

CANADA

House of Commons Debates

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The following is the English translation of Speeches delivered in French on the date indicated

Friday, March 31, 1939.

Mr. LAPOINTE (Quebec East):

(Quotation.)

Our country is developing and growing: that is in the natural order of events.

That we should seek to determine its exact standing, to ascertain whether it is out of its leading-strings and free to direct its own destinies, nothing is more natural.

But, is in this matter as in all others, we should come out of the clouds and cease dwelling in abstractions.

We are the masters of our own destinies. Agreed. But that does not obliterate the fact that we have a neighbour to the south, ice-bound solitudes to the north and, to the east and west, much travelled oceans beyond which dwell populous and active nations with which we cannot avoid having relations—with which we have to deal, to negotiate, to agree or to fight.

This is a reality which we cannot ignore without exposing ourselves to a terrible awakening.

We are our own masters. Agreed. But that does not prevent us from asking ourselves what are to be our relations with England, to wonder whether we can do without her or whether it would not be better for us to remain associated with her.

Canada has become a nation. We must, however, recognize the fact that a nation has other obligations, other duties and other cares than a colony has, and place ourselves in a position to meet them. We must remember that nations evolve and are sometimes faced with situations not of their own making. We must understand that the shores of Asia are not sufficiently remote to justify us in showing no interest in the tremendous game which is being played there, and whose repercussions may come home to us, perhaps sooner than we think.

Since we claim to be serious citizens, let us not look upon political developments in our country as mere objects of curiosity or amusement; let us rather seek to understand them and form sound and intelligent opinions about them. Let us direct our thoughts in this domain to higher levels than petty patronage or post office matters; and the interval between the sessions of 1939 will have been usefully employed.

Mr. LIGUORI LACOMBE (Laval-Two Mountains): Mr. Speaker, the effects of the last war are engraved in letters of blood on the political history of this country. This sad reality will ever guide the steps of all true Canadians in the path of autonomy, liberty and sovereignty traced by the Statute of Westminster. Nevertheless, a deplorable colonial mentality still exists in Canada, despite our unmistakable evolution towards independence and the explicit statement, contained in paragraph 3 of the Statute of Westminster, of our power to legislate in external matters. This paragraph reads as follows:

It is hereby declared and enacted that the parliament of a dominion has full power to make laws having extraterritorial operation.

It is in the name of this treaty stamped with liberty, nobility and sovereignty that I earnestly entreat the house to beware of military and financial imperialism which will always seek to raise obstacles against the exercise of our sovereign rights. It is in the name of this document which consecrates our magnificent evolution towards the full exercise of our prerogatives that I say: Beware of occult influences and odious war profiteers. They will stop at nothing. Accustomed to defile the most worthy causes, dissimulating their impudent plans of spoliation, they will spare nothing to deprive us of our right of self-government. Why should we ruin ourselves in wars or even preparations for wars which are no concern of ours? In constant peace with our neighbours, are we to commit this lamentable error? Shall we be so forgetful of realities that Canada will cease to be Canada; that this country will no longer be ours; that our lines of defence will be everywhere in this troubled world; that we will have to emigrate to unhappy Europe with the last shred of our country, the last dollar of our money, the last son of Canada? I say no.

Personally, I have always been opposed to any increase in military appropriations, so