

Our first diplomatic representative in Washington, Vincent Massey, who was later Governor General, traced the origins of his family to colonial Virginia. His successor as Governor General, Georges Vanier, was a descendant of the settlers of La Nouvelle France. Although some Canadians occasionally seem to have difficulty in deciding what it is to be a Canadian, I find it hard to share this predicament. I think I know what it is to be a Canadian. My ancestors have been in Canada for more than three centuries. Most of my French-speaking compatriots are in the same situation. North America is our home, our only home. We consider ourselves as something distinct and original to this part of the world, entitled to and determined to achieve survival, a place in the sun. I speak, of course, as a member of the smaller group in our country which has often had to ask itself about the value of the Canadian experiment in ensuring the group's survival and in nation-building. From the same vantage-point, I should say that I have never felt a greater determination among French-speaking Canadians to work out the full implications and promises of their destiny in North America. They think they can, in the process, strengthen the Canadian state.

As for my English-speaking compatriots, who are, of course, more open in many ways to continental influences, I must note that, from the beginnings in the eighteenth century, they have shown a fairly well-developed capacity to absorb what they needed from the society to the south and then to do what they wanted on matters most important to them. Current national preoccupations suggest a strong desire to keep on doing exactly that.

The Canadian story will continue, therefore, and it will be characterized by a typically North American insistence on progress and a fundamental optimism. In order to continue, to improve, to meet the particular problems of today, we have to act, whenever necessary, to maintain a freedom of choice and a sense of security in our own destiny. I do not think that outside pressures will destroy a sense of purpose and identity. Without foresight and diplomacy in the continental relationship, however, the frictions entailed in reaching accommodation of our interests in particular areas between two nations could affect a political relationship which is of great value.

To allow that relationship to be affected would be unfortunate. The well-being of many people in both our countries depends on a relationship of confidence which encourages bargaining to find the best mutually-acceptable arrangements in all the areas where our interests are overlapping. Furthermore, we both have an obligation towards the rest of the world to co-operate in the global search for peace and justice. How many times in this century, since the United States has moved from a hemispheric role to a global one and since Canada has assumed the obligations and opportunities of independence, have Americans and Canadians worked together or along parallel and independent lines to achieve greater tranquillity in the world community? This is another part of our continental history which will continue.

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