

ADDRESS
of
RONALD WILSON REAGAN
President of the United States of America

to
Both Houses of Parliament
in the
HOUSE OF COMMONS CHAMBER, OTTAWA
on
Wednesday, March 11, 1981

The President was welcomed by the Right Honourable P. E. Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada, and thanked by the Honourable Jean Marchand, Speaker of the Senate and Honourable Jeanne Sauv , Speaker of the House of Commons.

Hon. Jeanne Sauv  (Speaker of the House of Commons): May I call this meeting to order?

Mr. President, we are grateful for the great honour you do us in addressing this joint session of the Senate and the House of Commons. I now invite the Right Honourable the Prime Minister to introduce our distinguished guest.

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker of the Senate, Madam Speaker of the House of Commons, Mr. President and Mrs. Reagan, distinguished American visitors, honourable members of the Senate, members of the House of Commons, Excellences, Mesdames et Messieurs:

Mr. President, yesterday I welcomed you to Canada. I repeat that welcome now because in this chamber Canada's democracy finds its ultimate expression. Here, in a special way, we speak on behalf of the people of Canada, and here the people of Canada are honoured to receive you, Sir.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trudeau: Nations do not choose their neighbours; geography does that. The sense of neighbourhood, however, is more than a product of geography; it is a creation of people who may live as far apart as California and Quebec. It is what makes neighbours of Canada and Mexico, for instance. Canadians have noted this sense in you, Mr. President, and they know that it gives a particular meaning to your visit to Ottawa.

[*Translation*]

Our being neighbours is not simply a matter of geography, it is a state of mind. Beyond North America lies the New World which we inhabit by your side. We share the dreams which have made this continent a beacon in the night and a haven of hope for mankind. We share the courage and the love for work which have enabled us to build side by side two great federal states stretching from the Atlantic coast to the distant shores of the Pacific. Our accomplishment is dear to us. We are intent on preserving our heritage, but at the same time we gladly agreed to share with others the prosperity and freedom we found in this land.

[*English*]

It is right that we should celebrate what we hold in common. At the same time it is necessary that we remember and respect what makes us different.

More than 200 years ago our paths diverged, although our goals remained the same. You created a great republic with a presidential system. We evolved as a constitutional monarchy, under a parliamentary system. You placed yourselves from the outset under a written constitution that you continue to revere today. We are only now finishing the work of writing ours and bringing it home. You fought a tragic civil war. We have recently undergone the experience of a referendum that involved no violence, but nonetheless touched the very fibre of this country.

The differences of history affect our relations today, because they affect our perceptions, our approaches, our priorities. You, Mr. President, would perhaps agree with Thoreau where he says of the United States government:

This government of itself never furthered any enterprise, but by the alacrity with which it got out of its way. It does not settle the west. It does not educate. The character inherent in the American people has done all that has been accomplished.

The character of the Canadian people, Mr. President, has also made Canada. But here in Canada our own realities have sometimes made it necessary for governments to "further enterprise". Those realities and that necessity are still with us today.

[*Translation*]

Mr. President, you are visiting Canada at a particularly turbulent time in our history. We are in the process of completing the construction of our country. As an American you will appreciate the challenge which we must face. We are attempting to improve our democratic system and to cement our unity. Undoubtedly the din of our labour will reach your ears. However, I can assure you that our stormy but productive discussions will pave the way for a stronger Canada. Indeed, if I may recall a humorist's description of a megalopolis, we have decided that at the close of our current debates we will be "more than a confederation of shopping centres".

In the years to come the United States will be looking at a dynamic neighbour to the North. But putting its own house in order Canada will grow confident in itself. We will establish more clearly where our interests lie and we will pursue them with renewed vigour. One thing will remain unchanged, however: our deep friendship for the United States. In fact, Mr. President, the relations between our two countries will grow at the same time as Canada will grow. Of course, as neighbours we will hold frank discussions. But we have always spoken clearly to each another and our openness was based on mutual respect, as befits two sovereign and equal countries linked by deep friendship.