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## **UNIVERSITIES AND PUBLIC POLICY**

Transcript of a presentation by

**James B. Steinberg**, United States Deputy Secretary of State,  
at the Presidents' National Dialogue, University of Ottawa, Canada

October 22, 2009

Transcript from original video recording, available online at CPAC.ca:

<http://bit.ly/c2dCBT>

ALLAN ROCK (President and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ottawa): Now we're very fortunate to have a keynote speaker to start this process who is well positioned to speak on the role of universities in the policy development process within the context of the United States of America. A person whose inbox includes just the most complex and difficult challenges in the world, and who has found time to be here today for this discussion because of the importance that he puts on the subject and on the relationship between the academic and the government communities.

Dr. James Steinberg was appointed by President Obama as Deputy Secretary of State serving as the Principal Deputy to Secretary Hilary Clinton. Prior to his appointment in the Obama Administration, Dr. Steinberg served as Dean of the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas in Austin. Dr. Steinberg has also served as Vice-President and Director of Foreign Policy Studies at the Brookings Institution in Washington, D.C., where he supervised a wide-ranging research program on U.S. foreign policy. During the 1990s, he served as Deputy National Security Advisor to President Bill Clinton.

Dr. Steinberg has earned a reputation not only for a mastery of a broad range of complex subjects, but also for the energy and the enthusiasm, which he brings to his work. Would you please join me in expressing a warm Canadian welcome on a cool Ottawa day to Deputy Secretary of State, James Steinberg. Jim?

JAMES B. STEINBERG: Well, thank you, Allan, for that kind introduction. Merci. Bonjour.

INTERPRETER (French to English): Thank you, and welcome [sic]. The President asked me to speak a bit of French and I hope you'll please forgive me. I don't want you to suffer because of my bad French, which is why I will continue my talk in English.

STEINBERG: It is a great pleasure to be here with such a distinguished group of university professors, of government officials, of students, private sector and thought leaders from all parts of Canada. I'm particularly honoured to share this event with... I don't know if the greater honorific is President or Minister Axworthy, but Lloyd Axworthy, who was really one of the great public servants that I've had the pleasure of working with in my time and who's contributed so much not only to Canada but to bilateral U.S.-Canadian relations and to the cause of global peace and prosperity, and you're very privileged to have him as a leader in this country.

As President Rock said, this is a topic which is near and dear to my heart, and it really is a great opportunity for me to be able to share some thoughts with you and to hear your thoughts as well in the course of this afternoon. As you've heard from at least part of my bio, I've had the opportunity to be on almost every side of this question in terms of public policy and the world of ideas from my most recent time at the University of Texas, to service in government, particularly as Director of Policy Planning in the State Department, and I'll talk about planning shops in a minute, to times at think tanks, not only at Brookings but the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London, to a government sponsored think tank, RAND, in Santa Monica, and the like. So the question about how to enhance the role of universities and to strengthen the involvement of the ideas community with the policy-making community is something that I've given quite a

lot of thought to in my career and I look forward about sharing my ideas and getting your thoughts today.

As I talk about this today, I want to cover two related issues: the role of the university in policy innovation, the pure idea side as it were, but also the role of university in preparing current and future policy makers. And on this second topic, I'll try to avoid using the word "training" policy makers, bearing in mind the admonition of one of my great mentors, Professor Ellsworth Rostow, who frequently admonished me and others who talk on this subject, that training is something you do to dogs and elephants, but not to people.

It's obvious why there should be a connection between policy makers and universities. After all policy making is about putting ideas into practice, and universities are about generating ideas. As President Rock has said, policy makers are desperate for ideas, they are constantly facing the challenge of coming up with solutions, to meet the needs of their people to do their jobs, to do what's expected of them, and this is true not only for politicians and career government officials, but increasingly for NGOs and people in the private sector who are increasingly part of this broader policy community. (5:36 - time stamp)

Now, for most policy makers, most practitioners, the ideas that they employ in their day-to-day work tend to arise out of their own experience, from trial and error, from learning by doing. Theory plays a very limited role in what they do. Even George Kennan, the first Head of Policy Planning at the United States State Department, and perhaps the most famous policy planner and thinker in the field of international relations, and who actually became an academic after he finished his career in diplomacy, compared policy planning to farming, not botany or even architecture. The world of academic research is rarely on the minds of most practitioners. So why is that? Why don't policy makers make more use of the work of university researchers? There are a number of obvious answers to this question, but I think it's important to reflect on them if we're going to try to do a better job of building a stronger relationship between the university and the policy community.

The first reason, I believe, centres around very different priorities that typically set the agenda for the university researcher or professor and for the practitioner. The

practitioner tends to focus on the problems that are the most urgent, the ones that dominate the headlines. President Rock suggested when I think about my inbox, it's preoccupied with things like constitutional reform in Bosnia, counterinsurgency in Iraq, the risk of trade protectionism growing out of the recent economic crisis, nuclear programs in Iran and North Korea, and the effect of climate change on conflict and economic development. By contrast, for the university researcher, the agenda tends to focus on what is most important, typically defined by what is most innovative or ground breaking in a particular field or discipline, and that what is important is typically judged by the peer review journals, which put a premium on contributions to the prevailing intellectual debates and parsimonious theoretical elegance, with little regard to the relevance of the work to contemporary policy problems. Closely related to this problem are differences in time scales. The policy maker operates in the here and now, without the luxury of waiting for the outcome of laborious longitudinal studies and painstaking peer review and revisions, which can prolong the publication of research results for years and even decades.

Perhaps even more important is the value that academics place on methodological rigour and the replicability of results, which often pose artificial restrictions, for example, on initial conditions that dramatically reduce the relevance of the work to the real world. One of the great academics and policy planners who followed Kennan, Walt Rostow, once said "the test of a planner in the Department of State lies in results achieved rather than abstract notions of method and procedure." How often, for example, have you seen a work of econometrics coming out of the university beginning with the assertion "assume perfect knowledge" or "no transaction costs"? Now, compare this with the policy maker, who has no control over the setting of initial conditions, and under the best of circumstances cannot know all of the relevant exogenous variables, much less manipulate them, that would undercut the value of an academically-produced theory to the real world problem. To paraphrase, perhaps unfairly, a phrase once attributed to a French policy maker: "Yes", he said, "I know it can work in practice, but will it work in theory?"

The problem is further compounded by the fact that policy making does not take place in a vacuum. It is the product of institutional and political forces which can strain choices, including competition among those with different priorities and values, all of

which must be reconciled in order to see policy put into place. What constitutes good policy is in the eye of the bureaucratic or the interest group beholder, not the philosopher king or even the Nobel prize-winning economist. One need only listen to the contemporary debates about health care policy or climate change to understand the limitations of theoretical research to the contemporary debate.

(10:09 - time stamp)

Finally, there's the chasm between two very different epistemic communities. Academics and policy makers use different language and concepts, read different journals, attend different conferences. Relatively few policy makers have formal research training and have very little ability to access, much less evaluate, the results coming from the academy. Policy makers are overwhelmed by day-to-day work, and rarely have time to read what's not urgent in their inbox. There are large practical barriers to communication and to exchange.

Now of course there are exceptions to these generalizations, and I know you have experienced them in your own work. But even more important, over the years, particularly in the United States, there have come into being several kinds of institutions that were designed almost explicitly to help bridge the gap and facilitate the communication between the world of academe and the world of practice. I like to see it as a continuum, with traditional university-based, university discipline-based programs on the one hand, followed by schools of public policy – the topic which I'll return to in a minute and which is dear to my heart – one step closer to practice, then think tanks, and finally policy shops within government and NGOs, including advocacy organizations, which fill the space between the university on the one extreme and the policy maker on the other. These intermediating institutions play a critical role in helping to transmit to the research community the needs and priorities of the policy makers while making accessible and usable the products of universities to the policy makers.

It's no accident that the periods of greatest institutional development in building these kinds of institutions came about during times of greatest governmental policy activism. For example, institutions like Brookings, where I worked, was a product of a Progressive Era, right after the turn of the last century, and many of our most prominent public schools, including the LBJ School, where I taught, as well the Kennedy School

and many others, were spin-offs of the policy activism of the 1960s. Also, on the government side, we have seen a similar response to the need of policy activism: the creation of institutions like the GAO, the Congressional Budget Office, the Office of Technology Assessment in Congress, the Council of Economic Advisors, all reflect efforts to try to develop institutions and structures that can build linkages between these very different kinds of communities. Even institutions like RAND, where I also worked, a federally-funded research and development centre, was an attempt to find a way to bring the best scientists to a place where they could work directly on projects of concern to the federal government.

Now these intermediary institutions play a critical role in bridging that gap, but it's an imperfect substitute for more a more fundamental look at how the traditional university can do a better job of meeting the needs of the policy community. I have a number of suggestions to offer in this respect, and I know that over the course of the next two days this is exactly what you'll be focussing on, but they all proceed from a fundamental premise that the university needs to put a greater priority on the value of its work both in teaching and in research, on meeting the needs of the policy community, which means ultimately on meeting the needs of the public. This means important changes in emphasis on who universities recruit for teachers and researchers, what kind of work is encouraged and rewarded, and even how universities organize themselves. Let me be a little bit more specific.

First, universities need to be more open to flexibility in hiring both research and teaching faculty. For too many of our programs, the only reliable path to an academic position, especially a tenured one, proceeds from graduate research, culminating in a Ph.D. through non-tenured academic positions to the Valhalla of tenure. Diversions from this path, especially into the so-called real world, are risky and sometimes fatal for the would-be professor. If universities want their faculty to be able to contribute more effectively to the policy debate, they need to encourage and reward those who would develop practical as well as real-world... as well as academic experience, without sacrificing intellectual excellence. In addition, having a more diverse faculty along these lines will also contribute to future generations who are able to better pursue careers that straddle both worlds. In parallel, we need to encourage more exchanges of personnel

between academics and the policy-making world. Along the lines of programs such as the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Science and Technology Fellows Program in the United States that brings academic scientists to the State Department and other agencies, including, I might add, to our Congress.

(15:31 - time stamp)

Second, we need to revise university curricula, both at the undergraduate and graduate level, to be more attentive not only to contemporary policy problems, but also to the tools and methodologies of policy practice. Public policy schools have led the way in this area, but in too many universities, they are held at arm's length from traditional academic programs, with graduate students and academic programs discouraged from integrating policy-oriented classes and research into their highly scripted career development paths.

Third, we need greater focus on multidisciplinary. For the policy maker, the discipline-based categories and theories, concepts and the like, cannot be kept in isolation. The good policy maker needs to know how to draw on economics and political science, psychology, sociology, anthropology, and even history. Few policy makers have the skills or background to accomplish this themselves; they need the academic world to build these syntheses. Now there has been important evolution in this direction in recent years, and we had a chance to talk about that at lunch today, but the weight to the academic enterprise still remains in discipline-based silos. One of the advantages of public policy schools, such as the one that I taught at, is that it is a way to break down those barriers where the faculty is recruited not because of what discipline they came from, but what work they want to do.

Finally, greater weight needs to be given to policy-relevant scholarship. For the most part, the most highly regarded academic journalists are at best indifferent to, and sometimes even subtly hostile to, policy-relevant work. While policy journals tend to be treated as second tier and more accessible policy writing like op-eds or magazine pieces almost in for dig. A good friend and colleague of mine who has both served in the State Department and a distinguished dean and academic, Bruce Jentleson, did a study a while back and he noted that not a single major journal article in the international relations field in the three years prior to 9/11 featured a piece on terrorism, and only one Ph.D. student

in the top 25 IR programs in the United States did their dissertation on terrorism. I think it's not unreasonable to say by 1998, with the embassy bombings in Africa and the like, that it might have occurred to somebody that this was a problem worth studying.

I could go on and talk about the structural changes that need to be done here, but I'm eager to get your response and to hear your thoughts as well. Because despite the difficulties, I do believe these gaps can be bridged, and that universities can play a more effective role in the world of policy development. I want to cite one example from the past as a model of how this has worked. In the early year of the development of nuclear weapons and nuclear strategy, the most prominent participants in the policy debate were among our most and foremost research scientists, from physicists like Einstein, Fermi, Teller, Panofsky and May, to economists like Ken Arrow and Tom Schelling. Even today, in the Obama Administration, distinguished academics, from Secretary of Energy Steven Chu, to president Larry Summers, to John Holdren, are making substantial contributions to policy innovation. So it can be done.

So I congratulate you on starting this discussion. I hope that from our experience and our exchanges that we can be helpful as you explore this very important question, and I think our colleagues in America can learn a lot from the effort that you are undertaking as well. So thank you for the opportunity to be here, and I look forward to your questions and comments.

[APPLAUSE]

ROCK: Thank you, Jim. Dr. Steinburg has agreed to take some questions. Nous invitons vos questions.

(19:49 – time stamp)

INTERPRETER: If you have any questions, please proceed to the mike.

ROCK: Please tell us who you are and state your question and I'm sure that you'll get a first class response.

Question period. Alors, there are microphones here, if you would.



PARTICIPANT : Question en français si possible.

INTERPRETER: Question in French if possible. Catherine [???], Natural Resources Canada. I'm a doctoral student at Laval University. I'd ask you to develop some more the role of a policy shop within the government. Sometimes I think I'm suffering from some kind of dual personality here; I have to deal with policy requirements, at the same time I have an academic background. So I'd like to know what's our role exactly as an interface between the two.

STEINBERG: Excuse me but I'll answer in English. I understand French far better than I speak French. I've actually had two experiences in my life in policy shops. One of my first jobs in government was at the Office of Planning and Evaluation to at what was then called the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. And then I guess it would have been almost 20 years later, I came back and became Director of Policy Planning in the State Department.

The policy shop is a unique place to be able to bring together the world of ideas and practice, in part because the mandate of a policy shop is not what we would call a line job. That is, there's no day-to-day responsibility, there's no portfolio that the policy shop is there to do. It sort of stands to the side, usually reporting to very high levels in the federal government, almost always directly to the cabinet minister, the secretary. But the policy shop has a seat at the table, so while the people, the operational people are debating and deciding on policy, they get to sort of chime in from the side. So there's a deep connection, but it's not a line connection to the operational work of government. Because of that, it has been a place where it has been relatively easy to bring in people who have a more academic or research background. So, for example, when I worked at HEW, in their policy and evaluation shop, director was a man name Henry Aaron, a very distinguished health economist in the United States, who has been very prominent for the last 35 years in debates; and Henry, who was before that time and after that time at Brookings and a colleague of mine there, was somebody who was known for his strong academic credentials but because he had been in a think tank, had strong options there. It's almost always the case that the people who run these things tend not to be career government officials. We've had many academics over the years at the State Department

running the policy planning shop for example in the Bush Administration, Professor Steve Krasner from Stanford, a very distinguished international relations professor, was Connie Rice's Director of Policy Planning. And because it isn't involved in sort of day-to-day management, there aren't the same kinds of challenges for these people who are coming in from the outside to get up to speed.

So what you have is a nice hybrid. Usually on the staffs, there will be some people on the career side who support the work, and some people come on the outside. At the State Department, the breakdown is about one third of our people in policy planning are career foreign service officers, one third civil servants as career but not foreign service officers, and one third academics and other outside[ers], and they rotate through over time. So you get this, you not only get these different expertise, but they interact with each other. So we have a chance in the day-to-day work of the policy shop for these ideas to be blended together.

They have different degrees of influence at different times. For some leading senior officials, they are enormously influential and they're deeply involved with the work of the agency; sometimes they tend to get marginalized, either because the leadership doesn't know how to effectively use their position to transmit ideas and connect them to their decision-making process, or because the day-to-day operators are just not that receptive, so there's no guarantee that they will have the kind of influence that one would hope.

They also, in addition by bringing in people on the outside, often provide a kind of operational bridge to the academic and policy world. So, because they don't have the same kind of day-to-day pressures, they will host conferences, they'll invite people from the outside to come in and meet regularly with them, and so they sort of deepen the frequency of the exchanges on the outside. At the State Department, because of the prestige that George Kennan brought to policy planning during the 1940s and the influence he had, it has had the virtue of being kind of self-perpetuating in a positive sense. It is a prestigious place, it's highly regarded, it attracts people from the outside who are eager to have an impact on policy; and because it attracts high quality people it has more of an impact on policy, and so a virtuous cycle is established.

(25:27 – time stamp)

But it is, I think, and it is widespread, almost every major federal agency has such an entity, and in most cases I think they have a fair degree of influence. So it is an important element of this continuum that I talked about, linking both in human terms, it is actually individuals moving from one to the other but also being a transmission belt for ideas in the government. And also as people go back, which I think is important for people back in the academy, to understand what is government thinking about, how does government work, how does government use the ideas that are being there? The fact that the arrow works in two directions, I think, is quite important.

PARTICIPANT: Hi, I'm Roland Paris and I'm a professor here at the University of Ottawa, and very much welcome the analysis and the message about the importance of, in particularly International Relations field, which is my field, of addressing as you put it, real world problems. And I'm sure that President Rock, over lunch, pointed out that that's something that we're very much trying to do here at the university.

You made two statements that I generally agree with, but I think probably deserve some qualification: one about the relevance or irrelevance of theory, and the second about the importance or the need for the university to meet the needs of the policy community; and you quoted George Kennan. Of course, you know, when I read stuff about bridging the gap between academe and policy making, it's always the battle of the quotes, and then there's the classic quote from the 1930s, from Keynes, about even the most practical policy maker basically not realizing that he or she is echoing the language that had been scribbled by some academic years earlier. And Keynes himself could have very well been in various legislatures in the western world during the recent movement toward stimulus spending.

The other point was about meeting the needs of the policy community, and I think that's generally true, but the qualification there would be based on my own experience in the first part of my academic career teaching at the University of Colorado, in Boulder. A lovely university, a wonderful place, great department, but funded by the State of Colorado with a legislature that was very hostile towards the University of Colorado, and that took every opportunity it could to try and knock down the University of Colorado, so: Whose policy community?

STEINBERG: Well I think, I mean what you're talking about there is politics, and obviously we can have an extended discussion because the question of politics and how politics influences the independence and the integrity of academic work is an important one and really deserves a full discussion as part of this. But I would just say on the theory side, and I do feel pretty strongly about this as a person who has, you know, been pretty heavily involved in international relations and [is] pretty familiar as both a teacher of international relations, that the problem is that the parsimony of theory as it's translated in the real world almost loses all its power – in the sense that all of the conditions that have to be relaxed to apply to the real world make the world of theory very, very indeterminate. And it's so indeterminate that it's not even a second best, and that you're not even sure. So the excruciating debates in international relations theory about realists and constructivists just don't help you decide whether we have a national stake in trying to defeat the Talibans in Afghanistan. They can give you a perspective that helps you think about what some of the questions would be, and I would never want to discourage students from learning about these debates, but these kind of Jesuitical disputes that go on in the journals, which are what the journals are about, just don't shed any light on the problem. And the irony is that when practitioners begin to apply that to the real world, they get lost. And I'm going to cite a very controversial example at the expense of somebody who's a friend but somebody who I disagree [with] very much, which is the whole debate, and I'm sorry I'll bore you but this is... IR people like to talk about these things, by two very famous international relations professors, John Mearsheimer, from Chicago, and Steve Walt, from Harvard, about the question about U.S-Israel policy. John Mearsheimer is a pure realist. His view of the world is that it doesn't matter what happens within states; states have permanent interests and they only do what their permanent interests say. How is it conceivable that John Mearsheimer now facing this debate writes an op-ed piece, not a scholarly piece, about how a political lobby is influencing our policy, when under his theory, it could have no conceivable applicability at all? Now of course, John believes it, because he recognizes that his theory is actually quite incomplete, and therefore in order to be relevant to the policy debate, has to abandon this deeply held very pristine, parsimonious theory about international relations

in order to say something about the contemporary debate. And so that's where this is a strong view, but it is, which is not that it's not important to understand it, but to take theory and the elaboration of theory for its own sake is not going to be very enlightening and not terribly useful to the world of practice. And that's why, you know, when people who are diplomats and they're trying to end wars... look at these journal articles and they have absolutely no idea what it's about, because it just bears no relationship at all to the world that they're forced to operate in.

(31:05 - time stamp)

PARTICIPANT: Marc Fortin, from Agriculture and Agri-food Canada, but also spent many years at McGill University. The academic world and the public service world face very different metrics of performance. The academic world is the published papers, the awards, the inventions, whatever, and the policy shops are looking at solutions for now. How do we reconcile those two worlds, how do we bring the academic world to value the more short term, if you wish, work that would be done by academics that are transposed or are interacting with policy shops? There's also the notion that we need to keep universities and university professors independent of governments, governments and policy shops that are more subservient to an elected government. How do we maintain that independence, how do we reward the academic work... the academic staff, that is doing work with policy shops?

STEINBERG: Well, those are both at the core of the debate, and those are good questions. On the independence, I actually find this is... the devil is in the details, but at the core it's not as hard as I think we sometimes make it out to be. It is obviously totally impermissible and inconsistent with the academic enterprise for government to tell somebody what the result of research should be. You know, there's an old joke at RAND, a very unfair one, but it's always told about RAND, which is: they were asked .... what is the operational side of what you do, and you know the joke is ... you tell me the results you want and I'll tell you the question. That, you know, is inconsistent with the... would taint the enterprise. But it's not, it doesn't damage the integrity or the independence of university for government to say here's a question that we really need the answer to; we

don't know what it is, we maybe have an idea but we're not going to prescribe to you what the answer is. And by being responsive to governmental policies agenda doesn't somehow compromise the integrity of the academic enterprise. So that's one place where a greater willingness to feel comfortable about being responsive to policy needs and making those a priority in the research agenda seems to me to be one way to get at this question.

I think the second has very much to do with governance at the universities. I mean it is fundamentally a question of what you're going to value in tenure reviews, what you're going to value in hiring decisions. I mean I've sat on lots of tenure boards, you know, and... the question if you're in IR, for example, is how much weight you put on a peer review theoretical journal versus an article in *Foreign Affairs*, which is the most influential place if you really want to get your ideas done. It's not peer reviewed and in most discipline-based departments, it wouldn't count at all – and yet the most famous article ever written in international relations was arguably the “X” article by Kennan, right, which appeared in *Foreign Affairs*, which was not peer reviewed, but transformed U.S. foreign policy and the subsequent work on containment. So, how do we make hiring decisions, how do we make tenure decisions, how do we decide what Ph.D. theses to support, and what do we encourage our students to work on? All of these things have a huge impact on how the governance of the university and the academy as an institution will either be more open to or resistant to having policy relevance be there, without in my judgement in any way undermining the integrity or the independence of the academic enterprise.

(35:01 – time stamp)

PARTICIPANT: Hi. My name is John Higginbotham, I was Head of our Policy Planning unit in Foreign Affairs. I also spent a number of years at the embassy in Washington, and frankly my impression was how well off the United States was in encouraging the sort of oxygen of outsiders to come in to the bureaucratic process, largely because so many positions change with each administration. Now that sometimes works out very well, sometimes not so well. It's a very different system here, where you have a permanent public service and a really sharp distinction between the political level and the

bureaucratic level. In Canada, we kind of go along a middle road, sometimes not as good in many respects, but also sometimes not as bad. I wondered if you could comment on the relationship the Democratic administrations have with universities and that Republican administrations have with universities in the United States.

STEINBERG: I actually don't think there's a huge difference there, to be honest. I mean, I think that... if you think about the previous administration, I just mentioned Steve Krasner, who was Head of Policy Planning. Who was the National Security Advisor? It was Condie Rice and she was a Secretary of State, a very distinguished academic, and you can agree or disagree with her policies, but there's no question that she's somebody who's had very strong ties and engagement with them. Henry Kissinger was the National Security Advisor in the Nixon administration and a Secretary of State too, again, a distinguished academic. So I don't think that there's a profound difference between the two. I think that there's a huge debate in the United States, as there is everywhere, about whether there are structural biases in terms of the politics or the values of universities and whether that leans to one party or another. But I actually don't think for whatever the merits, which I think even that are exaggerated in the debate, that you would say that somehow one party or another is more open to this. I think in general, there has been recognition... I mean again, I could give you dozens of names of colleagues of mine who... after all, I've had a career that consists of changing jobs with Richard Haass... you'll know Richard Haass. Richard and I have had the same job in about as much different iterations as one could imagine. He was Vice-President of Brookings, I was Vice-President of Brookings. I was head of Policy Planning, he was head of Policy Planning. He's a Republican, I'm a Democrat. So I don't think there is a profound difference; I think both parties... and indeed, I mentioned... the evolution in relating it to policy activism but to be fair, on the so-called conservative side, it was the conservative activism of the Reagan era, with the Heritage Foundation and others, it was the very policy and substance-oriented set of initiatives that drove a lot of the energy there. It was Irving Kristol and others with the committee on the present dangers, so I think both parties in the United States have had pretty strong ties and a real sense that ought to be part of the mechanism of policy development.

PARTICIPANT: [???], from Public Works and Government Services Canada. I'm here as a member of a program that brings mid-career public servants into the university setting, sponsored by the University of Ottawa and the government. And I think you brought forward a number of very thoughtful and pragmatic ideas on whether through rewards or organizational changes to make universities more relevant to public policy. It would be interesting in getting some more of your thoughts on how the government could make some similar type of shifts to make themselves more accessible to ideas coming out of the universities and to integrate ideas into public policy.

STEINBERG: Well... to be honest, I do think the barriers are smaller on the government side, in part because I think there are such incredible appetites for ideas in government that the person who's got a good idea and knows how to get in front of the right person doesn't have a hard sell. I mean we are desperate – every day, we wake up and say I wish somebody had a good idea to solve this problem. So, you know, and I think...there are things that would be good, like if there were 48 hours in a day so we had more time to read and interact with people, but I think the keys are, one, this interpenetrability of people, which is very critical. Because if they're around and present, and especially for us, the fact that we have this revolving door is tremendously useful because you do run out of ideas after a while of government service, and the cliché is very true, which is the recharging your batteries, restocking your intellectual capital that takes place, is enormously important. I mean for most of us who have been in and out, we are enormously grateful that we have places to go to think about problems again to reflect on our own experiences and try to learn the lessons from government experience in a more systematic way, and then to... prepare ourselves to go back into the fray again is enormously important. So having the ability to do that, having enough opportunities and places in government to do that, having the right kind of institutions within government that facilitate that, like the policy shops or the auxiliary institutions like CBO and the former Office of Technology Assessment, which is now gone but is in excellent model of that, are also parts of it.

(40:43 – time stamp)



The other part that's obviously very important and that we haven't talked about here today in that ideas change, is the role of the media, which is a whole separate question. Because that's quite critical in terms of not only creating space for policy makers to explore ideas, but also for the broader politic to have the ideas debated and that's a big challenge now, because the space for that in contemporary media has been challenged in a lot of ways, and that poses a big problem for policy makers because the opportunity for policy entrepreneurship is harder in an environment where any risk-taking, any getting outside the mainstream, makes you very vulnerable to the kind of not very tolerant media world that we live in, is a set of problems.

PARTICIPANT: Good afternoon, I'm [???], from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, which is, in Canada, is the funding agency that support research and development of talent in the SSH. It's interesting you're here, because I just came out of a session we're holding today, a workshop with a group of grant holders that help for the knowledge mobilization of research, and they're having a lot of discussion today about their experience under two programs that we created: the Strategic Clusters and the Knowledge in Society program. And some of the points you made are very much related to what they were saying. They talked a lot about the reward system this morning and how it works or doesn't work. I was following on an earlier question, wanting to get your thoughts about the role of research funding agencies and the interaction and the incentive they can provide and how they could work with universities to help the cause.

STEINBERG: It's a really good question and we spent a lot of time at lunch before this talking about this, and it is critical. And there are so many different dimensions of it, because particularly in the United States, there are lots of different streams of funding, each of which have very very different impacts on what gets done, how priorities are set, and how relevant or non relevant the work is. You know, we do have a range from, you know, our National Research Council, NSF, NIH, which are kind of traditional peer-reviewed government funders, but it would at least have some connection to the policy-making world so that they bring some of the values that the university is used to. Scoring, grants and all that stuff, but at least because they're publicly funded, have some

accountability back both to the Congress and to the policy environment, which they're situated to build at. That can be very useful, it is very important obviously in many of the fields that where policy-relevant work is important. Those kinds of institutions are critical and can have a very positive impact in bringing the priorities of the academic research world more in line with the policy world.

There are also... the role of foundations in the United States is enormously important. For those intermediary institutions, like think tanks and public policy schools, they are the pure oxygen. Precisely because we don't do discipline-based research, the discipline type funders don't fund very effectively into think tanks and to a lesser extent but still to an important extent into public policy schools whereas the foundations, the Fords, the Carnegies, the MacArthurs, have played an enormously critical role because they see themselves as trying to foster policy-relevant work and they have a weakened version of peer view, which allows them to be more entrepreneurial and get outside the kind of constraints that the peer episteme applies to deciding what's important and relevant and the like.

But finally, critically important is the role of the private sector. And there, you know, the private sector, tends to be very results-focused and very kind of near-term and it is enormously important in the American academic enterprise, because corporations and private funders are increasingly a critical part of the funding environment, and therefore do have a big role in priority setting. Now, there's another debate to be had there about whether that's skewing the agenda in ways that don't take it away from relevance; they're often very relevant, but they tend to be on an agenda setting which is reflective of a particular interest or perspective. So even if it isn't results-oriented in the outcomes, just the very fact that the questions that they're interested in tend to move the focus of research in that direction.

(45:29 – time stamp)

**PARTICIPANT:** Paul Ledwell of the Public Policy Forum, which is a non-governmental, non-academic part of that continuum in Canada... It's great to hear what you have to say about what's happening in the U.S. Rob Wright actually stole my question, but I did want to ask: I've always been struck in Washington of the free flow of

ideas and people, it's really remarkable how people move around and you're a testimony, a testament to that. What practical suggestions do you have for Canada that regard, a Canada that's very geographically dispersed, has thought centres and policy centres right across the country? How can we encourage that real movement of people and ideas, both virtually and geographically?

STEINBERG: Well technology is a tremendous advantage in this respect. I mean, it's just much less the case. I mean, if you look at where most of the think tanks are, they're in Washington. There is a propinquity dimension to this, which is useful. I mean you kind of schmooze, you go to the dinners and the conferences and stuff, but technology has dramatically increased what you could do. I mean I was really very pleasantly struck in going to UT, the University of Texas, after being a pretty Washington-focused person for most of my career, at the ability that we now have to get the ideas out. I mean you can participate virtually in conferences, you can hold virtual conferences... Just in terms of the teaching side of this... I didn't have to be in Washington to have policy makers teach classes at my school, because I had a studio that I had access to in Washington and I could get senior policy makers, members of Congress and stuff just to come there rather than to come to my university. The ability to get the ideas out – we created a network of public policy schools where we were generating content for debates through a consortium that we developed that then marketed this to cable television stations, radio, printout and its websites, that allowed us to sort of leverage the content that was being generated every day and lecturers at our schools, either in regular courses or by guest lecturers or symposia, were then able to get them out on to the net, on to the various communications channels that had... All of a sudden we were starting to get cited in places where we would never have been if we were looking for print.

And also, you can be faster. I mean you don't, if you're just putting up a PDF or you're... uploading a conference, you don't have to go through the laborious publication stuff... I was just amazed in getting there, because we're a little behind, frankly, but they were still, you know, printing these things and it would be a year after somebody finished the policy paper that it would appear. That's... you needed it out today, this afternoon. So technology, I think, has really empowered the ability of universities to participate. You

don't have to physically be there, you can... there are much more effective ways to get the ideas out in their rawer form... It goes against some of the culture, and God forbid these things won't have been peer reviewed because they will be just a lecture that all of a sudden gets out, but part of the shift that I'm advocating is to be more tolerant of that and to reward that more, and to say it's okay if your faculty are doing occasional papers that aren't peer reviewed, they count in terms of [???]. Maybe they count even more in some cases. And I think harnessing the technology and the ability to interact and communicate creates great opportunities now. You don't have to worry about moving the campus from... Vancouver to Ottawa in order to have the ability to have an impact on day-to-day decision making.

(49:37 – time stamp)

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