

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
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No. 51/7 CANADA'S ROLE IN THE DEFENCE OF THE FREE WORLD

An address by Mr. C.D. Howe, Minister of Trade and Commerce, delivered to the Commercial Club of Chicago on February 27, 1951.

...I took your invitation extended to a Canadian to mean that you expect me to speak about Canada. After reading current magazine and newspaper articles about Canada's war effort, and after talking to some of my friends in this country, it seemed clear to me that a Canadian speaking to his American friends, should talk frankly and fully about Canada's part in the defence of the free world. I intend to do so.

Some of you may think that we Canadians are touchy, too ready to resent the suggestion that we are doing less than our duty in this time of peril. That may be so, but I doubt it. What I am concerned about is that my American friends should have a clear explanation of the Canadian position, including a statement of what we are doing. If the facts are fully known there will be less room for misunderstanding or for misrepresentation.

We Canadians believe that the good relations between our two countries are founded on independence and mutual respect. We do not expect the United States to carry our burdens, even though it has twelve times the population and eighteen times the productive strength. Your country has made generous gifts and long-term loans to most countries of the world, but never to Canada. Canada has never asked you for other than occasional short-term accommodation and Canada would never have accepted your gifts even had they been offered to us. In fact we have, out of our more limited wealth, made our own gifts and loans to less fortunate countries during the post-war period.

So it is in this present period of emergency. We expect to carry a fair share of the sacrifices and costs of collective defence. On a per capita basis we shall probably carry more than many of our allies.

The defence of our immense territory by a population of fourteen million people presents a unique problem. We must depend upon mobility, for even if all our men of military age were pressed into service, we could not hope to defend our sea coasts and our centres of population by any static defence. Therefore, our defence planning must emphasize air power and sea power: air power to focus the defence on the point of attack wherever it may be, and sea power to protect our coasts and our trade routes. The normal back-bone of our active service infantry force is an airborne brigade, highly trained and specially equipped