



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION
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No. 54/53 An address by the Prime Minister,
Mr. L.S. St. Laurent, to the Second National
Conference of the Humanities Research Council
of Canada, at Ottawa, November 19, 1954.

May I first of all assure you that it is a real pleasure for me to be with you this evening on the occasion of the Second National Conference of the Humanities Research Council. I should like to say how honoured I am to be invited to speak at such a distinguished gathering of intellectual leaders from across the country.

The theme of your meeting, I understand, is the contribution of the humanities to government and society. As the leader of the government I want to assure you that my colleagues and I are grateful for that contribution. We know that the esteem in which Canada's Civil Service is held in international circles is in large part due to its ability to attract to its ranks many dedicated men and women of high intelligence, breadth of knowledge and great understanding.

The federal government is fortunate in having the services of men and women of high calibre available to it and it recognizes that the humanities in Canada have helped to make this possible. But it does not feel that it deserves to reap the harvest without having made any contribution to the tilling of the soil and the planting of the seed.

One reason why the Massey Commission was established was to examine the part played by federal agencies in producing this harvest and to recommend means to make their contribution more effective. With your permission, later on I shall reverse the theme of these meetings and refer to the contribution of government to the humanities in Canada.

In the preface to their comprehensive survey "The Humanities in Canada" Dr. Watson Kirkconnell and Dr. A.S.P. Woodhouse state that "the function of the humanities is to humanize by stimulating the imagination to develop in breadth and depth until the individual becomes enlarged into the full measure of humanity". It is obvious that the sort of education which these gentlemen had in mind in setting this high goal was not the mere accumulation of knowledge in order to pass examinations or to enable students to earn a certain salary after having completed their formal education. What they had in mind was the search for a deeper and more complete understanding of man.