


STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
OTTAWA - CANADA

GOVERNMENT

CANADA

No. 49/34 . . . Address by Mr. L.S. St. Laurent, Prime Minister of Canada, in Acknowledgement of the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Laws, at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Troy, N.Y., on October 14, 1949.

It is needless for me to say I am very glad to be here in Troy today, and I am exceedingly grateful for the high honour which has just been accorded me by Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. It is a privilege I shall always treasure, to be associated with this Institute with its high tradition of scholarship in pure and applied science, and I am proud that the association begins at such a significant milestone in the history of the Institute.

Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute is, I believe, the oldest surviving school of science and engineering in the United States. As a result of the "application of science to the common purpose of life" to use the words of our founder, Stephen van Rensselaer, the Institute has played a major role in the industrialization and the development, not only of the United States but of the whole modern world. In peace and in war, the graduates of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute have been prominent in the original conception and in the construction of vast and varied engineering projects. I am told early spectacular examples are Brooklyn Bridge and the original Ferris wheel. But Rensselaer does more than deal with the material things of life. From this Institute have come graduates trained and skilled at working with people as well as with instruments and tools. But you did not invite the Prime Minister of Canada to this Convocation to tell you about the history or the objectives of this great institute of practical learning. You know them better than I do. What I am going to do is to say something about the relationship of my country with yours; and the relationship of our two North American nations with the rest of the world.

The United States is now the most powerful nation in the world. Canada is even larger in geographical extent than the United States, but our population is less than one-eleventh, and our developed wealth only about one-sixteenth as great as yours. In other words, ours is a comparatively small nation living beside a very great one.

Now, in our generation, the fate of many small nations with great neighbours has been anything but happy. The classic example, I suppose, is Czechoslovakia - a nation with a population about equal to ours - a people remarkable for their industry, for their skill and for their civilized behaviour. Twice in a single decade, the people of Czechoslovakia have fallen under the domination of powerful neighbours.

How different our Canadian experience has been. It is one hundred and thirty-five years since Canadians and Americans faced one another as foes. Most Canadians, and I dare say most