

GOVERNMENT
OF CANADA

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
OTTAWA - CANADA

No 55/40 THE PAST TWENTY YEARS IN CANADA.

Speech by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Mr. J.W. Pickersgill, to the Society of New York, November 7, 1955.

Every Canadian who is invited to make a speech in the United States is tempted to tell the Americans how to run their country or how to treat the rest of the world.

That is a temptation I have had no difficulty in resisting.

But a member of the Canadian Government has a more difficult temptation to resist, and that is the temptation to tell the Americans how to treat Canada and Canadians.

I am not going to try that either: because I do not flatter myself such a lecture would be heeded, even if it found any listeners, and, in any case, I am sure the Canadian Society of New York wants a Canadian to talk to them about Canada.

The usual practice, in these times, is to talk about the future of Canada and to forecast the growth and development of our country.

But that theme does not even tempt me, because I have always felt it was wiser for public men to avoid the role of prophet and any forecast of the future of Canada would inevitably involve forecasts of future population.

Now I happen to be the Minister of Immigration and I have, therefore, double reason to be cautious in making forecasts about population which are quite certain not to turn out according to our anticipations.

For me it is far safer to talk about the past and, as one who spent eight years of his life as a professional historian, I have more qualifications to talk about what has happened than what is going to happen.

What I thought I would do was to remind you of some of the ways Canada has changed in the past twenty years.

I say remind you - because I have no sensational revelations to make.

We all know the face of Canada has changed since the days before the Second World War; but we don't always stop to measure the rate or the character of the change.

That is what, in a very sketchy fashion, I am going to attempt this evening.

The first and most obvious change in the face of Canada, and I happen to think it is also the most important change in the past twenty years, was the actual increase in the geographical area of the country which was made at midnight on March 31, 1949.

That change was the union of Newfoundland with Canada.

The Union of Newfoundland with Canada marked the completion of the work of the Fathers of Confederation.

The province of Newfoundland is more than the island of Newfoundland.

It also includes the vast territory of Labrador on the North American mainland.

The union of 1949 increased our Canadian territory by four per cent.

As long ago as 1886, Sir John Macdonald, the then Prime Minister of Canada, said that Newfoundland "has the key to our front door".

There is no question that the completion of Confederation in 1949 gave Canadians a feeling that our country has at last reached its full dimensions.

The union also gave us a new conception of our place in world strategy, both in peace and in possible war.

We are only beginning to discover the extent of the resources of this tenth province of Canada, much of which was still unexplored in 1949.

But what has already been uncovered is helping to transform the Canadian economy by making Canada a major source of iron ore in the free world.

But for Canada as a nation, what was even more significant was the addition, at one stroke, of a third of a million new citizens.

These new Canadian citizens in Newfoundland were already experienced in the ways of the new world; they were not really strangers to Canada.

Moreover, Newfoundland has a higher birth-rate and, now, also, a lower death-rate than any other Canadian province.

For a country that needs people, there could be no greater asset than this large addition of splendid new citizens.

The population of Canada in mid 1935 was well below eleven millions; in mid 1955 it was estimated at more than fifteen and a half millions.

It is safe to say that our population has increased nearly forty-five per cent in the past twenty years.

The greater part of this increase can be attributed to the natural growth in the none older provinces and the addition of Newfoundland.

Immigration has, however, made a considerable contribution both in numbers and in quality to our total population; particularly in the last decade.

About a million and a quarter immigrants have entered Canada since the Second World War, and it is a conservative estimate to say that one person in every fifteen in Canada today is either a post-war immigrant or the child of a post-war immigrant.

In places where immigration has been concentrated, such as greater Toronto, this proportion may be as high as one in eight.

About a third of the post-war immigrants to Canada have come from Great Britain.

In the case of British immigrants, there is, of course, no difficulty at all about their rapid integration into the life of Canada.

The overwhelming majority of the post-war immigrants, regardless of where they have come from, have come to Canada with more education and a wider variety of skills or professional qualifications than was usual among immigrants in earlier periods, and they have found it correspondingly easier to fit into our Canadian environment.

Canada has been very fortunate, at a time when our economy could absorb additional workers and, indeed, needed them urgently for development, to attract new settlers of such a high quality.

The eagerness of the newcomers to become Canadian citizens has also been most gratifying.

I have already mentioned the physical addition to our national territory represented by the entry of Newfoundland into Confederation.

There has also been a vast psychological addition to Canadian territory since 1935.

This psychological addition results largely from the combined effects of developments in aviation and the apparently insatiable demand for base metals and other minerals.

The northern areas of the provinces, as well as the Northwest Territories and the Arctic islands, were a scarcely penetrated wilderness twenty years ago.

Today this whole area is being explored, mapped, prospected and developed with amazing speed.

Another thing that has given depth to Canada, geographically and psychologically, is our new appreciation that we have another great power as a neighbour just over the North Pole.

Canada and the United States have felt that the needs of our common security have required the construction of three parallel early warning lines in the Canadian North; and this construction is adding greatly to our knowledge of the North.

Because all this activity in the North has given a new depth to Canada, our country can no longer be described as a thin fringe of people just across the border from the United States.

In 1935, Canada was very largely dependent on the United States for three of the most important sources of industrial growth: coal, petroleum products and iron ore.

In twenty years that picture has changed in an almost revolutionary way.

We are already large net exporters of iron ore; we can look forward to the day when we will be net exporters of petroleum products; and great new developments of water power and increased and increasing use of petroleum products has greatly reduced the relative importance of coal in our industrial economy.

Natural gas is likely to reduce still further the place of coal in the economy and the consequent dependence of Canada on imports of industrial and domestic fuel.

Developments such as these are gradually changing the pattern of Canada's external trade and our trade with the United States is coming into somewhat better balance than before the war. In absolute terms, however, Canada's trade deficit with the United States is still very substantial. Over the last four years it has averaged more than \$600 million a year.

Canada continues to be a very large importer of the agricultural products of warmer climates, such as citrus fruits and cotton, and of capital equipment and parts for production as well as manufactured goods for consumption.

The great increase in our exports has been concentrated in a relatively small number of basic commodities.

One reason for this situation is that the growth of Canadian exports of processed materials and manufactured goods which we can produce efficiently have been held back by high tariffs and other trade barriers from entry into the United States and other countries where we could otherwise compete.

First, the war and then the full employment of the post-war years have drawn workers away from the Canadian farms and speeded up the mechanization of agriculture at a tremendous rate.

Forty per cent fewer farmers are producing 45 per cent more farm products than the larger number did before the war.

The export of farm products and particularly of wheat is still a matter of prime concern in the functioning of our national economy and the whole of Canada retains its historic sensitiveness to the well-being of the wheat growers.

The entry of Newfoundland into Confederation has greatly increased the place of our deep-sea fisheries in the economy.

The healthy development of the Atlantic fisheries has become one of our national objectives.

Canada, and particularly the province of Newfoundland is geographically in a better position to exploit these greatest of all fisheries than any other country.

And most of the fish we catch in Canada has to be exported.

That is true of all the main products of Newfoundland: pulp and paper, iron ore and base metals as well as fish have to be exported.

Indeed, Newfoundland is more dependent on external trade than any other province.

Canada is as dependent as ever for prosperity upon the maintenance of good commercial relations with the rest of the world and, particularly, with the United States, the United Kingdom and Western Europe.

Since we Canadians depend so much on selling our products in the United States, it should be fortunate for us that we are, by a very wide margin, the largest and most profitable customer for American exporters.

While the United States as a whole is not nearly as dependent on exports as Canada, there are a very large number of American exporters who depend just as much on Canadian sales for the difference between profit and loss as Canadian exporters do on the American market.

We Canadians hope American exporters to Canada are alert to their interest in a gradual reduction of trade barriers and particularly in the avoidance of any increase in the barriers which exist today against Canadian imports into the United States.

The proposition that a country must import if it expects to sell its own goods abroad is well understood by our Canadian exporters and I am happy to say that Canadian exporters exert a steady and effective resistance against protectionist proposals whenever they show themselves in Canada.

This bread-and-butter interdependence between Canada and the United States makes good commercial relations vital to Canada and, we believe, very valuable to the United States.

There is a far greater sense of national solidarity in Canada today than there was in the years before the war.

Among other evil effects of the great depression of the 1930s, it produced deep conflicts between the governments of the provinces, particularly the larger provinces, and the national government.

In that period, none of the provinces - not even Ontario - was in a financial position to pursue progressive policies and most of them, in fact, did not even maintain essential public services in a reasonable state of efficiency.

The governments of some of the provinces seemed to take a perverse delight in frustrating the efforts of the national government to meet national problems with nation-wide solutions.

All that was changed by the war.

Co-ordination of public finance was essential to the successful prosecution of the war; and wartime tax agreements kept all provincial governments in a position to meet their constitutional responsibilities.

Every province emerged from the war with a budgetary surplus.

Post-war fiscal arrangements have made it possible for all the provinces to finance the rapidly expanding public services required for a fast-growing population and still have budgetary surpluses in every year since the war.

There are still problems, and difficult problems, in the relations between the national government and the provincial governments; and there are always bound to be such problems under a federal system, especially when there are such wide extremes as there are between a province like Ontario with a population of over six millions and another like Prince Edward Island with only one hundred thousand people.

But in 1955 we seem to have what was deplorably lacking before the war, and that is a disposition on all sides to solve problems, and to maintain harmony in the relations between governments within Canada.

We have just recently had a Federal-Provincial Conference in which there was genuine cordiality and goodwill on all sides.

No doubt this state of affairs is, in part, the consequence of the good times since the war; but it is also, in large part, the reflection of a wider and deeper sense of Canadian unity than we had previously known in our brief history as a nation.

Practically all Canadians today have come to accept the fundamental fact of Canadian nationhood: the fact that Canada is a nation of two equal races with separate, though closely related cultures, with two official languages and a host of other differences which are here to stay.

I say all Canadians have come to accept that fact: indeed every year, more and more Canadians, both English-speaking and French-speaking, are developing pride in our long history of working together, of compromising our differences, and concentrating on the common goal of building a nation which is distinct and different from any other nation on earth.

And this unity at home in Canada is reflected in our relations with the rest of the world.

Twenty years ago the Canadian people were sharply divided about their external relations.

There were still many Canadians of British origin who were prepared to follow wherever Britain led; there was another group which believed in collective action, by force if need be, against warlike aggression anywhere; there were still others who believed Canada could isolate itself from world affairs and avoid participation in potential wars.

Today the last vestiges of the colonial mentality have disappeared.

Most Canadians have the friendliest feelings for the British people; many still cherish a deep affection for the United Kingdom, and all hope there will always be a close relationship and community of interest between Britain and Canada.

But no responsible Canadian today questions the view that the Canadian people must decide for themselves, in the light of their own national interests, what course our country is to take in world affairs.

And I think I can add that no responsible Canadian believes today that our country can isolate itself from world affairs and hope to escape the awful consequences of war, if another war should come.

That is why we have been ready to share with the United States, since the war, in active participation in world affairs on a scale and at a cost no one would have believed possible for North Americans before 1939.

Like the American people, the Canadian people have learned that the only hope of escaping the consequences of great wars is to prevent another great war.

And we in Canada have welcomed warmly the leadership of the United States in organizing the free world for peace.

We have done - and I believe our people are prepared to go on doing - our full share in building up the strength of the nations that really want peace and freedom in the world.

Of all our external relations, those with the United States have the greatest day-to-day impact on the average Canadian.

It is not an exaggeration to say that the main impulse which led to the Confederation of 1867 was fear of the United States; and for the first half century of our national life the preservation of Canada from American absorption was our first national pre-occupation.

The recollection of those fears lasted long after the cause for them departed.

Indeed, I well remember the apprehension with which Mr. Mackenzie King announced, in the darkest days of 1940, the establishment at Ogdensburg of the Permanent Joint Board on Defence.

Mr. King knew this step was in our national interest, but he was concerned about our historic suspicion of American designs.

Today no Canadian fears the designs of the United States on our national integrity; our gravest apprehension about the United States is that the American people may at times act in ways that are detrimental to our national interests, not through lack of good will but through lack of understanding of how our interests will be affected.

The Canadian people do not delude themselves into thinking that Canada, like the United States, is a great power.

We know we are not.

For as far ahead as we can see, the disparity between the United States and Canada, in population and in developed resources, will continue, though the differences will probably grow smaller because we are growing faster than the United States.

Most Canadians are not too concerned about this disparity in national strength.

We have confidence in the continued good neighbourliness of the American people; we believe they are satisfied to let us develop in our own way, as a separate nation.

And that is what all Canadians want.

We are realists.

We know we cannot be really big; but as we look out in the world on the achievements of middle sized nations, like Holland and Belgium, we know that numbers are not essential to the happiness of a nation or to substantial national achievements.

Most Canadians believe that as a united nation of middle rank, we have made for ourselves a unique place in the world, which we are happy to occupy, because we feel our people can have a good life at home, and because we believe our country is contributing constructively to the efforts of men and nations of good will to give peace to the world.