

# The possible action of Canada in the cause of International Arbitration

Speech delivered by Mr Henri Bourassa, at the Lake Mohonk Conference, May 14th, 1913

Up to the present hour, Canada, a mere dependency of Great Britain, endowed with a large measure of internal self-government, but deprived of all the powers and responsibilities of state, has played no part in the world of international politics.

The constant evolution of the principles and powers of government in the British Empire, and the growth in population and wealth of the great dependencies of Great Britain, are rapidly bringing us to the day when Canada and the other self-governing British communities will have to assume the responsibilities of manhood, either as independent nations or as real partners of Great Britain in some new form of federated association.

In either case, Canada, with her immense territory and superabundent natural resources, which are already attracting a yearly growing number of settlers from all countries of northern and central Europe, with her exceptional advantages for cheap and rapid communications with Europe, — Canada is bound to play an important part in the affairs of the world; and that part ought to be favorable to the cause of peace and good will among nations.

No existing community of white men will enter the state of nationhood with less causes — passed, present or future, historical or economical, accidental or permanent — of quarrels with the outside world, with keener motives, both moral and material, to be at peace and to see peace prevail in the world.

The geographical position and economic conditions of Canada are such that she has a deep and growing interest in the preservation of peace, not only on the continent of which she forms an important part, but on the two oceans bordering her shores and giving her communications with Europe and Asia.

The peculiar configuration of the country, practically cut into three distinct regions by the barren table-land north of Lake Superior and the lofty chain of the Rockies, make it of vital importance to Canadian trade that the sea routes of both oceans remain uninterrupted, and the free transit on rail, between Canada and the United States, unhampered.

That inconvenience cannot be overcome by sea communications around the north shores of Canada, such as the United States are on the point of creating through the Panama Canal. May I interject here that from the viewpoint of peace and justice, Canada will thus be spared the temptation of protecting her own interest at the expense of international equity?