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QUEBEC IN WORLD AFFAIRS - MYTH OR REALITY?

Speech by Mr. Marcel Cadieux, Under Secretary of State for External Affairs, to the Annual Meeting of the Club des Relations internationales, University of Montreal, March 2, 1968

... Quebec's presence on the world scene is, I believe, not merely a fact; it is an obvious fact. That Quebec must be more active on that scene also appears obvious to me. The real problem is how Quebec is to play its role in the world: alone, by and for itself, or as one element in Canada's representation. In other words, are Quebec's activities abroad to be separate from Canada's or are they to be Canadian?

The problem is basically the same at home and abroad, and amounts to this: is a Quebecker a Canadian as well, or are the two loyalties mutually exclusive? If the answer to the latter question is yes, then, obviously, no compromise is possible. If not, then I think there is every possibility that an accommodation can be worked out.

But let us define our terms: when we say "Quebecker", we mean a person living in the Province of Quebec. We do not mean "French-Canadian". Certainly, 85 per cent of the Quebeckers are French-Canadians, but there are almost one million French-Canadians living elsewhere in Canada, mainly in Ontario, New Brunswick and Manitoba. Bearing this in mind, it remains a fact nevertheless, that Quebec is, to employ a familiar phrase, the "homeland of French-Canadians". But this does not mean that the Quebec government is the only one with an obligation to promote and protect the interests of French-Canadians.

By the time the federal-provincial conference last February had ended, it was clear that the warnings and recommendations of the Dunton-Laurendeau Commission had been understood by the majority of the other provinces and by the Federal Government. Doubtless their motives were not entirely magnanimous; they realized that, if the country was to survive as a unit, equal status had to be given to the French and English languages and cultures. While this reasoning is not entirely selfless, it does show clear recognition of their vested interests. How many world crises and problems could be settled by this kind of approach! Let us examine, if you will, this area of clearly-recognized interests and ask ourselves one question: what is the interest of French-Canadians and Quebeckers in the field of foreign relations?