

of Canada's leading business personalities, has been making high-level contacts with French businessmen and studying ways of increasing the flow of trade, investment and technology between our two countries. The work of this mission is complemented by that of the Franco-Canadian Economic Committee, which met in Ottawa last autumn and is to meet again this year to develop means of increasing economic co-operation between our two countries, both bilaterally and on the international level.

One subject discussed by the economic committee was the possibility of co-operation in providing assistance to French-speaking less-developed countries. Though still on a modest scale compared to our aid to Commonwealth countries, our economic assistance to these countries has in recent years been expanded through the establishment of a special programme of assistance to the 21 countries of Africa that use French as their official or as a second language. Our diplomatic representation in that part of the world is being further extended this year by the opening of embassies in Dakar and Tunis.

In France itself, of course, we opened, in 1965 and 1964, Consulates-General in Bordeaux and Marseille which are contributing to the development of Canada's connections with the important regions which these cities represent.

Last autumn, French and Canadian parliamentarians, wishing to make a contribution of their own to the growing number of contacts between our two countries, met in Ottawa to found the Canada-France Inter-parliamentary Association. The Association had its first regular meeting in Paris a few weeks ago, and will meet alternately in the two capitals each year. As in the case of the Canada-U.S. Inter-parliamentary Group, and of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (Canada has been a member of both these bodies for several years), the activities of the new Canada-France Association aim essentially at developing between parliamentarians of the two countries a mutual understanding of each other's preoccupations and activities.

Canadian and French diplomats constantly consult in their common search to find just and effective solutions to the problems which burden today's world. The French Foreign Minister and I have made a practice, since the Prime Minister's visit to France, of meeting twice yearly to discuss not only bilateral questions but also those of worldwide importance; we met once again at the beginning of June in Brussels, before the NATO ministerial meeting. We now look forward to meeting next time in Ottawa, in September, when we shall have the pleasure of welcoming M. Couve de Murville to Canada.

I regard the continued development of our relations with France and other French-speaking countries as of vital importance for Canada at this stage of our national development. Internally, this process, if successfully carried out, should consolidate our national unity and help to define our sense of purpose as a country.

The strengthening of our relation with France is also an eminently desirable part of our active international role as a middle power. It should reinforce our position in the world by creating new channels for our influence, favourable opportunities for trade and more extensive contacts from which to improve our understanding of world trends. With a double heritage from two great civilizations, Canada has many opportunities in relations with countries which share this heritage in one form or another to play a useful role.