

VERNMENT



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 51/18 SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT CANADIAN-AMERICAN RELATIONS

An extract from a speech by the Canadian Ambassador to the United States, Mr. H.H. Wrong, to the St. George's Society of Baltimore, on April 23, 1951.

It is not easy for an Ambassador - even one from a country as friendly as Canada - to make a public speech in the United States at this time, in the midst of an acute domestic controversy over very important international and strategic issues which has deeply stirred popular emotions. I shall avoid touching on the issues raised in this controversy. I could do this easily by following a pattern that has become very familiar to me, and perhaps to many of you, on the theme of the cordial relations between Canada and the United States, bringing in all the well-worn phrases about the undefended border, the 135 years of peace, the historic friendship, and so on. Such a speech would be full of platitudes and perhaps even more boring to me than to you.

Yet a platitude is but a frozen truth, and one must not allow the fact that it has become tedious through repetition, so that it no longer stimulates the imagination, to prevent one from recognizing the truth which it contains. Ambassadors suffer from the occupational handicap that they are rarely able to speak their minds freely in public; it is a part of their duty to say nothing likely to cause offence either in the country in which they are stationed or in their own country. I might describe what I shall try to do tonight - and I think it is an appropriate theme on this occasion - as an effort to unfreeze some of the familiar platitudes about the relationship between Canada and the United States. I shall attempt in so doing to set in perspective some of the achievements in international co-operation, of which we are rightly proud, and some of the problems which we must face from day to day in preserving and extending these achievements.

This involves a brief excursion into history. Our two countries have grown up side by side and divide between them the North American continent north of the Rio Grande. In several respects there are close parallels between the national development of them both. Both at one stage in their history were groups of British colonies on or near the Atlantic seaboard, with a vast hinterland behind them in the west; both in time settled this hinterland and incorporated it in their metropolitan territory; both developed a democratic and federal structure of government.

The timing of these events, however, was very different in Canada and in the United States. When the Declaration of Independence was signed Canada consisted of the French-speaking settlements along the St. Lawrence River which had been ceded by France to Great Britain in 1763 only 11 years before;