

At this stage, the Canadian Prime Minister, through the United States Minister at Ottawa, Mr. J. Pierrepont Moffatt, suggested to President Roosevelt that the time had come when a personal interview between the heads of government might be useful. On August 16, when the President received this message, he at once telephoned Mr. King, inviting him to meet him the following day at Ogdensburg, New York. Mr. King, accompanied by Mr. Moffatt, motored to Ogdensburg the next afternoon, and that evening the President and the Prime Minister spent several hours aboard the Presidential train in long discussion.

This conversation between the two heads of government resulted in the press release of August 18 known as the "Ogdensburg Declaration":

The Prime Minister and the President have discussed the mutual problems of defence in relation to the safety of Canada and the United States. It has been agreed that a Permanent Joint Board on Defence shall be set up at once by the two countries.

This Permanent Joint Board on Defence shall commence immediate studies relating to sea, land and air problems including personnel and material. It will consider in the broad sense the defence of the north half of the Western Hemisphere.

The Permanent Joint Board on Defence will consist of four or five members from each country, most of them from the services. It will meet shortly.

Thus, with unique informality, a new era of Canadian-American relations began. The press release was the basis for the establishment of the Permanent Joint Board on Defence. The text was published in the Canada Treaty Series and passed as an Order-in-Council, while in the United States the Ogdensburg Declaration was viewed as an executive agreement that did not require the ratification of the Senate. Public reaction in both countries was immediate and favourable, though few persons, perhaps, realized that Canada and the United States had, in fact, advanced from a position of friendly co-operation to one of positive alliance.

The organization of the Permanent Joint Board on Defence has not altered substantially since its inception. From the outset, it was established in two national sections, each with its own chairman (a civilian), representatives from the armed services, and -- as secretaries -- representatives of the Department of External Affairs and the Department of State. The first Chairman of the United States Section was Mayor Fiorello H. La Guardia of New York City; the first Chairman of the Canadian Section was Colonel Oliver Mowat Biggar, a prominent lawyer. Since 1951, representatives of the Department of External Affairs and of the Department of State have served as members of the Board in addition to the two secretaries provided by these departments. These appointments ensure that the Board is more than a body for joint staff consultations and that it is in close touch with the wider aspects of government policy.