

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES



INFORMATION DIVISION
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"CANADIAN-UNITED STATES CO-OPERATION -
A LESSON OF PEACE TO ALL NATIONS"

An address by Hon. Brooke Claxton, Minister of National Defence, at the unveiling of a Plaque at Ogdensburg, N.Y., August 17, 1948, in Commemoration of the Meeting of Franklin D. Roosevelt, President of the United States, and Right Hon. W. L. Mackenzie King, Prime Minister of Canada, August 17, 1940.

Most of the great battlefields have their monuments. If it is true that "Peace hath her victories no less renown'd than war" then her major advances should be commemorated with equal, yes with even brighter glory. The plaque which will shortly be dedicated commemorates a momentous meeting of two friends, Franklin D. Roosevelt, President of the United States, and the Right Hon. William Lyon Mackenzie King, Prime Minister of Canada.

Our Prime Minister asked me to express his warm appreciation of the invitation to be at this ceremony and his regret that he was unable to be here. Mr. Mackenzie King is particularly happy that there is being established here at Ogdensburg a permanent record of what he has always regarded as one of the great moments, alike in his personal friendship with the late Franklin Roosevelt and in Canada's friendship with the United States.

I regard it as a great honour to be invited to take part in this ceremony and to be associated in it with your distinguished Secretary of Defence, the Hon. James Forrestal. During the war he gave great service to his country and the allied cause and now I doubt if anyone anywhere is carrying heavier or more important responsibilities.

Eight years ago today, two great leaders, your President and our Prime Minister met here in the black midnight of the war more than a year before Pearl Harbour and when the nations of the British Commonwealth alone withstood the enemy. The outcome was uncertain. Without United States aid the Axis powers might be soon attacking our shores. At the President's invitation Mr. King motored down from Ottawa and in the President's car standing on the siding here, these two old friends sat late into the night discussing the situation and what should be done to meet it.

The next day, after attending church, they continued the discussion and drafted what has since become known as the Ogdensburg Agreement. The agreement or declaration consisted of a little more than a hundred words, and it was announced at once to the press. The agreement established the Permanent Joint Board on Defence "to consider in the broad sense the defence of the north half of the Western Hemisphere". Within two days the Board was set up and it has since worked in our common interest quietly and effectively.