



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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DEMOCRACY IN WORLD AFFAIRS

An address by Right Hon. Louis S. St. Laurent,
Secretary of State for External Affairs, to the
Ontario Good Roads Association, Toronto,
February 25, 1948.

I much appreciate the privilege of being your guest this evening and I am particularly happy at being present on this occasion, when you are doing honour to some of your members who through long and devoted service have accomplished much to further the objects of your association.

Of course I will admit that I would be enjoying the occasion even more completely--and perhaps you would too--if I did not have to make a speech. But having to make one, I feel that I could not select a more appropriate audience for one of the things which I propose to discuss i.e., our present attempts to extend democratic processes into the domain of international affairs.

First of all, I think it is a truism which no one can dispute that an organization such as yours is typical of democratic processes at their best. Democracy, after all, is, in action at least, a way of life whereby free men co-operate together to achieve results for their own benefit and for the benefit of their fellows, which either could not be achieved at all, or would be achieved only in a much less complete and practical way by the individual and isolated efforts of each.

I think it is an error to look upon democracy as a system whereby minorities are ruled by majorities. It is true that in democracies, it is the will of the majority which finally determines what action shall be taken and what conduct shall be avoided in order that the welfare of the greatest number may be better promoted. But the governing consideration should be and usually is the welfare of the greatest number.

When all the members of the group have given thoughtful and intelligent consideration to what is apt to be good for the greatest number, have weighed the pros and cons of a line of conduct and given proper consideration to each, the decision of the majority can be accepted by the minority as one that is pretty apt to be fair and productive of beneficial effects for the community as a whole. Democracies work best where all the members seriously attempt to believe in the fair-mindedness of their fellows. In that kind of an atmosphere, even when one finds himself in the minority, he need not necessarily feel like the new recruit having his first march with his company in the army, that everyone is out of step but himself!

I understand that your association has been in existence for something over fifty years and I would be ready to believe that it is entitled to much of the credit for the splendid system of highways which has been developed in your province during that period.

I have learned that Mr. Sibbitt was your president in 1935, and that he has served as reeve of Pittsburg township for 15 consecutive years and has been for many years a member of the Kingston-Frontenac County Suburban Roads Commission; that Mr. Cameron is one of the senior County Engineers of the province, a Director of the association for

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