

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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CANADA-UNITED STATES: GOOD NEIGHBOURS
BUT ARE WE GOOD ENOUGH?

Text of an address delivered by the Minister of National Defence, Mr. Claxton, to the Economic Club of Detroit, at the Book-Cadillac Club on May 2, 1949.

It is a great honour for me to be asked to speak to your distinguished club.

I have never missed an opportunity to come anywhere in the United States to discuss Canadian-American relations. For a good many years it has seemed to me that the relations between our two countries show a pattern that other countries could study and follow to their profit, security and happiness.

The Common Boundary

Canada and the United States have developed a recognition of mutual interests and an understanding never before seen between any two other nations in the world. We take each other for granted. This is because the shuttle of individual lives and of business relationships across our undefended border have established ties of friendship that are the best basis for international relations. Incidentally the undefended boundary is not the 3,000 miles so well loved by the after-dinner speaker. It is 5,655 miles and every inch of it is undefended. Sometimes we don't even know where the border is.

The ties that bind us are more than material. We share a common political heritage and in the development of our democratic system much of our way has been along a common road. It is not an accident that Canada and the United States are almost the only countries who base their hope for progress and a better life for their citizens on a system in which enterprise is free . . . and our standards of living are the highest in the world.

This boundary line of ours is crossed by the flow of human lives, by births and marriages and deaths, by trade and travel and trains, by hockey and baseball players, by radio and movies, by newsprint both ways, by more of almost everything than any boundary has ever been. Why Canada even exports railway tickets!

I don't suppose that in any like area in the world do the peoples of two different nations mingle to the extent and in the numbers as do the citizens of Detroit and Windsor. What is most important, the association between Americans and Canadians is freely and voluntarily entered into for the mutual benefit of us all. There is no finer illustration of the kind of friendship that exists between our two nations than that provided by the good neighbourhood of these two great cities.

Our record of co-operation has a venerable history. The friendship of Canadians and Americans is not the infatuation of a passing expediency. It is a friendship based on trust and understanding which has matured over many years. In Jay's Treaty of Amity and Friendship of 1794, the following words appear:

"This (treaty) is intended to
promote a disposition favourable to
friendship and Good Neighbourhood."