



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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THE CHANGING WORLD VIEWED FROM CANADA

An Address by the Secretary of State
for External Affairs, the Honourable
Mitchell Sharp, to the Order of the
Sons of Italy, Toronto, November 6, 1971.

...Things have been happening quickly here at home in Canada, and in the world as a whole, and it is this rapid rate of change that contributes much to current unrest. Many of the assumptions we made in the past have to be re-examined. The accepted patterns have been broken. Canada recognizes the People's Republic of China. Other nations, some of them among our oldest friends like Italy, follow. Peking takes the China seat at the United Nations. President Nixon announces a new economic policy and shock waves are felt around the world -- nowhere more than in Canada, the United States' best customer and closest friend and ally.

Within six months, the Prime Ministers of the Soviet Union and Canada pay extended visits to each other's countries, a Protocol on Consultations is signed in Moscow and a General Exchanges Agreement in Ottawa. Britain moves towards the European Common Market. The whole pattern of world trade, so essential to Canadian prosperity, seems to be changing. Signs of hope for an end to hostilities in Indochina are offset by a growing confrontation between India and Pakistan.

All of this and much more within the space of a relatively few months.

Small wonder that there are uncertainties as to the future and the course that Canada should follow both at home and abroad.

First and foremost, I am sure you will agree, is the question of how to protect and strengthen the Canadian economy in this complex situation, and on that point I shall say only two simple things.

First, we are not going to strengthen our economy by anti-American policies. It is our destiny and our good fortune to share the North American continent with the richest nation on the earth's surface. It makes good sense to exploit that advantage for all it is worth. It makes good sense to work with the United States for our mutual benefit.

The second point is that in our economic policies we should strive to avoid unnecessary dependence upon the United States by promoting trade and financial links with the rest of the world. This is not anti-American in any sense. It is traditional Canadian policy, which is becoming more and more relevant as Europe and Japan, for example, challenge the predominant position of the United States as an economic power and the Soviet Union looks outward for trade with the non-Communist world.

The effort to diversify lies behind the Prime Minister's visits to the nations of Asia and the Pacific (and our transpacific trade is multiplying apace), behind the constant consultations my colleagues and I are having with European governments and the European Economic Commission, behind the exchange of visits between our Prime Minister and Mr. Kosygin. None of these activities is anti-American in intention or effect. They are in pursuit of Canada's best interests. The economies of Canada and the United States are interdependent to an extent unequalled and unprecedented. It would be to the interest of neither nation were Canada to become an economic satellite of the United States.

I have dealt with Canada's economic interests first, since they represent solid realities that touch us all, that we can identify and measure in dollars and percentages. But Canada would be a poor country and I certainly would not be the Canadian Foreign Minister if we saw ourselves as no more than a business enterprise....

North of the Rio Grande, this continent is shared by the people of Canada and the people of the United States. Canadians and Americans are proud peoples. They cherish their independence of each other, and the particular traditions and differing institutions that give independence meaning.

As we cherish our differences, even more we cherish the shared ideas and goals that unite us. This simple but profound fact overshadows the constant conflicts of interest that arise between us. Conflict is a function of contact. Canada has very little in the way of conflict with Mongolia; our relations with that country might be regarded as a model for all nations if we were to overlook the fact that our contact with the people of Mongolia is almost non-existent. Should changing circumstances bring us into close contact with Mongolia, I can guarantee you some pretty good conflicts of interest within a very short time. No two nations in the world have so many contacts at so many levels, official and unofficial, as Canada and the United States. Essentially, these contacts serve the common interest but, no matter how busy Secretary Rogers and I are with the oilcan, constant contact leads to constant friction and the generation of frequent heated exchanges.

In a recent far-reaching statement on Canadian foreign policy, the Government had two things to say about our relations with the United States -- that the United States is our closest friend and ally and will remain so (this I have discussed with you), and that the central problem for Canada is how to live in harmony with, but distinct from, the most powerful and dynamic society on earth.

For a generation, and until very recently, the world was locked in a sterile East-West confrontation, with China obsessed with its own internal difficulties and playing little part on the world stage, the nations of the third world engaged in a life-and-death struggle for survival.

Suddenly, Peking sits on the Security Council. President Nixon prepares to visit the two great Communist capitals, Moscow and Peking. The Soviet Union accepts a better arrangement between the two Germanies, responds after years of inaction to NATO urging for balanced force reductions in Central Europe, promotes a European security conference, engages in strategic-arms limitations talks with the United States, calls for a world conference on disarmament.

I cannot discuss all of these developments with you tonight, nor can anyone, I believe, be sure what they all mean for the peace of the world and the well-being of all men.

What is clear is that power relationships frozen for a quarter of a century are in the process of change and that trading patterns and monetary arrangements laboriously established are in flux. In these new and perhaps unsettling but at least hopeful circumstances, Canada is determined to preserve its sovereignty and its independence while, at the same time, refusing to remain locked in cold-war attitudes that have lost at least a part of their meaning and their importance. Canada welcomes the human face being shown by nations like the Soviet Union and China. Past history should not be forgotten but it should not be allowed to impede careful, prudent movement toward a saner and safer world equilibrium.

One thing seems to be clear -- that the emergence of China on the world scene and the presence of China in the Security Council will make it more difficult for the United States and the Soviet Union to settle matters between themselves. Only time will tell whether this is a healthy development in international relations. Although it will certainly have the effect of making the settlement of issues more difficult to achieve, settlements once reached may well prove to be more effective and more enduring.

In my remarks this evening, I have travelled a long way from this hall and from our reasons for being here. I have tried to show you a little of the changing world as Canada sees it. I hope I have given you some food for thought. Without further ado, I offer to all of you in this room and to all Canadians of Italian descent my thanks for all you have contributed to Canada and the Canadian way of life. I salute you all on this day of Christopher Columbus and so -- on with the dance!

S/C