

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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OUR RELATIONS WITH FRANCE ONE OF THE PILLARS OF OUR FOREIGN POLICY

An Address by Mr. Jean-Luc Pépin, Parliamentary Secretary
to the Minister of Trade and Commerce, to the French
Chamber of Commerce in Canada at Montreal, on March 26, 1965.

...For many years, Canadian politicians have been telling us that our foreign policies rest upon three pillars: our activities in world and regional organizations, our membership in the Commonwealth, and our neighbourly relations with the United States. It seems to me that a fourth pillar is now being raised, our close and effective co-operation with France, a co-operation entirely natural since it stems from the cultural and political similarities between our two countries, and from our mutual and self-evident economic interests.

Why have we waited so long to till and nurture so rich a field? Some may say that we were afraid to slight other countries. (The leaders of these countries were probably the first to be surprised at our bashfulness.) What about domestic differences among Canadians? Let us not be too quick to blame our English-speaking countrymen. We all know that in France as well as in French Canada stupid prejudices have hampered any true rapprochement. We French-Canadians have had a frightful inferiority complex in relation to our cousins abroad -- they overwhelmed us with the full weight of their accent and with their knowledge of grammar. The average Frenchman thought that we were irrevocably lost in the British-American plot, and found relief and gratification in an "Isle-of-Orleans" image, printed at Epinal, of which we ourselves were often the most active promoters.

But let us look rather at the present and future of Franco-Canadian political, cultural and trade relations.

What do we see?

Favourable Circumstances

First, we see that the situation is extremely favourable to a rapprochement.

On the one hand, we have France, an ancient land which is modernizing, diversifying, automating and planning its economy by capitalizing, with great energy and originality, upon its scientific and technical resources which some thought to be exhausted; an old land whose philosophical, religious and artistic