

## SOME ASPECTS OF CANADIAN-AMERICAN RELATIONS

*An address by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. L. B. Pearson, to the Canadian Club, Montreal, April 27, 1956.*

You will not be surprised, I am sure, especially in view of the current attention being given to the matter, if I talk to you today about some aspects of our relations with the United States.

It is a subject with which Canadians have always been intensely preoccupied; and, I expect, always will be, as long as the facts of history and geography, economics and politics, remain as they are.

This preoccupation, while natural and, indeed, inevitable, at times seems to occupy a disproportionate share of popular interest. If we are not careful, we will soon be spending more time in thinking negatively about what the Americans have done or may do to or for us, than in thinking positively about our own plans and policies.

### Close Relationship

Canadian-American relations are today the most important single item in the foreign policy of our country; apart, of course, from the transcendental issue of peace and war. Moreover, these relations will probably grow in difficulty and complexity as the importance of each country to the other increases, as is happening. After all, we share most of a continent, and one which is today not on the periphery, but in the very centre of the world. Its northern half—the Canadian half—is growing steadily in strength and influence.

Today there are no two countries in the world whose contacts are so varied, so close and so compelling, as those between Canada and its neighbour.

When Professor Leacock retired from McGill, he was invited to return to England, and pass the rest of his life there. His reply, courteously and humourously declining the invitation, included the following sentences:

"There's another reason for not wanting to leave Canada for England. I'd hate to be so far away from the United States. You see, with us it's second nature, part of our lives, to be near them. Every Sunday morning we read the New York funny papers, and all week we read about politics in Alabama and Louisiana, and whether they caught the bandits that stole the vault of the national bank, and—well, you know

American news—there is no other like it. And the Americans come-and-go up here, and we go-and-come down there, and they're educated just as we are and know all about Kilowatts but quit Latin at the fourth declension . . . .

"Our students go and play hockey with their stoddents and our tourists going out meet their towrists coming in. The Americans come up here and admire us for the way we hang criminals. They sit in our club and say, 'You certainly do hang them, don't you!' My, they'd like to hang a few! The day may be coming when they will. Meantime we like to hang people to make the Americans sit up.

"And in the same way we admire the Americans for the way they shovel up mountains and shift river-courses and throw the map all round the place. We sit in the club, fascinated, and listen to an American saying, 'The proposal is to dam up the Arkansas River and make it run backwards over the Rockies.' That's the stuff! That's conversation.

"... We are 'sitting pretty' here in Canada. East and West are the two oceans far away; we are backed up against the ice cap of the pole; our feet rest on the fender of the American border, warm with a hundred years of friendship. . . .

"... Thank you, Mother, England, I don't think I'll 'come home'. I'm 'home' now. Fetch me my carpet slippers from the farm. I'll rock it out to sleep right here."

I do not wish you to infer from all this that the ties that draw us across the Atlantic, that link us with our mother countries, Great Britain and France, and with the nations of the Commonwealth, are weakening. On the contrary, they are stronger than ever. The old problems arising out of our development from colony to nation, and from the impact of imperial policy on that development, have been solved. There is now little to worry us and very much to satisfy us in the Commonwealth relationship. It is a relationship which we must maintain and strengthen.

On the other hand, our problems with the United States are, if not new, at least expressing themselves in new and, at times, per-