



CANADA

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION

DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 66/22 THE IDENTITY OF CANADA IN NORTH AMERICA

An Address by the Right Honourable L.B. Pearson,
Prime Minister of Canada, to the American Society
of Newspaper Editors, Montreal, May 19, 1966.

... This, I understand, is the first time your association has met outside your own country. It is natural, I think, that you should have chosen Canada, and I hope you will be back next year and bring your friends with you to help us celebrate Canada's centennial and to visit Expo '67 in Montreal, the most magnificent, the most spectacular, the greatest world's fair since they opened the Hanging Gardens in Babylon. Coming to Canada has also, though natural, I think, some significance. I am sure you felt that, in coming across the border, you were not really entering a foreign country at all but one almost indistinguishable from your own - a country where you would feel as much at home, and in as friendly company, as Canadians feel when they go to the United States.

That feeling, of course, is something we can be happy about. But, paradoxically, it is also a source of some of the difficulty we experience in our relationship.

It is hard to convince you that we are determined to maintain a separate society and our own Canadian identity when we seem to you - and often to ourselves - to be so much like you - and even to insist, in so many ways, on becoming more like you so far as the material standards of living are concerned.

However, any misconception about Canada that might have been confirmed by meeting in this country should have been removed by your decision to come to Montreal. For no one is likely to mistake Montreal for just another North American city. Among other things, it is the largest French-speaking city in the world - except Paris. I have often said that, if a Canadian wants to prove to an American neighbour that he is not merely a species of American, though no doubt a superior species, but that he has an identity of his own, he need only speak to him in French, Canada's other official language. There is nothing like not being understood to make one feel different....

When I spoke (to the ASNE) in San Francisco, inevitably I discussed the relations between our two countries - but not, I hope, merely in terms of amiable platitudes. Naturally I propose to talk