



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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Translation of a Speech by the Prime Minister, Mr. Louis S. St. Laurent, delivered in French to the La Société Historique Franco-Américaine, Boston Mass., on December 15, 1949.

First of all, I should like to express my thanks to the President and Directors of the Société Historique Franco-Américaine. I fully appreciate the honour bestowed upon me, and realize that I owe it more to the position which I occupy than to my own personal worth. However, it is as a private individual that I am here tonight, as, contrary to belief, one is really Prime Minister only in his own country. However, I wish to express my profound gratitude to you for having given us the opportunity to participate in the celebration of the 50th anniversary of your organization.

Half a century in the life of an individual, a Society or a nation, represents an important milestone, and it is worthy of special mention. The years between 1900 and 1950 have been particularly weighty in the history of humanity. I will leave to others better qualified than myself the task of recording the glorious achievements of your Society during that period; however, it is my great privilege to offer to your Society on this occasion the congratulations of Canada. I do this all the more freely because your Society, on account of its aims and its influence, is entitled to the admiration of every Canadian. If there are degrees in the feelings of friendship which my country bears towards the United States, those whose ancestors are the same as ours, are nearer to us than any other group. Therefore, I bring you these greetings tonight on behalf of your brothers and friends in Canada.

The half century which will come to an end in a few days will have been one of the most eventful periods in the history of the world. Empires have crumbled like 'châteaux de cartes'; continents have been shaken to their foundations; civilizations which were considered to be eternally stable now have begun to doubt their solidity. Scientific discoveries have radically altered basic notions which were traditionally accepted as matter of fact. But it is no less true that the progress of science and the development of means of communication have given the world a unity and a feeling of solidarity which did not exist before our time.

Although the North American continent has known more security and peace than other parts of the world, we have not been strangers to the march of time. Another factor which has intensified our participation in the life of other continents is the growing influence of our two countries due largely to the growth of our populations and the exploitation of our natural

resources. The United States and Canada have more than doubled their respective populations. In the case of trade, our total trade in Canada in 1900 amounted to 380 million. Today it amounts to something close to 5 billion.

So far as its relation with the rest of the world is concerned, Canada was a colony of Great Britain in 1900. Today Canada is a sovereign nation playing a major role in the world, and her international influence is developing rapidly.

There is one aspect of the development of both our countries which is fundamentally different. We in Canada have gone through the colonial stage to that of sovereignty through a process of slow and progressive evolution, while you have become a sovereign nation following a decisive revolution.

It will be profitable for a moment or so to look into the different stages of this development of ours towards sovereignty. It is an evolution which can be understood only if the decisive events which led up to it are kept in mind.

Canada's participation in the first world war had demonstrated her capacity to play her role as an independent nation in the international field, and earned us the opportunity to participate in the subsequent deliberations determining the peace. As a member of the League of Nations, we had established and developed direct relations with other countries.

These external relations have contributed materially to the constitutional development of British countries and have led to the declaration, at the Imperial Conference of London in 1926, that all the autonomous dominions, which until then had been part of an international empire, were in fact equal in status in a British Commonwealth of Nations.

Since 1926 we have implemented the constitutional consequences of this decision. In 1931 the British Parliament adopted a law known as the Statute of Westminster whereby the decision of 1926 was consolidated and fully applied. At the beginning of the Second World War, in 1939, we gave the fullest proof of our national autonomy. In 1914, Canada entered the war more or less automatically because the United Kingdom was at war. In 1939, the decision to participate in the war was taken by the representatives of the Canadian people in their own parliament. Such a decision was taken because these men believed that it was in the interest of Canada to do so. They had the right to decide otherwise, had they thought that isolation was wise and practical.

It was also by an act of its own free will that Canada joined your own country in an express understanding of joint defence for both nations. You will remember that at Kingston, in 1939, President Roosevelt declared that the United States would be opposed to any attempt coming from any power which wished to extend its domination over Canadian soil. Mr. Mackenzie King declared that Canada would resist any country that would attempt to use Canadian soil as a base from which to attack the United States. Two years later in August, 1940, at one of the darkest hours of the Second World War, Messrs. Roosevelt and King signed the Ogdensburg Agreement, establishing a permanent committee of joint defence for the North American Continent.

The evolution of Canada as a sovereign nation has been well exemplified by the growth of our diplomatic service. The first fully diplomatic post was opened in 1927 in Washington. We now have thirty diplomatic missions in different parts of the world.

This year we added one-third of a million inhabitants to our population and a new province to our country when Newfoundland joined Canada. This union, the principle of which had been discussed ever since 1867, was consummated on April 1, last. It completes the natural and geographical limits of our country.

Internally we have also reached the last stage of our evolution towards absolute sovereignty. We have now decided that appeals to the Privy Council in London no longer need be made, and at present we are endeavoring to come to an understanding on a procedure whereby all future amendments to our Constitution will be made in Canada. Before such a procedure is adopted, however, we wish to establish precise and clear safeguards in favour of provincial rights and those of the minorities. We have a perfect right to adopt such measures but in order to exercise them ourselves at home, we wish to come to an understanding about the procedure whereby such rights as those mentioned above would be fully protected. I need not labour the importance of safeguarding such rights before an assembly of Franco-Americans.

You are well aware, indeed, that there are some aspects of our national life which are different from your own. I should like to be permitted to cite a few. There is, first of all, the fact that we do not exactly represent a facsimile of the great American melting pot. Canada is a nation based on the association of descendants of two great races living in equality. Those two races for a long time indeed were rivals and, at times, enemies. They spoke different languages, were attached to different forms of Christian heritage and ancestral traditions. Each was most anxious to maintain and develop its cultural heritage, but at the same time to participate in a common effort towards the material development of a country which extends its limits over a continent. We are solicitous in Canada that it shall be the aim of both to march hand in hand toward the common goal. In Canada, the association of two races has given our people customs and qualities which enable them to understand and to take into account the viewpoint of others and thus occasionally to play the role of mediator in international affairs at the United Nations. Thereby we work towards facilitating the understanding necessary to good relations between all peoples.

Our association with the Commonwealth and the fact that our national sovereignty is the result of a gradual evolution rather than revolution resulted in the maintenance by Canadians, at least in appearance, of closer relations with the European world than have Americans. In a certain way, Canada has been able to serve as a bridge between the old world and the new. That was illustrated in 1914 and again in 1939.

If we have maintained strong ties with Europe, it doesn't mean that we are Europeans. Those of you who have visited Canada know better than that. We are an American country and an American nation. We have the same characteristics, failings also perhaps but the same qualities and aspirations, the same confidence and even impetuosity native to the New World. Like the United States we sincerely wish for peace in the world. We are aware of our national resources and we have no aggressive designs. We should like to develop to the utmost our abundant resources and we believe that, in doing this, we can increase the standard of living of our citizens and contribute to the general advancement of humanity.

It is often said that Canada did not need a revolution to obtain independence. This is true, but one should not forget

that during the course of the first half of the century which will terminate in a few days, Canada has participated in two world wars, and it is on the battlefields of Europe while struggling for the independence of other countries that we have evolved our own. The thousands of young Canadians who sleep under the soil of Europe are the defenders of our liberty just as much as your young men who sleep their last sleep in the graveyard of Gettysburg. These wars have furnished glorious pages of American and Canadian history, but they were no less evils for humanity, evils and calamities even for the victorious side.

That is why Canada accepted with such eagerness the invitation of your Government to participate in the San Francisco United Nations conference, the invitation to try once again to create an organization which might prevent such evils and calamities from falling on future generations. That is why we have made the United Nations the cornerstone of our foreign policy. That is why, when that great body was, at least temporarily, found to be incapable of creating the feeling of security which your people and ours so fervently desire, we gave our full co-operation in the establishment of another powerful weapon for peace, the North Atlantic Pact.

I am sure that you hope, as we do in Canada, that this pact will have the double effect of warding off another war from those nations who are willing to undertake its obligations, and, of proving to all that international co-operation is fruitful according to the measure of its sincerity.

I told you earlier that among other reasons we wished to have an era of peace to develop, for the benefit of all, the natural resources of our country. In our own territory, in Canada we have at hand natural riches, the extent of which we have only recently discovered. From the Labrador to the Yukon, our frontier of settlement is rapidly moving northward. Our country is acquiring a new dimension. The "Great North" as we call it at home is a challenge to each and every Canadian. There lies an abundance of natural resources which will enrich not only the nation but also the sturdy individuals willing to accept this challenge. These adventurers of today will succeed to the best traditions of our early discoverers and the hardy pioneers who have made the Canadian nation what it is today. The frontier on this North American continent, has never been an obstacle, but rather a challenge. The call of the far away has never gone unanswered. Mid-twentieth century Canada then projects its glow into the future.

When I think of the future of my country visions of its youth come to my mind. During this last year I have had to travel a great deal; I have visited not only all the Canadian provinces, but I have stopped in hundreds of villages. Everywhere I have seen a youth with hopes as unfettered as the space in which it lives. This is the finest wealth of our nation. It is for these children of ours that we must build so that they may not be disappointed in the heritage which we will leave. We must make sure of the future of our children; we must protect them against subversive doctrines which might poison their minds; we must guarantee them the means to develop themselves in schools and universities of their own choice, according to their language and their creed; we must dig our own soil and discover the riches of the earth from which they will benefit; at the same time we must protect them against possible attack from without.

We are the inheritors of a country with limitless resources; we ourselves must add to this heritage. Our youth must be able to be proud of its country, proud of the place Canada

now holds in the world, proud of its traditions and customs, proud of its history and its future, and finally proud of its patrimony.

Providence has given me fourteen grandchildren; I have, therefore, learned a little of the art of being a grandfather. It is an art to which I always turn with joy when the duties of my office permit.

I should like to see them live in a better world than we, their elders, have known. I dream of a world in which they would develop without fear of men or their machines. An aeroplane should bring joy to them and not bombs; a scientific discovery should be something utilized for their profit, and not for their detriment. An idea should be fruitful and not a producer of hatred.

If our children ever come to live in such a universe - and it would be not at all merely a dream if all men of good will were to work for its establishment, - their prayer each night would be a hymn of thanks to the Creator their Master, the Prince of Peace. We realize however, that such a world can only come into being, if we can count on the good will of all.

We know that we have the good will of the United States. Today, your country has become the greatest power in the world. Geographically, Canada is larger than the United States, but we haven't even a tenth of your population, and our developed resources are proportionately only one sixteenth of yours. We are, therefore, a rather modest nation living in the shadow of a great power.

There was a time when it was believed that the United States ought to comprise all of North America. I need not remind you of certain enterprises of an historic sort during the War of Independence, which sought to persuade Canada and Nova Scotia to join with the colonies which were then fighting for their independence. Even in 1900 the absorption of Canada was a question which was still being freely discussed.

James Bryce has an interesting comment to make on this subject: "As far as the interests of the two peoples most directly involved is concerned, it can be said that for the moment the United States and Canada gained by a development following different types of political life and intellectual progress. Each of them can, by developing his own institutions, teach something to the other. Already there is too little variety on the American continent."

This wise advice given by James Bryce has been followed by our two peoples. This variety happily does exist on this continent today. The existence of Canada in North America is solidly based on the cordial relations which exist between your country and mine. You are very familiar with this subject, since you live it in your daily lives. Altogether you are the living proof of the excellent relations between our countries.

It is difficult for foreigners to understand these relations. Some believe that since we live next to a country as powerful as the United States independence is unknown to us. To them, we are but a northern extension of the United States, a pleasure and hunting ground for the tourist, an annex of Wall Street for economic purposes, and, all told, but a satellite. Canada would have a very short political life indeed were this ever to become true. We would have worked for half a century

to achieve our nationhood as a member of the British Commonwealth only to become a mere satellite of Washington. This confusion of the mind would seem to come perhaps in part from groups like yours strung all along our mutual frontier; the Franco-Americans to the south of the Province of Quebec, Canadian-American concentrations of population in more important centres such as Windsor and Detroit, or Vancouver and Seattle, or new Canadian and new American groups in the western provinces. Our common boundary is overlaid with harmony instead of being dotted with fortresses. As far as our good people are concerned, there is no frontier. There is only what they call in their own realistic way "the line".

This conception comes partly from the fact that in our two countries we have more or less the same standard of living, the same methods of work and ways to relax which are not dissimilar. These are but the external aspects of more profound ties which unite us. We do indeed favor the same ideal, an ideal which is deeply rooted in Christian civilization and which conditions our attitude when faced with daily problems as well as the collective difficulties which both our nations must face. Notwithstanding these resemblances, each of our two countries has deep respect for the national sovereignty of the other.

Since your country and mine has nothing to hide from the other, our citizens can go in what ever direction they choose without encountering any difficulty. You continue to speak French today on American soil. You keep the traditions and the faith you have carried with you, because this language, these traditions and this faith are working and thinking instruments more in line with your own personality. It is realized that your life will be richer if you keep this heritage and that you will find in it temporal as well as a spiritual profit. The French language, which we speak here, is very ancient in this part of the world. Civilization was brought to the shores of the St. Lawrence as well as to the shores of the Mississippi by means of the French language. In the cultural sphere you belong to one of the most lively and fruitful traditions of all time.

In the Christian order, we are the heirs of the middle ages, of the cathedral builders, of the uneasiness of Pascal, and also of the great modern pilgrimages. We wish to maintain this rich heritage and to see it bear fruit. With this point in view, together with us you have a mission to fulfil on the American continent. Unless this heritage is utilized it will disappear. Up to the present time I would say, using an expression from the economists vocabulary, that we have been mainly consumers of French culture. Because of this we have been able to survive, but a passive culture lacks vitality; it can become stagnant. A culture which produces, a culture which illuminates has gone beyond the stage of survival. It convinces. The respect which is given to a minority is proportionate with the riches it gives to a nation. A minority which would live a marginal life within the society where it is established would not be fully effective; but a minority which adds its original spirit and its own culture to the life-blood of the society in which it lives, enriches the common heritage. I see that this is the view of your society because in your manifesto, published in 1949 one can read that "You fully accept the responsibilities and duties of American citizenship together with its advantages and its benefits."

This patriotism, together with your veneration of ancestral traditions is made easy on American soil where there is the same conception of human liberty, the same respect for human beings, where institutions are based on these concepts and where power is not considered by the state to be an end but only a means to protect the liberties of its citizens.

Can one find a more eloquent and more convincing proof of this than in seeing me tonight. The Prime Minister of one country, having received an invitation from the citizens of another country, proceeding here freely to speak to this group without having to consult your government and without any restrictions or difficulty.

And what is more extraordinary is the fact that I am here to give a talk to a group of Americans in a language which is not the current one, a language which is not that of the majority of the American people, which is not even the language of the majority of the people of my own country, but a language which we are free to use in our two countries, because our two nations respect liberty, because both our nations realize that a nation which permits the free development of individuality and the growth of culture, will finally become more civilized and stronger than these nations where the individual is merely the instrument of the state.

The object of my talk tonight was primarily to extend greetings from a kindred group in Canada, but I have also felt that I should emphasize our joint heritage of freedom on this continent.

May it always be so, and may you merit and receive for many years felicitations and greetings as sincere as those which I bring to you tonight.

s/A
