

An address by the Governor General, His Excellency the Right Honourable Vincent Massey, delivered to the Canadian Club of the Niagara Frontier, March 13, 1953.

We, like the United States, cherish law and liberty. Our manner of cherishing, our constitutional and symbolic expressions are different. We have much to learn, and we have learned much, from the American's sense of freedom and equality, from his idealism and his insistence that all should have the good life, the best life; from his determination and his successful efforts to provide the necessary material foundation for that life. We respect the American consciousness that material things do matter; their continuance of the pioneer distrust of meaningless survivals; their insistence on direct appraisal of individual worth.

But we have something of our own, too, which is different and valuable; we express the common good, the public welfare in parliamentary institutions. With the Parliament we associate the Crown. Forgive me if I dip into history for a moment. It is an historic fact that Parliament is derived from the authority of the Crown, and that on the other hand the Crown has, for many centuries, achieved its greatest dignity and power in and through Parliament. I will not go into detail. I shall remind you only that historians tell us that in England when the Crown was abandoned during a period of strong republican feeling under Cromwell, it was brought back, as much for the sake of Parliament as for its own sake. Since then, the two institutions have grown together, apparently inseparable, in increasing power and prestige. In the eighteenth century, however, our neighbours, finding the current concept of parliamentary imperialism in conflict with their ideas of liberty and national independence, severed the link.

We have retained this link. We are indeed the first people to embody the monarchical principle in a federal system. I believe that we have been singularly happy in so doing. I am not thinking at the moment of our connection with Great Britain. I think of our Canadian Crown and of all that it means to us. May I remind you that almost all -- I think all -- of our greatest Canadian statesmen have not merely accepted, they have been profoundly seized with the significance and the value to us of the Crown and of all that it stands for?

Sir John Macdonald, whose name has been brought most happily to our attention by the recent work of a distinguished Canadian historian, was only one among many "A British subject I was born and a British subject I will die" was the expression of his profound belief in the value of the Crown in Canadian national life. His famous successor, differing from him in many political views, was at one with him in his view of the Crown, as he was at one with him in his steady support of Canadian nationalism. And it is true to say of all our leaders that the more profound their belief in Canada as a nation, the more insistent have they been in supporting the Crown and in developing its Canadian character.

Long before the official adoption of the Queen's new title of Queen of Canada, the Crown was a Canadian Crown playing its own part in Canadian life. And here it may not be irrelevant



for me to mention that the Sovereign in French-speaking Canada and her representative to this day exercise special privileges in relation to certain institutions. These come to them from the French kings, through the French governors. They were transferred voluntarily and graciously at the time of the conquest to British governors. Ever since they have been exercised as a precious right. The Sovereign in England has no such rights; but our Canadian Queen holds them in Canada, and it was my privilege last autumn, during my residence in Quebec, to exercise them in her name.

But apart from quaint and pleasant customs, what does the maintenance of the Crown and of all that it stands for, mean in Canada? First, it means the combination of law and of liberty which both come from the Crown, historically and actually. The Anglo-Saxon kings cherished law; the French-Norman monarchs, with their genius for administration handed out duties with a firm, a very firm, hand. With these duties, however, went power and authority which ultimately broadened into liberty with responsibility. It happened to be an American historian who coined a great phrase for the contribution of the Crown to English constitutional liberty, "self-government at the King's command". And it was a Frenchman who paid his tribute to England as "the only country to understand that political power has to be something more than a mere expression of common interest, that liberty and authority are not contradictory terms, that liberty can be enjoyed without disorder, and that authority can be exercised without tyranny". These are the words of André Siegfried, who strives here to express what he deems a typically English contribution to western civilization. He does not oppose it to, but he does distinguish it from, the equally important American contribution to the ideals of human dignity, human equality, and human well-being in a material sense.

And this is the matter that I would emphasize. We, in Canada, admire American ideals, and so far as lies in our power, we strive to emulate American achievements. But we do not forget that the institutions of Crown and Parliament, embodying in a symbolic fashion as well as in their practical operation, the ideals of liberty and authority are, on this continent, peculiarly ours. It is we who have cherished and preserved them in the New World. It is we who can offer them in our Canadian translation, as our contribution to civilized life on this continent.

I should like, in this Coronation year, to say something of the particular role of the Crown in modern times. It will be my duty and privilege to speak particularly to the nation on this matter on the occasion of the Coronation. But this need not prevent me from saying here, in these friendly and sympathetic surroundings, some of the things that are, I know, in all our minds and hearts. As I have suggested, liberty and authority in the best British and Canadian tradition are symbolized in the Crown and personified in its wearer. I need not say how happy and fortunate we are in our present Sovereign, as we were happy in her father and her grandfather, to speak only of recent times. We have seen in them persons capable of combining the splendour of authority, and the dignity of freedom, with the warmth and friendliness which expresses a common bond of humanity. This does not conflict with the principle of equality which we are proud to maintain. It does, however, give to our society of free and equal citizens at once a bond and a symbol. It recalls to us not only our common ideals; not only the necessity of human justice, but the blessings of human mercy and of human love.



I would remind you that the universal craving for a personal symbol of justice and mercy is happily fulfilled in Canada without servility and without emotional extravagance. We see it, with splendour and with simplicity, in the institution of the Crown and in the person of the Sovereign. The combination in this symbol of law and authority with humanity is, I think, a not unworthy contribution which Canada makes to North American life.

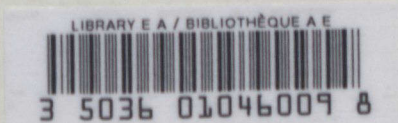
But we have other contributions to make to North American affairs and to international business, and these are even more exclusively bound up with our own national life and history. Canada is no longer small and weak. We can no longer dissociate ourselves from great international decisions with the plea that we have neither the constitutional power, nor the material resources to implement them. Whether we like it or not, we are now on the international stage with a not unimportant role, and we must play it worthily, and in our own way.

Here, too, we have certain advantages and a special contribution to make. A well-known American historian who is still to all Canadians a Canadian, has written with much scholarly insight and sympathetic understanding of what he calls the North Atlantic triangle: Great Britain, the United States and Canada. As a part of this North Atlantic Triangle, Canada has been internationally minded from her earliest colonial infancy: from the days when the fortunes of Quebec and Boston alike depended on the good or ill success of the British navy on the high seas. Canada was international minded long before she became a nation.

It is true that Canadian interest in international affairs has, in the past, perhaps been too exclusively concerned with our immediate needs, our need for survival, for example, and our hope of increase of power and of control over our national life. Now, as I have just suggested, all that is behind us. Now, and for the future, we are asked to consider more seriously what we have to give to others.

And when I speak of giving, I do not mean giving in the material sense. I am thinking, of course, of the kind of contribution of which we have been speaking... In a recent pronouncement, yet another well-known Canadian historian suggests how useful Canadian experience may be, if placed at the disposal of other powers in our new and complex international system. Nations long proud of their great power and complete independence, must now, in the interests of peace, accept limitations on their sovereignty. Canada's long experience as a colony, as rather more than a colony, as partly a dominion, as really a dominion and finally as more than a dominion, has taught us many things which our friends now must learn. We can now show others, says this writer, "how to lack sovereignty gracefully" and also how to be a reasonable partner.

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