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CANADA'S POSITION IN THE WORLD

An address delivered by the Prime Minister,
Mr. St. Laurent, to the Canadian Club, Ottawa
January 16, 1953.

...I don't think most of us realize how greatly the actual position of our country in the world has changed since 1939. But if our real position in the world is changed, I think our attitude to it has changed even more.

Many of us may have forgotten that, in those far-off years after Hitler came to power in 1933, the great debate among Canadians was whether our connection with the Commonwealth, our membership in the League of Nations and our racial and cultural affinities with Europe were not likely to drag us into troubles which were no real business of ours. Literally nobody in Canada talks that way today.

We all know that what happens to the rest of the world is our business and most of us realize it is the most important business we have. The only debate today is how much we should do and how far we should go in helping to keep world affairs from deteriorating into another world war.

Even on this subject there are happily no fundamental differences between the major political parties in Canada. Such differences as there are cut across party lines and are mainly differences of emphasis. There are those who think that we have taken our responsibilities a little too seriously and have tried to do a little too much to solve the world's problems. There are those who think we aren't serious enough and aren't doing enough.

I am sure that all of us realize that a country which in territorial extent is the third largest in the world, which has undeveloped wealth even the most optimistic dared not dream of in the 30's, which has a population as skilful and as enlightened as that of any other country, which has know-how and developed capital greater in proportion to its population than that of any other country of the world but one -- a country with all these advantages and many others besides cannot fail to have heavy responsibilities for what goes on both within and beyond its own borders.

Canada is not a great power but it is nevertheless a real power in the world, and public men and responsible citizens both have a duty to see that that power is exercised not only for the common advantage of all Canadian citizens of today but with a proper sense of responsibility toward future generations of Canadians. And, as I shall try to show in what I am going to say to you today, that also means a proper sense of responsibility toward future generations of mankind.

...I would suggest that the door to our relations with the rest of the world hangs upon two hinges, one hinge called peace, the other called trade.