

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES



INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 48/42

"CANADIAN-UNITED STATES CO-OPERATION -
A LESSON OF PEACE TO ALL NATIONS"

An address by Hon. Brooke Claxton, Minister of National Defence, at the unveiling of a Plaque at Ogdensburg, N.Y., August 17, 1948, in Commemoration of the Meeting of Franklin D. Roosevelt, President of the United States, and Right Hon. W. L. Mackenzie King, Prime Minister of Canada, August 17, 1940.

Most of the great battlefields have their monuments. If it is true that "Peace hath her victories no less renown'd than war" then her major advances should be commemorated with equal, yes with even brighter glory. The plaque which will shortly be dedicated commemorates a momentous meeting of two friends, Franklin D. Roosevelt, President of the United States, and the Right Hon. William Lyon Mackenzie King, Prime Minister of Canada.

Our Prime Minister asked me to express his warm appreciation of the invitation to be at this ceremony and his regret that he was unable to be here. Mr. Mackenzie King is particularly happy that there is being established here at Ogdensburg a permanent record of what he has always regarded as one of the great moments, alike in his personal friendship with the late Franklin Roosevelt and in Canada's friendship with the United States.

I regard it as a great honour to be invited to take part in this ceremony and to be associated in it with your distinguished Secretary of Defence, the Hon. James Forrestal. During the war he gave great service to his country and the allied cause and now I doubt if anyone anywhere is carrying heavier or more important responsibilities.

Eight years ago today, two great leaders, your President and our Prime Minister met here in the black midnight of the war more than a year before Pearl Harbour and when the nations of the British Commonwealth alone withstood the enemy. The outcome was uncertain. Without United States aid the Axis powers might be soon attacking our shores. At the President's invitation Mr. King motored down from Ottawa and in the President's car standing on the siding here, these two old friends sat late into the night discussing the situation and what should be done to meet it.

The next day, after attending church, they continued the discussion and drafted what has since become known as the Ogdensburg Agreement. The agreement or declaration consisted of a little more than a hundred words, and it was announced at once to the press. The agreement established the Permanent Joint Board on Defence "to consider in the broad sense the defence of the north half of the Western Hemisphere". Within two days the Board was set up and it has since worked in our common interest quietly and effectively.

Henry L. Stimson, then Secretary of War, came up for part of this meeting and recorded in his diary that he told the others: "I felt that it was very possibly the turning point in the tide of the war, and that from now on we could hope for better things". As so often, he proved to be completely right. Moreover, the Ogdensburg arrangement was subsequently repeated many times in the pattern of Allied organization which carried us to victory.

This agreement showed what could be achieved by free peoples, and this memorial is a warrant for our determination to persevere together in the accomplishment of great common ends - it stands as a reminder of two great men who laboured in the cause of liberty.

Their achievements were possible because the friendship and trust between them reflected the friendship and trust between the peoples of the United States and Canada.

The Agreement was drafted, as I said, in a railway car. History has known other famous railway cars: The German surrender in 1918 was in a railway carriage; the short-lived German triumph of 1940 was, you will remember, celebrated in the same carriage. There was the closed carriage which bore Lenin across Europe to be injected into the Russian chaos in 1918.

In those cases the railway carriage was the scene of conquest, oppression and revolution. But at Ogdensburg if the stage setting was similar, the drama was very different. Here in a brief conference, the leaders of two nations drafted not a treaty, not an ultimatum, but something far more typically North American - a press release. Could such an agreement have been made by a press release between any other two countries in the world?

But that press release was as solemn a document as any agreement sealed by wax or ratified by formal resolution. For its language was the language of the spirit of two peoples. Its seal was the will and consent of free men, the united support of a whole continent.

The people of your part of the United States have always had particularly close relations with the people of Canada. It was exactly right that the foundations of the structure of joint defence should have been laid over here, and that over there, in Canada, the first formal recognition of United States and Canadian interest in their common defence should have been made by President Roosevelt at Kingston and by our Prime Minister at Woodbridge, Ontario, in August 1938. Two years later, in August 1940, when the Nazis had over-run most of Europe, the willing and friendly hands of the same two men drafted the agreement which we are commemorating today.

Our two countries had showed the way to co-operation long before this. In Jay's Treaty of Amity and Friendship of 1794, the following words appear:

"This (treaty) is intended to
promote a disposition favourable to
friendship and Good Neighbourhood."

So far as I know, that was the first time the phrase "Good Neighbour" was used by one nation of another. What two countries would better have begun a good policy?

Then in 1817 the Rush-Bagot Agreement limited the total armament on the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence, as well as Lake Champlain, to six small, lightly armed vessels. This must be one of the first and perhaps the only effective disarmament programme between two countries in all

history. The Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909 provided for the International Joint Commission of three representatives of each country to deal with all boundary disputes between the two nations. In setting up the Permanent Joint Board on Defence, your President and our Prime Minister were thinking of the composition and successful operation of that Commission. Since its inception all differences arising along the 5,655 miles of frontier have been satisfactorily and amicably settled.

Similarly, under the Permanent Joint Board all matters relating to our common defence have been satisfactorily dealt with.

A Canadian friend of mine who was broadcasting to the United States on the fourth of July, once told me that he afterward received a letter from San Francisco which he will never forget. The writer, after describing the scene as the sun was setting in the Golden Gate of that famous city, ended with these words: "In the geography of the map, the distance between San Francisco and Montreal is many hundreds of miles. In the geography of the human heart the distance is too small to be measured."

Few people on either side of the boundary realize how close our relations have been. Our soldiers fought side by side in comradeship and our industrialists worked together as a team. We virtually pooled our economic resources in consequence of another agreement President Roosevelt and our Prime Minister made at Hyde Park in April, 1941. We shipped you minerals, electrical equipment, aeroplane frames, shells and explosives; you shipped us steel and coal and oil and the other things we needed, and we each paid for them in cash. Alone among the Allies we were able to get along without loans or lend lease assistance. Like you we contributed largely to the pool of the Allied effort.

Canada and the United States are each other's best customer, each has more money invested in its neighbour than in any other country. We respect each other's word, and we both have met and will meet all our obligations.

We are almost the only countries which base their hope for progress and a better life for their citizens on a system in which enterprise is free..... and our standards of living are the highest in the world.

The ties that bind our two peoples are more than material. We share a common political heritage and in the development of our democratic system much of our way has been along a common road.

Things were not always as they are today. More readily than many other cities, Ogdensburg can recall the bad as well as the good: You have had more of both. This district was the scene of victories and defeats in the wars of the past. You will remember that a large number of the early settlers of Canada were members of the thirteen colonies who left the prosperity they had won in your part of the New World for a still newer world of wilderness and hardship. The memories of what this exodus meant for them were slow to die. We fought openly in 1812; controversies arose over the boundaries of Maine and Alaska, the Rebellion of 1837 the Fenian raids of the sixties, over reciprocity and over trade barriers that obdurately stood intact until 1935.

These old difficulties are not mentioned to open old wounds - at worst they are nothing but honourable scars - but to recall that the relationship of today did not come about inevitably and without effort; it was not stumbled on. Our good relations have been anxiously and patiently striven for by two sensible peoples, each working out its destiny in a

spirit of tolerance and in the air of freedom. Does anyone think that this could have been done by governments alone? Does anyone imagine that this springs merely from our having a common language or a common frontier? Does anyone believe that a people who were the ignorant instruments of the ambition of their leaders could achieve so much in understanding? Does anyone think that two dictatorships could ever have accomplished this tremendous, unique, feat? Only the free can be friends.

Lincoln once asked "Why should there not be a patient confidence in the ultimate justice of the people. Is there any better or equal hope in the world?" And is there any better hope for the world than that other nations should learn from our two peoples how to become "Good Neighbours"?

This spirit of neighbourliness is expressed and stimulated in organizations like International Kiwanis. You have followed the practice of erecting memorials along the border with the inscription on each, "This unfortified boundary line between Canada and the United States of America should quicken the remembrance of more than a century-old friendship between these two countries, a lesson of peace to all nations". Today on the banks of the St. Lawrence you are placing a monument to a great forward step in the achievement of understanding and co-operation between our countries.

I am sure that I express your feelings as well as ours when I say that we must never be complacent or superior about our happy situation and our good relations on this continent. The community to which we, on both sides of the border, all belong is based on a profound belief in the principles of political freedom, tolerance and honest friendship; we must never forget that our way of life was made possible by great natural resources and geographical advantages, and we must never forget that all that we prize was earned by hard work. The one sure way of losing our heritage is to begin to think that peace, security, progress, prosperity or happiness are either automatic or easy. These are all different facets of liberty, and the fight for freedom has to be won over again each day so long as life lasts, for we on this continent believe that there can be no life without liberty.

On many occasions in history no doubt, kings have met on frontiers to exchange social calls and dispense dynastic courtesies with one another. The leaders of neighbouring peoples have at such places spoken words of temporary healing in the language of diplomacy. But I venture to believe that this is the first occasion when two Ministers of Defence (not Ministers of War, mark you) have met together on an unarmed frontier to rededicate their nations to the great cause of mutual peace.

I don't imagine that any of us will be deterred by fulminations by the propagandists of other countries. They charged me with being a tool of Wall Street. Well, I haven't got my payment yet, and never will because it will never be offered and never be taken.

Canada and the United States will continue to work together without thought of aggression, but strong in the determination that neither failure from within nor attack from without shall cause either of us to lose the right to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness".

So we work together. What better reason could there be?

The Permanent Joint Board worked successfully during the war. Mr. Mackenzie King tells me that the word "Permanent" was used deliberately and after consideration. It seemed sensible that something which had worked so well in our common interests during the war should work equally well in the maintenance of our security. On February 12, 1947, the extension of the existence of the Board was formally recognized in joint declarations by the

two governments made simultaneously at Washington and at Ottawa. I am sure that your Secretary of Defence would tell you as I do that the arrangements are working to the satisfaction and advantage of both countries.

One of the speakers in the Confederation debates said that the impending confederation of Canada was a union not of parchment but of men's hearts and minds. The British Commonwealth today, of which the pattern has largely been molded by Canadian example, is in itself a union, not of parchment but of men's hearts and minds. Within such a union of spiritual forces there is room for the fullest co-operation between the United States, Canada and all nations who love freedom and are prepared to defend it.

The progress of human nature is often challenged in a world which threatens the extinction of civilization. We have shown that the sort of relationship which must exist between nations if they are to survive, is possible and practical. I often wish the countries of the world could see how the United States and Canada work out their disputes. I have heard newspaper men complain that there is seldom a story in Canadian-United States relationship. We don't know the strife, the bitterness and the misunderstanding which today make the headlines all over the world. Yet we have a story to tell which must be heard. A man who robs his neighbour is more likely to make the papers than the man who lends his neighbour his lawn mower. But the world is inclined to forget what we know - that the only sort of neighbours who prosper are those who seek to understand each other, and in so doing, strive to help and not to hinder.

There was a time when a country had no neighbours except those on its borders. Today distance has shrunk and almost every country in the world has become our neighbour. There are good neighbours and bad neighbours. We are two good neighbours who have sensibly determined to work together to preserve our freedom. We have other good neighbours who also fought for their freedom, which is again in jeopardy, and freedom, let us not forget, is indivisible. If it is sensible to work with one good neighbour, why not with the rest? Recognizing this, the United States and Canada have done all they can to assist the free nations of Europe to regain their moral and economic vigour.

Even before the war was over, Canada was helping with Mutual Aid and export credits. Since then we have made loans to the United Kingdom and other countries even greater in proportion than your own. But the world has never known such a tremendous gesture of good neighbourliness as the Economic Co-operation Administration. With such aid, and by virtue of their own determined efforts, we must be sure that the countries of Europe become once again strong and good neighbours. And we can strengthen their faith by demonstrating our willingness to share with them the burden of security won by the courage and sacrifice of many free peoples.

What Mr. Roosevelt and Mr. King did at Ogdensburg had far greater significance than the joint defence of North America. What the Ogdensburg Agreement symbolizes in friendship and co-operation between Canada and the United States should point the way to that larger co-operation between nations on which alike depend the hope of peace and the promise of happiness to mankind.

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