



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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No. 55/8 SOME ASPECTS OF CANADIAN-AMERICAN RELATIONS

An address by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. L.B. Pearson, to the Canadian Club, Toronto, March 14, 1955.

Almost exactly four years ago, speaking in Toronto, I gave my view that the days of relatively easy and automatic relations with the United States were over. I say a good many things in the course of a year, in Parliament and out of Parliament. It is part of my duty, as I see it, to be ready to discuss with my fellow-Canadians situations in which I have some measure of responsibility for acting on their behalf. So I have to do a fair amount of talking, and sometimes what I say finds its way into the newspapers. One gets used to that, but I was somewhat surprised at the amount of attention which that particular statement, about the end of relatively easy and automatic relations with our neighbours, got in the press, particularly the American press, which is not normally unduly interested in what Canadians say. I was even more astonished at the extent to which it was misinterpreted.

These misinterpretations illustrate, I suppose, the perils of trying to put in a few sentences, if you happen to be a Foreign Minister, your view of relations with another country, without fairly exhaustive illustrations to show not only what you mean, but why you mean it, and perhaps, too, what you don't mean. Or perhaps possibly they illustrate rather the difficulties and perils of being a newspaper reporter or editor. In any case, it occurred to me that it might be interesting if I re-examined the suggestion I put forward to you four years ago, that the days of relatively - and I stress relatively, because they were never absolutely - easy and automatic relations with the United States are over. This view was, I think, true then and is still true now; not because our relations are less friendly or close than they used to be; but, on the contrary, because they are closer than ever; and with a fundamental friendliness which the occasional difference may temporarily ruffle but doesn't remove. We should be more concerned even than before about maintaining and strengthening this friendliness, both because in the dangerous world of today it is more necessary than ever, and because it is bound to be subjected to new situations - new tests.

The starting point in our relations with the people and government of the United States is, of course, the fact that we are neighbours. But though this is the first word, it is very far from the last. Neighbourhood,

in itself, is merely a fact; good neighbourhood is an achievement. Canadians and Americans have, of course, not always been good neighbours. In the early 19th century we even had some fighting, the result of which usually depends on which history books you read. For most of that century, I think it is true to say, Canadians, making up the smaller and weaker society, feared their powerful and exuberant neighbour. But thanks to common sense and decency on both sides, to generosity and vision by both peoples, good neighbourliness was achieved long ago, and has been maintained pretty consistently since. It is of first importance to keep it that way without forfeiting in any way our right - and our duty - to maintain and express our Canadian point of view on issues as they arise.

There are two kinds of good neighbourly relations, however, and only one should I think, be called easy or automatic. Take, for example, the situation of two farmers who, with their families, farm neighbouring sections. Their relations are excellent, and they are close friends. Each minds his own business and respects the other's. They often visit each other, and their children intermarry. They help each other when the occasion arises, and occasionally cooperate in such things as building a common fence between two fields. Problems are few, and easily settled.

Suppose, however, that these two neighbours decide that the situation called for common enterprises, such as developing a joint irrigation system, or setting up a school. This means that their relations become even closer. It does not mean a slackening in their friendship. On the contrary, it is precisely because they are friends that such co-operative enterprises are possible. But it does mean that they will have a great many new problems on which they must work out agreements, reconciling separate interests, compromising, harmonising, and talking things over to foresee and forestall difficulties or resentments. It does not necessarily mean rifts. But it does mean that they must now discuss together frankly a good many topics on which each could previously afford different and even divergent views.

Now that they are closer, such relations, far from being easy and automatic, call for more alert attention; for greater care and consideration, on both sides. As the two countries move into new situations, they can less than ever afford to take each other for granted; or to ignore each other's problems and the necessity for solving them, often in different ways. With our own Canadian institutions, our own constitutional, legal, and political forms, practices and traditions, we sometimes boast in this country of the fact that we are different from - distinct from (occasionally we interpret those words to mean superior to) our neighbour.

If this is so, it is increasingly important for us to recognize, not only the greater burdens borne by the United States, but also the fact that their governmental mechanism and method for dealing with them is as different from ours as is, say, that of France. The very similarities of our ways of life, however, make it difficult at times for us to appreciate these differences; for instance, that a Congress is not a Parliament, a President not a Governor General, and Washington not Ottawa.

Recognition and understanding of these differences will help us work out the necessary adjustments to new situations which are developing out of our increasing interdependence. We have to make these adjustments in a way which will recognize on the one hand the terrific responsibilities of the United States and the necessity of maintaining unity in our coalition, and, on the other, that Canada is a free and full member of that coalition, with responsibilities of her own and with the obligation to adopt and express a Canadian point of view when that is called for.

We will need to show sound common sense, mature judgment and understanding of our long-term interests to ensure that this new and complex relationship between two North American powers, one of which is the bulwark of the free world, and both of which occupy a continent now vulnerable to devastating attack, will consolidate and strengthen rather than weaken our good neighbourhood.

This increasing interdependence is not, of course, peculiar to the United States and Canada. It is happening between nations and groups of nations all over the world, and it means a corresponding enlargement in the responsibility of those branches and agencies of government charged with diplomatic negotiations, and a country's external relations. Canadian-American relations is only one of innumerable examples which illustrate this increasing interaction, this growing dependence of each on all; a dependence greatly increased and speeded up by the most far-reaching technological revolution in human history.

One field in which Canadians and Americans are co-operating more closely is the frontier where we face new problems. In most parts of the world the frontier is simply a boundary line between two countries. On this continent we have changed that; even altered the very meaning of the word. For us, the frontier is not a barrier dividing two countries, but the advancing edge of man's development. It means how far we have got to date.

True, in the other sense of the word, frontier, our southern border has its own problems; and its own triumphs. That 4,000 miles of boundary to which so many "unguarded" references are made, is one which we like to think of, not as a barrier that divides, but a line which unites. Some 140,000 persons, on the average, cross it every day, not aware that they have done anything very significant. Surely this is as it should be. But this achievement was not easy or automatic. One of the less pleasant features of the modern world is a tendency, very marked in many regions, for governments to put increasing difficulties in the way of free movement between countries. There are iron curtains and bamboo curtains and curtains of red tape. The tendency to red tape and some limitation in personal movement may be understandable enough, for there is a real threat of subversion through infiltration. Although their power and ubiquity are often over-stressed, there are people who move across boundaries and would destroy democratic institutions and betray free societies if we allowed them to. In these circumstances, it is natural enough that governments should take reasonable care to prevent

the entry of such persons. But it would be a tragic loss to freedom and to our good neighbourhood if, in the interest of such security, the freedom of movement for the vast majority of Canadians and Americans into other parts of the continent which we share together, were sacrificed or made more difficult. That it has not been sacrificed has not come about automatically, but through the good sense of governments and peoples on both sides.

But how about our other boundary, our last frontier, the North? This brings up the question of continental defence, and here, I can assure you, there are Canadian-American problems aplenty, and they will increase. In this connection it is useful to remind ourselves how things have changed, and are changing, in the field of defence, so far as Canadian-American relations are concerned. Twice in this century Canada has been involved in a major war, a life and death struggle, for periods of two years or more before our American neighbours came in. Today, I think that the neutrality of either of us, if the other were engaged in a major war in which its very existence were at stake, would be unthinkable. That is a tremendous change, and one which must affect all our policies and relations with the United States.

Our position in this regard is something that we should never forget when we say, and correctly, that certain United States commitments, those, for instance, covering help to Chiang Kai-shek in Formosa and certain Chinese coastal islands, have not been accepted by us. But that is not the same thing as saying that they may not involve us. And it is certainly not the same as saying that they do not concern us.

There is a difference in these matters between legal commitment and political concern. That is why we and other friendly countries at times find it necessary to state our views clearly and frankly, confidentially through government channels, publicly through Parliamentary and other channels, on matters which, in a strict legal sense, may not be our concern, but which are most assuredly our concern in every other way. In Canada, our co-ordinated and inter-related continental defence arrangements with the United States would alone make such concern inevitable - and special.

One of the new factors in this defence field, and one of growing importance, is that North America itself and its main centre of population and industry are, for the first time, vulnerable to direct and devastating attack by an enemy. It is, therefore, the course of prudence for us to try to deter such an attack, by building defences against it - diplomatic and military. In each case these defences must be collective and co-operative. Obviously, continental defences are matters of common effort and concern. On the military side, the resources needed for such things as early warning lines and air defence installations to give the greatest practicable safety to our two peoples, and to maintain the deterrent effect of certain and massive retaliation, may involve substantial economic effort and the stationing of increased forces in Canada; especially air forces. This is a joint United States-Canadian problem - indeed it is also a NATO problem - and can best be solved by joint and agreed action of the two NATO members from this continent. That .

therefore, is how we are tackling it. But there is nothing easy or automatic about it. It is difficult and complicated. But this does not, of course, mean that Canada would not have still greater problems, indeed insoluble problems, in trying to provide defences in our half of this continent if we did not have the Americans to cooperate with us in the enterprise.

There are also difficult and complex problems in our economic relations with the United States. What we need to remember here is that it is largely because there is more trade between us than between any other two countries, that there are so many problems. Our object should be not to stop that trade by restrictions, but rather to solve the problems.

That is not easy. With the growth of our own economy and with the increasing variety of our production the points of contact and of competition and friction have multiplied many times over during the past few decades. Our relations have also become much more complex as a result of the growth and the development of both countries. This trend is not regrettable. It is inevitable and desirable. It does mean, however, that economic relations between us will require even closer and more continuous attention and understanding if the progress of both countries is not to be retarded and if friendly relations between us generally are to be strengthened.

We seek no special favours from the United States for our trade. Quite apart from any political implications, a narrow continental approach would not resolve our problems. It would merely ignore most of them and would aggravate many of them.

The fact that we are on the same continent has, of course, a good deal of significance for the commercial policies of both countries. One of its important consequences is, I think, that it reduces the risk that in an emergency essential goods and materials will not be available if their development is encouraged by trade in normal times. This reinforces the case for the greatest possible and freest possible trade between us. It weakens the strategic and security argument for artificially protecting domestic industries, since there are known to be economic, adequate and secure sources for so many goods and materials nearby.

This domestic security argument was carried to extreme lengths the other day in a brief which I understand lead pencil manufacturers in the United States solemnly presented justifying protection on the ground of the "strategic essentiality" of their product. I fear that technological advances in methods of producing innumerable papers in Government offices or in the Armed Forces may already have detracted somewhat from their case.

More important - and more disturbing to us - are the arguments which have been made on strategic, as well as other grounds, for protecting - by tariffs, quotas and other devices - the producers of commodities which Canada is able to sell competitively, such as agricultural products, fish, metals and minerals, and now oil.

I must say that I was puzzled to learn the other day of certain proposals that imports of crude oil into the United States should be restricted on defence grounds. When such large supplies are becoming available in Canada in locations connected with refining facilities in the United States, and when it would seem prudent not to discourage further exploration and development of these oil resources, this suggestion is one which is particularly difficult to understand. Not only would such a proposition, if implemented, tend to disrupt the economic development of this continent's oil resources, but it seems entirely to overlook the fact that American oil exports to Canada are already far greater than our exports to the United States. That is not, therefore, the kind of proposition which helps to make the course of our economic relationships easier.

I do not underestimate the difficulties of carrying through commercial policies or maintaining economic conditions which will be conducive to good relations between us. We must realize how serious it would be, however, if those important relationships were to be impaired. It is surely worthwhile for both our countries to make a special effort to avoid actions which would have such deplorable consequences.

No doubt problems will arise in our economic relations in the future and some of them may be of quite a serious character. We shall be best prepared to handle such situations with good sense if we and our neighbours have always in mind that we shall be living together for a long time. We shall live most satisfactorily and with a minimum of friction if we are steadily aware of the growing interdependence between ourselves and within the community of the free world.

What I have said about defence and trade alone will, I hope, indicate that in my view relations between our two countries will not be "easy and automatic", but that they will be increasingly complex and important; and they must remain close and friendly.

The fortunes of both our countries are interdependent. But the dependence of Canada on the United States is far greater than the reverse. That is a fact which we must accept even if, at times, it makes us feel uncomfortable.

- This does not mean that we should not stoutly maintain and frankly express our own views on all matters of interest or concern to us. It does not mean that we should not do our best to alter American policy in matters which affect us when we think that policy is wrong. Above all, it does not mean that we should not use every legitimate means to protect Canadian interests, when they are damaged or threatened by American policy. "Canada first" may be good policy as well as a good slogan, but there is nothing how to be said for "Canada only" or "Canada apart from its friends and allies". Above all, let us give no countenance to the idea, so sedulously cultivated by the enemies of freedom and the slaves and dupes of Communism, that Canada can live and grow, apart from and without the friendliest relations with its great neighbour, which is also the strongest bulwark of our common defence against those aggressive despotisms which are today the greatest threat to peace.

In our differences with the United States, we Canadians have to remember two things.

One, that in any major war we must be on the same side.

Two, that in any major economic conflict, we would suffer more than they would by a policy of retaliation.

The moral of this is not that we should be less Canadian, but that we should do everything we possibly can to ensure that Canada's influence and Canada's policy, especially in its relations with the United States, will be directed toward the avoidance of conflict - political and economic. The same, of course, applies to the United States of America.

Looking back, then, after four years, I am confirmed in my view that the days of relatively easy and automatic relations between our two countries are over.

But I am also more firmly of the view than ever that those relations are bound to become closer and more important to both countries than ever before.

To do what it can to ensure that this development will take place in friendship, and in mutual respect and understanding, is the most important problem of Canadian foreign policy today.

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