

The creation of a nation in 1867 was not an act of revolution, nor did it involve rejection of an imperial power. The closeness of the remaining links in most fields was evident, but so was the inevitability of the march towards complete and formal independence and to the complete equality of status as we see it in the Commonwealth today. Canadians expected the familiar processes of political growth and change to carry them through difficult periods.

The tasks of economic development were a powerful stimulus to unity as well. Half a continent lay before the founders of our country and the exhilaration of the work that had to be done was a powerful force creating national feeling.

In spite of the obstacles it has presented to settlement, development and communications, the land itself, in all its splendour and immensity, has always been a powerful force felt by all. The romance of early exploration cast an aura of future greatness over the land and its inhabitants.

Sir John A. Macdonald was Prime Minister when the first rail-line reached the Pacific in 1885. He took his own first trip there very shortly afterwards and, in the excitement of the passage through the Rocky Mountains, insisted on taking his place out on the cow-catcher to miss nothing of the scenery. This is a feat which few of you, well travelled though you may be, are likely to emulate!

A couple of decades after that, another Prime Minister, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, came back to Canada after telling both the British and French about the virtues of his homeland. He told them "the blood of youth runs in its veins, it has faith in its future". He added "...Paris, with all its beauty, does not speak to my soul like the rock of Quebec".

The confidence which sustained Canadians in their settlement of the land and in its political development has carried the nation forward in many fields of war and foreign policy in the century which has elapsed since Confederation.

Canada did not feel itself divorced from an Empire after Confederation. In the long history of development, from Empire to Commonwealth, Canada has followed its own political traditions of securing independence and equality of status, while preserving the benefits of a close and unique form of association with nations located in all parts of the earth and comprehending many races.

The value of that Commonwealth association and the importance of the role Canada has been able to play in it have been apparent in the conference concluded in London only a week ago.

The Rhodesian problem is a most difficult one. We cannot yet foresee how it will be resolved. Nevertheless, the Commonwealth nations have acted in a vigorous and responsible manner to deal with the situation there and to preserve the principles of social justice and harmony, which are as essential to the survival of the Commonwealth as they are for the United Nations itself.