, both in the DEA's planning stages and when the program came to fruition. According to Hume Wrong's functional principle, being the second largest contributor to Commonwealth endeavours would give Canada the second greatest influence in Commonwealth matters.⁴¹ From this perspective, the CSFP proposal appears to be a deliberate attempt to construct a particular identity for Canada, a middle power identity. In fact, the DEA explicitly listed "Canada's role as a leading middle power which has advanced from colonial status to a constructive position in world affairs" as another of the publicity themes for Diefenbaker's 1958 Commonwealth tour.⁴² In the same way, the CSFP allowed Canada to be a "helpful-fixer" and a bridge between the developed and developing worlds. It could take credit for noticing the lack of educational facilities in the underdeveloped Commonwealth countries and the surplus of educational opportunities in the others and putting two and two together in the scholarship plan proposal. In its proposition of and participation in the CSFP, the DEA was consciously building what Adam Chapnick calls Canada's "middle power myth."⁴³

There were, of course, a great many reasons that the CSFP seemed prudent at this time, and many of them are discussed here, but Canadian national interest must not be overlooked in the analysis of CSFP origins. Cold War battles for hearts and minds could be, and were, fought elsewhere and in other contexts. Commonwealth ties were important but they could be strengthened in other ways.

⁴¹ Adam Chapnick, "The Middle Power Myth," *International Journal*, Vol. 55, No. 2, (Spring, 2000): 189.

⁴² Cadieux, DEA 12687-4-40, "Prime Minister's Commonwealth Tour – Publicity Themes," 1958.

⁴³ Chapnick, "The Middle Power Myth."

Regardless of its real value, education was a long term investment in a rather abstract undertaking that would not result in Commonwealth cohesion until years later. Arguably, Commonwealth trade and economic relations strengthened the ties between countries more effectively and efficiently than education ever could. The CSFP did serve Cold War and Commonwealth strengthening ends, but it was adopted as policy only because it also factored into the Canadian construction of its image abroad.

In sum, the significance of the CSFP in Canadian history is directly related to the evolution of Canadian public and cultural diplomacy over time. In the 1950s, Canada was negotiating its role in a new international setting where Cold War dynamics and decolonization were the defining features while, at the same time, the DEA was developing the ideas of cultural diplomacy that had been put forward for the first time by the Massey Commission. These ideas took a while to percolate through Canadian institutions but they eventually came to fruition in programs like the CSFP, a proposal and a program that served Canada's key foreign policy and cultural diplomacy aims. Much to Diefenbaker's delight, it strengthened Commonwealth ties and it could be considered a Cold War offensive. More importantly, the CSFP was an early Canadian effort to shape its image abroad through cultural diplomacy and education. In the very act of proposing the CSFP, Canada was constructing the Canadian narratives about Canada's role as a "bridge" and a "middle power" both for itself and for the world.

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