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CANADA AND "LA FRANCOPHONIE"

Speech by the Secretary of State for External Affairs,
the Honourable Paul Martin, Montreal, March 11, 1967.

...Among the various aspects of foreign policy with which the Canadian Government is currently concerned there is one to which it is particularly sympathetic -- "La Francophonie", the conception of a French-speaking community. I think that Montreal, the second-largest French-speaking city in the world, would be an appropriate place for me to talk about this subject tonight.

"La Francophonie" is, of course, a subject of particular interest to French-speaking Canadians. But its significance is not limited to French-Canadians alone. Because it adds a new dimension to the development of our relations with other countries, "La Francophonie" will benefit all Canadians.

The idea of "La Francophonie" is quite a new one and not too clearly defined, but it has nevertheless been talked about a great deal recently. A number of leaders of French-speaking states, particularly President Senghor of Senegal and President Bourguiba of Tunisia, have been discussing this subject with the governments of interested countries. When President Senghor was in Canada last September, the Prime Minister and I discussed it at length with him. I have also talked about it several times with the French Minister of Foreign Affairs. We intend to continue this discussion with all the countries interested in "La Francophonie".

But what does "La Francophonie" mean? Perhaps the best explanation has been given by President Senghor. He thinks of it as an intellectual or spiritual community of all the countries which have French as a national or official language or where it is currently spoken. The aim is to bring closer together those countries which, through the French language, share a cultural heritage and have certain ways of thought and action, of looking at problems and of solving them, in common.

The conception is cultural and linguistic. Above all, it is a recognition of the richness of the heritage which we have in common with nearly 150 million people living in more than 25 countries throughout the world. These countries, like us, are anxious not only to preserve this heritage but to develop it. They realize today that they can do this better if they do it together.