



CANADA

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## CONFEDERATION NEEDS MORE THAN LIP SERVICE

"Like all thinking Canadians..., I have become increasingly concerned about recent developments in our Confederation and how to cope with them," Mr. Mitchell Sharp, the Minister of Trade and Commerce, told a meeting of the Canadian Club of Winnipeg on April 10. "I have also formed some views as to the approach likely to yield the best results..." Mr. Sharp added, and went on to discuss the subject as follows in part:

...I was born here in Winnipeg; I spent the first 30 years of my life in this city in an English-speaking environment. I knew something but not as much as I should have known about Canadian history, notwithstanding post-graduate work in that subject. I understood very little about the way of life and the outlook of the Canadians who live in the Province of Quebec and who speak the French language. I read French but spoke it hardly at all.

I was, I suggest, a typical English-speaking Canadian from the West.

I have now lived over 20 years in Eastern Canada, most of it on the banks of the Ottawa River that divides Ontario and Quebec. Gradually, and only gradually, because one's formative years leave an indelible impression upon one's pattern of thinking, have I learned that Canada is not what I thought it was in my youth and early manhood....

### UNITY NOT ASSURED FOREVER

When I was younger, I was taught and I assumed that the question of Canadian unity had been settled once and for all in 1867. Today, I believe more firmly than ever in Canadian unity, but I no longer make the assumption that the question was settled nearly 100 years ago. I now realize that Canada will remain

a united nation only if a sufficient number of Canadians in all parts of our country place national unity above all other considerations. Only if we do that can we hope to deal effectively with the forces that today threaten to divide us as they sometimes threatened to divide us in the past.

This does not mean, as some would have us believe, that it is sufficient to be in favour of "One Canada", or indeed that any such simple catchword or slogan will suffice. Catchwords and slogans such as this may indeed be mischievous, because they conceal differences that ought to be in the open where they can be examined. What "One Canada" means to some Canadians, I have found, is the imposition of their particular concept of national unity upon their fellow Canadians. Let us never forget that Canada is a federation, not a unitary state. Our federal structure permits diversity within unity. It assigns jurisdiction over matters of common concern to the federal authority and over local matters to the provincial authorities.

### SOUND ORIGINAL STRUCTURE

Let us not forget, too that, by and large, the original structure as agreed on by the Fathers of Confederation has stood up well over these past 100 years. There have been remarkably few constitutional amendments — a tribute to the foresight of the Founding Fathers as well as providing evidence that our constitution has a good deal of flexibility. Otherwise the remarkable changes in the respective functions of the federal and provincial authorities since 1867 could not have been accommodated. I am sure that, if the Fathers of Confederation were alive today, they would be astonished by what has actually happened within

(Over)