

GOVERNMENT
CANADA



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 53/47 CO-OPERATION AND UNITY IN THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING
WORLD

Text of a speech delivered by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. L.B. Pearson, at the Annual Dinner of the English-Speaking Union of the United States, at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, New York City, November 23, 1953.

It is difficult, on an occasion like this, to speak of the virtues of English speaking unity without using, and at times abusing, those somewhat thread-bare words and platitudes which are the defences of the diplomat against indiscretions, and, at times, his substitute for thought. I do not want to exchange a cliché for a cutlass, but I could wish that I were able to say something arresting and stimulating on a subject which is as important as any we are likely to face in the dangerous days ahead; the necessity of English speaking co-operation and understanding; of unity.

A Canadian, moreover, is in a somewhat special position, both of difficulty and of opportunity, in speaking on this subject.

We are a North American nation, but we are also proud to be a member of a Commonwealth of Nations which includes all the other non-American English speaking countries - and some others, including three in Asia. In this dual role, Canadians are supposed to have special qualifications, and a special incentive, for assisting the lion and the eagle to live peacefully together - an achievement which is neither biologically nor politically easy. Our value in this respect may be over-stressed, but there is, I think, something to it. More than once, I know from experience, a Canadian has been able to advocate a British position in Washington without dire consequences because he did it in an American accent, while his support in London of an American position has been listened to more attentively because the advocate may have had his trans-Atlantic words softened by an Oxford education, and, in any event, is a subject of the Queen. Someone, indeed, has cynically observed that we Canadians are so busy being British in Washington and American in London that we often forget to be Canadians. It is a danger, I admit, but I do not think we have succumbed to it. If we were tempted to, the facts of our history, and the pattern of our population, would come to the rescue. Our national existence is based on two founding races, only one of which is British, and the other isn't American! Furthermore, we are developing into a strong awareness of our own separate identity, as we stand confidently now on our own feet, moving toward a great national destiny but anxious, in the process, to keep in step with our friends.

For Canada, with the United States as a neighbour and the United Kingdom as a mother country, it is a first axiom of policy to do what it can to maintain the greatest possible English speaking unity, for national as well as for even more important international reasons. But to a Canadian, especially to one speaking French, English speaking unity is not enough. Indeed, it would be not inappropriate if I spoke to you about English speaking unity in Canada's other official language, French. Indeed, I had conceived that somewhat whimsical idea of beginning my talk on English speaking unity in French, and was restrained only out of respect for that beautiful language.

Language alone is not, in truth, a sufficient bond between peoples; indeed, it is not at times a bond at all, though I would not go as far as Bernard Shaw when he said that Great Britain and the United States were two countries divided by a common language. I cannot refrain from adding that if Bernard Shaw were alive today and could read an account of a baseball game in a New York tabloid, followed by a cricket or golf report in the Manchester Guardian or the London Times, by Neville Cardus or Bernard Darwin, he might not worry so much about the common language!

The bond of language, as a matter of fact, is occasionally reduced to the ability we share to criticize and argue in words that cannot be softened by translation. At times it seems to assist us in learning more easily the wrong things rather than the right ones about each other. I must confess that I could wish that one or two American newspapers and magazines were published in Tamil and that one or two radio or television commentators carried on in Swahili. And I'm sure the feeling is the same here about the use of the English language by certain speakers and writers in Canada and the United Kingdom.

A Canadian, Bruce Hutchison, writing in an American publication a few weeks ago, quoted a wise old Cambridge don on this common language dilemma, as follows:

"Most of our troubles with the Americans stem from the awful barrier of a common language. Since they speak the same language, the British and Americans expect each other to be the same sort of people. When they turn out to be utterly different both are disappointed and angered, as if the other fellows had somehow let them down. An Englishman isn't disturbed when a Frenchman eats snails or keeps a mistress. That is the French way. But when the American chews gum, dresses oddly, uses a queer accent or starts a fight in a pub, we find it inexcusable because it isn't British. And the Americans feel the same way about us."

Nevertheless, to continue on a less cynical note, while unity among all free peoples is essential for peace and progress, there is a special reason for and importance to unity among those peoples whose common use of the English language, whatever disadvantages it may occasionally have, does symbolize the important truth that we derive so much of our culture, institutions, ideas and customs from a common ancestry. We are very close together, in an ever shrinking world, and though propinquity does

not make necessarily for peace, as any honest married man or woman in this audience will testify, it does impose on those who are together a special necessity and a special responsibility for staying together, with a minimum of friction and a maximum of understanding and good will.

Well, are we staying together? You might be pardoned for some pessimism if you read or listen to certain shrill and noisy persons on both sides of the ocean. Their irritable and sometimes violent words, however, should not, I suggest, be mistaken for the voice of the people. There is no reason to believe that we are not as one in our determination to work closely together to preserve the peace against aggression and for other good purposes. Nevertheless, there are, in this difficult and trying period of political trench warfare, many stresses and strains on the great free world coalition, of which the English speaking countries form the core.

It is, of course, inevitable that we should have our differences and that we should express them. Such right of expression is the price we pay for freedom. But we are foolish and worse when, by rash, ill-tempered or irresponsible utterances, we make that price any higher than it need be. When we do so, we give comfort only to those whose aggressive and subversive policies threaten us and who fear our free world unity even more than they fear our strength.

One danger to our close co-operation is the tendency here and there in English speaking non-American countries to express, occasionally in irritating terms, anxiety at the power which the United States has acquired and criticism of the way that power is being used. This has gone so far in certain quarters as to evoke a feeling of nostalgia over the good old days when the United States was isolationist and the British could always send a cruiser.

It is customary these days, and very wise, to plead, for patience in the face of the difficulties that stem from the Cold War, for a minimum of provocation and a maximum of steadiness and understanding. I suggest that one way of strengthening English speaking unity is for the rest of us to show some of that patience - and understanding - of American leadership and American policy. We should also not hesitate to speak out in public recognition of the generosity, the constructive energy and imagination of the American people as they carry the Atlantean burden of world leadership and power; something which they never sought but which they are bearing in a way which may already have meant our salvation from those aggressive, expansionist forces eager to destroy our freedom and erase our future.

We Canadians claim the special privilege, as a close neighbour and a candid friend, of grousing about our big, our overwhelming partner, and of complaining at some of the less attractive manifestations of her way of life. It makes our own junior status seem relatively superior and helps us forget some of our own problems and mistakes. But we Canadians also know, from our own experiences and from our relationship with the United States, which is closer than that of any other country, that the sound and fury of contemporary clamour, while it may at times mar and even conceal, cannot destroy the noble qualities and the deep

strength of this land on whom there now rests (for there is no other strong foundation) the hopes of all peoples, not merely English speaking peoples, for free existence.

The ceaseless roar of Broadway is only a small part of the American scene and behind the pushing and shoving of the Manhattan crowds are millions of good and godly people, in quiet New England towns, on the rich soil of the Midwest, or in thousands of other places where Americans are working hard and unselfishly to build up a good society in a decent world. We other English speaking peoples do not hear enough about them. They are rarely on the screen, before the television camera or microphone; hardly ever make the gossip columns or the news digests.

One way, then, of strengthening our unity is to resist vigorously the temptation, which occasionally presents itself, to indulge in the somewhat novel but dangerous pastime of plucking the eagle's feathers. May the eagle in its turn learn, as the lion learned long ago when having its tail twisted, that this kind of attention is (in one sense) merely a recognition of its primacy among the birds and animals; even among the Canada geese and beavers!

A penalty, of course, of this primacy and power and great riches is often an inadequate appreciation by others of the purposes behind the power and the uses to which the riches are put. A leader must expect this; must also realize that it is inevitable that the rest of us should be intensely preoccupied and even anxious over everything that is said and done by the dominant partner.

How could it be otherwise when these actions may determine, not only the destiny of her own citizens who have at least direct responsibility for them, but also that of friends and allies who cannot escape the consequences for good or ill of a governmental decision in Washington, or even of a Congressional blast!

The British in their greatest Imperial days, and they were far easier days than those of the mid-twentieth century, learned that power did not normally inspire affection. They learned also that when power is used rightly, and rule is based on justice, they could win respect. Possibly this is a better result to achieve. As the editor of the NEW YORKER once said, "Don't try to make your neighbour love you. It will only make him uncomfortable. Try to gain his respect".

There is another aspect of contemporary national and international life which has a bearing on English speaking and, indeed, free world co-operation - our attitude to the Communist conspiracy which, harnessed to the might of Soviet Russia, is by far the greatest single menace to peace in the world today.

An unawareness of this danger, and slackness or softness in regard to the necessary measures to meet it - and I emphasize necessary - will undoubtedly be a source of friction and division between friends. Surely it is possible for allies whose security depends on each other far more than their insecurity can ever result from the domestic machinations of Communists and fellow-travellers,

and who, though they may express it in different ways, loathe and abhor communism and all its works, surely it is possible for such to accept each other's assurances of sincerity and good faith in dealing with these questions of security and subversion.

The occasional traitor in any of our countries can do much harm to all of us. We know that from hard experience. But I venture to say he cannot do nearly as much harm to our security as suspicion and lack of mutual trust can do to the co-operation and unity of the coalition on which our security must largely rest.

While slackness in these matters is bound to lead to recriminations, a fundamental difference of approach to them, of emphasis and of method, can also cause differences and difficulties inside nations and between nations, though they are trying to reach the same basic objectives.

We will, I think, keep these differences to a minimum if, on the one hand, we remain alert and realistic about the serious and present nature of the Communist menace, and if, on the other hand, we refuse to get panicky or be stampeded into the wrong way of doing things; if we stick to those tried and tested principles of justice and law; of scrupulous regard for the rights and liberties of the individual on which alone can national strength be permanently established.

This is not being soft to communism, or any other "ism". It is showing sanity and common sense, and an understanding of the really enduring sources of strength and greatness.

These are days that test one's patience and endurance as we strive at home to keep our countries free and secure, and, internationally, each to play its proper part in building up a coalition that will prevent aggression and maintain peace; or rather establish a peace which is more than the absence of war.

There are, I confess, times when one gets discouraged and anxious for the future as we suffer frustrations and disappointments at the United Nations; delays in fulfilling the hopes of NATO; and as we try to destroy the Communist conspiracy without descending to Communist tactics and procedures.

Out of these anxieties and perplexities and discouragements come the arguments and the differences between friends and allies, even those as close as the English-speaking countries.

Let us do our best to avoid these, but let us not become too alarmed and excited when they occur.

Let us keep, in short, a sense of proportion, of perspective, and even a sense of humour.
