

Thus it happens that he still encounters very curious distortions in the ideas which plenty of Americans seem to entertain about Canada. Some relate to our system of government - for instance, that the Canadian Government is told what it should do from London, and that Canadians pay taxes to the United Kingdom. As another example, an eminent judicial personage not long ago expressed incredulity when I remarked to him that Canada was, of course, a monarchy. Distortions about the Canadian way of life can be more amusing. A large number of citizens of the United States when they happen to think of Canada, have hazy visions of great snowfields (partly encouraged by the habit of the weather bureau in describing cold waves in terms such as "a mass of Arctic air moving south from Canada"), and in summer, of a land of lake and forest, full of fish and game, a land inhabited largely by mounted policemen, hockey players, wheat farmers, whiskey distillers and quintuplets. These distortions have some slight foundation in fact, of course, and the ignorance which they reveal is disconcerting rather than dangerous. Canadians would like to be known for what they are and what they do; but behind the misconceptions there appears to me to be a general assumption that Canadians are a friendly, stable, reliable and unspectacular people.

It is true, I think, that if we were less friendly, less stable, less reliable and more spectacular, a good deal more would be known about Canada in the United States, but I do not recommend that Canada should deliberately depart from its present course of conduct in these respects. I do urge on you, however, that it would be greatly to the advantage of both countries if the people of the United States were to take a greater and more constant interest in the affairs of Canada. On the great issues of our era, the two countries are facing in the same direction. They are working for a common conception of democratic freedom, for which they have fought in two great wars. The shrinkage of space through the new mastery achieved by our scientists and technicians has made the people of both countries alert to dangers from which they previously considered themselves largely immune. Modern developments in technology, the enormous requirements of the North American industrial machine for great quantities of raw materials, the new concepts of defence and possible offence, the dependence of the rest of the world on North America for much of what it must get to recover from the war -- all these factors, among others, make an understanding of Canada in the United States more important than ever before.

We do not go in for much of the pomp and ceremony that marks the official relations between many countries. There is a constant interchange of official visitors between the two capitals. Many questions which might elsewhere be the subject of a prolonged exchange of diplomatic notes and heated speeches in national legislatures are here settled easily and promptly by some of those concerned sitting around a table in Washington or Ottawa. When the Prime Minister of Canada or a member of the Cabinet comes to Washington there are few, if any, of the frills and feathers that customarily are produced on such occasions. It is more a matter of a neighbour dropping in for a chat next door than a state visit. This is a very good way of getting things settled, but it also serves to provide little material for publicity, and therefore for spreading public knowledge about the problems which the two governments must so frequently discuss together.