

An Enduring Pattern

In this spirit, it became possible for the United States and Great Britain, with increasingly direct participation by Canada, gradually to find ways and means of solving the many problems and differences which remained between them. There were, in particular, very difficult and contentious problems about the border between Canada and the United States and about international waters and fisheries. The techniques of negotiation, conciliation and arbitration which were then evolved set a pattern which has stood the test of time and remains to this day. So do the problems now more complicated and difficult than ever. For their solution now, goodwill and mutual understanding are needed as never before.

Today, then, we are not only commemorating the 150th anniversary of a military victory. Even more significantly, we are celebrating a century and a half of close, active and mutually profitable co-operation between Canada and the United States. It is a good example of good neighbourhood which is looked at with envy, and could be followed with equal advantage, in many parts of our troubled world. Since 1815 we have had lots of orws - but rows with wars or without a breach in our friendship. That is a real achievement. Let's keep it that way.

You will remember that shortly after the war, in 1817, an agreement was signed which is in force to this day and which provided for naval disarmament on the Great Lakes. This was one of the few disarmament agreements in history that worked.

A Precedent Worth Study

I know, of course, that with nuclear missiles and jet planes, the task of achieving disarmament on a world scale has become immensely more complicated. But I do suggest that the precedent of the Rush-Bagot Agreement could be studied with profit by some countries who are neighbours and who, like Canada and the United States of those days, have reasons to distrust each other but even more compelling reasons for removing that distrust.

There is another aspect of the War of 1812 that has been given less attention than it deserves. The response of Canadians to that War revealed the essential seeds that were later to develop into Canadian nationhood.

The Maritime colonies and the outlying Western garrisons were no less anxious than Upper and Lower Canada to affirm their common identity in the struggle. They showed their common desire to live in North America as part of the British system. Canadians of French descent were no less devoted to this objective than were those of British stock. It is not too much to say that in 1812 the foundations of Canadian nationhood were established.

Two Peoples and Two Cultures

The role of Lower Canada in 1812 showed that this was truly to be a nation of two founding peoples and two basic cultures. Many of the great moments of Canadian history have been moments when people of English and French origins have shown their willingness and ability to co-operate on a basis of true equality. It is that partnership which affirms our Canadian identity and gives it a distinct sense of common purpose and destiny.