

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES



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An address by the Governor General, His Excellency the Right Honourable Vincent Massey, to the Rotary Club, St. John's Newfoundland, August 22, 1955.

... I am delighted to find myself once again in this hospitable island and this time I have not come simply to slip into St. John's and out again. I am going to the outports -- a word full of fascinating implications for a Canadian from the interior of our country. I am going to the outports. I am going to see the borders of this great land and the deep fiords which ring its coast where, as an English visitor says "almost anywhere you could safely tie the 'Queen Elizabeth' to a tree and go ashore for a beer"! When I return I hope to have a clearer, a more vivid picture of this tenth Province welcomed so gladly by Canadians as the youngest and the oldest part of Canada. And I am hoping to learn perhaps what Newfoundlanders think of continental Canada as a new and I fear a rather noisy addition to the oldest colony in the Empire. You are older than we. In joining yourselves to us you have increased our age as well as our stature. And you have noble traditions, a special and characteristic way of life, a way that belongs to the island and to the ocean, to the stern ways of the sea rather than to the turbulent expansionism of the continental land mass on which for so long you quietly and not uncourteously turned your back.

You doubtless feel that your own ways are finer and better. Better at least for you, and not to be boiled down in the continental melting pot. I hope you do feel this. I hope you will keep your good old ways, along with your good manners, your good speech and your good names. And, may I say, in keeping them you will not only be good Newfoundlanders; you will be good Canadians. Canada is not a continental melting pot. Canada is an association of peoples who have, and cherish, great differences but who work together because they can respect themselves and each other.

I have said that Newfoundland is marked by strong individual qualities. There are, of course, various parts of Canada which possess such characteristics -- regional communities in which people have much in common in their local history, the occupations they pursue and the ambitions they share. Canada is so large that often these regions are widely separated, not only in miles but in mutual knowledge. As I thread my way through our intricate and absorbing national pattern -- I have travelled about 80,000 miles in the last three years -- I have got to know a number of these regional communities with their strong characteristics and special loyalties. One of the duties of my post, I believe, is to tell people in one part of our country something about what their fellow-citizens are doing elsewhere and perhaps far away.

The regions I am thinking of are scattered across Canada and are very diverse. In British Columbia, for example, there is the Okanagan Valley -- a lake surrounded by apple orchards guarded by sentinel mountains. Here is a valley, an entity where communities are linked together by the pursuit of the same industry -- fruit-growing. To those who live there, the Okanagan is "the valley" and the beauty and prosperity of the area explain their loyalty to it. Of course, there are other parts of Canada which are called "the valley". There is the Annapolis Valley in Nova Scotia; the Saint John Valley in New Brunswick and a lot of other valleys which are rightly "the valley" to the people who live there.

On the East Coast is another region with communal traditions and characteristics which are also quite unique. Cape Breton was at one time administratively separate from the rest of Nova Scotia and it still feels apart, for there are to be found there a series of towns and districts united with all the force of an unshakeable Scottish tradition and showing clearly, and I hope permanently, all the finest qualities of Scottish life in a Canadian setting. The people of Cape Breton welcome the great Causeway which now links them with the mainland, but they trust that easier communications will not mean the weakening of the special characteristics which always gave their community its strong individuality.

Let me mention another such region, this time in the Province of Quebec -- the country around Lake St. John with prosperous towns like Chicoutimi, Roberval and Jonquiere. Here again, a lake is the central feature of the area. Here again the population has grown apace in the last few years and with the ancient foundations on which all communities in Quebec are built, there is a new, pioneering spirit. The fact that the people around Lake St. John regard themselves as a community, is illustrated by the picturesque name which they have been given - "the Kingdom of the Saguenay" - a tribute to the great river which flows out of Lake St. John.

Last Spring I paid two visits to another part of Quebec - south of the St. Lawrence, the Eastern Townships, a region with its own tradition and character. There one finds a happy marriage of expanding industry and prosperous agriculture. There, too, is to be found close collaboration between people of French and English origin, working together against an historic background of great interest.

There is another Canadian community I cannot help saying something about. It is not small -- it is seven or eight hundred miles deep -- that is, from north to south and over twice as wide, and it is called by the simple phrase "the North". I have been only just inside it, but I saw enough when I was "north of sixty" the winter before last, to realize that although there are only a few thousand people in this immense area, they are all neighbours, living the same life with its combination of hardships and rewards. When you use the phrases "coming in" and "going out", as our northern friends do when they enter or leave that vast region, you know there must be something there which gives it a real unity.

The question is sometimes asked, whether it is a strength or weakness to have regions in a country which are so "different". I would say immediately, that our strength would, of course, be impaired if the various parts of Canada

did not have common basic beliefs, certain links and bonds which bring us together and give us our Canadian characteristics and loyalties. I think we have shown both in peace and war how strong these bonds are. But there is, on the other hand, as we all know well, great strength in diversity. In Canada, we have proved it.

How colourless it would be if the world was inhabited by people who had the same tastes, talked the same language, and more frightening still -- thought the same way. We in Canada have learned to respect this truth. As newcomers arrive from other lands we invite them to become citizens when they qualify, and to assume the duties of citizenship, but we are happy to have them make their individual contributions to Canadian life through the culture they bring with them. Our aim is not standardization, sameness. As I have already suggested, our unity is not that of the melting pot. It is based on a recognition and harmonization of differences. ..

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