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Lecture before the Academy of History, Bogota,
by R.A.D. Ford, Canadian Ambassador to Colombia.

The title of my lecture may strike you as incongruous; or perhaps superfluous, since it might seem obvious that Canada is an integral part of the Americas. But I chose this title to try to show that Canada is indeed an American state, but with a difference; and to demonstrate in what these differences lie, how they came about, and what that signifies for Canada's relations with her sister nations of the Western Hemisphere.

This year we Canadians celebrated the 90th anniversary of the Confederation of the British colonies in North America into an autonomous and completely self-governing state within what became the Commonwealth of Nations. The manner by which Canada became a national state is radically different from that of all the other states of the Western Hemisphere. Our national, political, economic and cultural formation when examined objectively demonstrates why Canada, though a firm and loyal member of the hegemony of American states, is nevertheless a unique member of our Western Hemisphere society.

The history of Canada is that of political survival. The task of creating a distinctive society has been achieved in the face of numerous conflicting stresses, both internal and external. Through the history of Canada runs the thread of a constant effort to reconcile the divergent strains inherent in Canada's position and structure, and to harmonize the varied and often clashing forces within a united and independent community.

This process has given a unique character to Canada. Its drama lies less in armed struggles in which the nation's destiny was at stake, though there were plenty of them, or in desperate political conflicts. It lies rather in a slow and tenacious advance along the road to nationhood: a patient evolution of successive compromises in politics and government, and an obstinate conquest of the physical obstacles to national development. Patience and compromise were born of necessity. The alternative would have been the disruption or extinction of the nation.