

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES



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CANADA'S CENTENNIAL AND NATIONAL UNITY

Remarks by the Secretary of State for External Affairs,
the Honourable Paul Martin, at the opening of the Jay
Centennial celebrations, Hamilton, August 13, 1967.

I was delighted to be invited to take part in the "Hamilton Happening" today and to represent the Government of Canada in cutting the ribbon officially opening the Jay Centennial celebrations....

Today is a day for fun. At the same time I think that we should consider some of the more serious reasons why we are celebrating our country's birthday.

One is that we all like a success story - and Canada is just that. Our country was created consciously in defiance of geographic and economic pulls to the south. It was created from many disparate elements. But the obstacles were overcome and for 100 years we have been developing a remarkable web of relations, institutions and understandings bringing together different peoples, regions and provinces. We can be proud of our efforts.

But if we have achieved much, there are many urgent tasks that remain. The most important, in my view, is the achievement of further progress towards national unity.

Some people argue that we shall only achieve unity in this country if we are not self-conscious about it - if we let the problems work themselves out; in short, they say that no special effort is required. I do not agree. Such an approach may have been soothing to some Canadians in the past, but the measure of its inadequacy is that the great majority of Canadians believe that national unity is not something that can be swept under a rug, even one 4,000 miles long!

Canadians across the nation are beginning to realize that this question is central to our future, and they are prepared to do something about it. A few years ago, there was little understanding of the aspirations of other areas of the country. When disagreements were not simply ignored, they were subjected to vitriolic verbal treatment. I believe that today, despite the evident differences between elements in Canada, we have found a new maturity in dealing with our national life.

Besides a wonderful opportunity for a party, centennial year seems to have spurred us to greater efforts in examining our national life and finding ways of settling our differences.