

Author Axworthy Still Passionate Voice for Canada

GRAHAM FRASER, Toronto Star
October 12, 2003

OTTAWA—Shortly after he left politics, Lloyd Axworthy was chatting with public opinion analyst Angus Reid, who asked him how he would sum up what he had learned from his time in public life, particularly as Canada's foreign affairs minister.

Axworthy replied, "Canadians can make a difference." It sounded to Reid like a theme for a book — and Knopf Canada agreed. The publisher made it clear that it was not interested in a classic memoir, full of remembered conversations with political allies, rivals and foes, but something that would set out Axworthy's view of the world, where Canada should go and how it should get there. Axworthy responded, and the result is *Navigating a New World: Canada's Global Future*.



It is a fascinating, passionate and wide-ranging account of one man's determined attempt to change the world, and his years as an activist foreign minister, determined to play on all the keys of the piano and ensure that Canada's voice could be heard in the international chorus. What is intriguing is that he has not stopped.

As CEO of the Liu Institute for Global Issues at the University of British Columbia and a member of the board of Human Rights Watch, he travels more now than he did as foreign minister. But, instead of whisking into a refugee camp in a motorcade, getting a quick tour, stopping to get his picture taken and rushing off to a meeting with officials, he can stick around, talk to more people, and get a better sense of the shattered lives and broken communities taking refuge in dusty camps and flapping tents.

Axworthy has been a man with a mission since he was a graduate student and his progressive zeal often disconcerted more conservative Liberal colleagues (who called him Pink Lloyd), and more traditional diplomats (who rolled their eyes and called him Saint Lloyd). Energetic and impatient with hierarchy and conventional advice from public servants, Axworthy brought to all of his cabinet portfolios considerable intelligence, a taste for complexity and a sense of what he wanted to achieve.

(His successors in Foreign Affairs, John Manley and Bill Graham, have matched his intelligence and energy, but have had either less taste for the complexity and multi-faceted nature of foreign affairs, like Manley, or less success in imposing a larger vision of Canada's foreign policy goals, like Graham.)

Axworthy has often been perceived as reflexively anti-American. But the book makes it clear this is an unfair caricature. In fact, he feels Canada has been too disengaged from the United States, and feels we should be beefing up our diplomatic activities to the south. New consulates have been announced, but he worries they will not be active enough in reaching beyond the traditional role of trade promotion to connect with the wider currents of American life. But there

is no question that he is uneasy at the speculation about the direction Paul Martin may take in Canada-U.S. relations.

He sees the possibility of Canada joining the national missile defence system as a dangerous step that "would fundamentally alter our position as a leading nation in the control and elimination of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, and constitute a significant retreat from protecting people against the threat of mass destruction."

And a department to deal with Canada-U.S. relations? "It would be a horrendous mistake," he told me. "Just as it is a mistake to have John Manley deal with Canada-U.S. relations now, instead of Bill Graham." Among his suggestions, Axworthy proposes using a broad range of people who are not part of the public service, as the military uses the reserves.

"The elites in this town are incredibly out of touch with Canadians," he said, deriding the assumption that Canadians are only interested in domestic concerns. "There's a huge appetite (to engage in the world). There's such a pent-up demand to do things!" The book's long "to do" list raises the question of whether Axworthy wants to return to public life.

"I don't have any offers on the table," Axworthy says, and then pauses. "It's a hard question for me to answer," he admits. Axworthy has a fascinating job, has been able to continue to work in many of the same areas that he focused on in politics, and has not discussed coming back with Martin.

"But one thing I always enjoyed was making things happen," he said. "Sure, I still like to do that. Can I be a part of it? I don't know." Paradoxically, Axworthy may have more success in pushing his agenda where he is now than he would were he to return to politics.

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