

Mr. Chancellor,  
Members of the Board of  
Distinguished members of  
STATEMENT  
DISCOURS



NOTES FOR AN ADDRESS  
GIVEN BY THE  
MINISTER FOR EXTERNAL RELATIONS,  
THE HONOURABLE PIERRE DE BANÉ,  
AT THE PRESENTATION OF AN  
HONORARY DEGREE AT THE  
UNIVERSITY OF MONCTON,  
MONCTON,  
MAY 15, 1982

Mr. Chancellor,  
Members of the Board of Governors,  
Distinguished members of the Senate and of the  
Academic Council,  
Dear Students,  
Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am certain that I speak on behalf of Dr. Bastarache, Dr. Doiron, Dr. Fulton and Mr. LeBlanc when I express to you my gratitude for this privilege of receiving a Doctorate honoris causa, especially since this honour is being conferred by the University of Moncton.

In many respects, the University of Moncton symbolizes the vitality and determination of the Acadian people, who have never been so alive, so vigorous, so much the masters of their own destinies, and consequently, so assertive and so active as they are today.

The history of the University of Moncton has been intertwined with the history of Acadia, and is now one of its finest institutions. Back in the nineteenth century, through a spirit of dedication and sacrifice whose importance could never be overestimated, a network of institutions was established that has been the centre of gravity of Acadian society and the mooring-point of its élite. Let us not forget that the University of Moncton is their direct descendant. As it prepares to enter its third decade, we must gain an appreciation of its past in order to gain a clearer vision of its vocation.

The word "university" expresses this eloquently: a university must tirelessly seek to embrace the universal while pushing back the frontiers of the unknown with the three beacons of transmission of knowledge, development of new knowledge and the perpetual questioning of knowledge, to use the famous words of Descartes. The supreme function of every university is thus the search for truth, unfettered by conformism, pressure or prejudice from without.

In this pursuit of the universal, we must not forget that every university has its own distinctive surroundings and acquires its character from a given culture and historic tradition, and from specific economic, political and religious structures. Thus it has a social function, and its very destiny tends to become intertwined with that of the society that it must serve. It must live in the public eye and above all must determine the extent and the manner in which it will participate in the life of the society whose hopes and plans must, without exception, have a solid intellectual foundation to rest on.

More so than others, Acadian society needs this intellectual foundation. As the world famous writer Antonine Maillet wrote, "Acadia is a country that is situated in time rather than in space. We have no physical homeland. To be an Acadian means that you have a certain lineage; not that you live in a certain place."

The last frontier today is the mind. The mind is a boundless land of promise. No longer is it just a question of safeguarding the French language or the Catholic faith, or of holding in check a people that is living dangerously. No, today's goal is to gain mastery over all of reality - in a word, to build a strong society.

A strong society - that is an understatement! Let it be said clearly: there is only one way that Acadian society can take, and that is the way of excellence. We francophones make up barely three per cent of the population of North America. We live right next door to the world's most powerful industrial giant, and are in the most homogeneous part of the Western Hemisphere. The love for our heritage must not yield to the temptation of defeatism and powerlessness or, worse yet, to that of pawning off our misfortunes onto others. No, Ladies and Gentlemen, the love for our heritage, in 1982, demands that each and every one of us choose the way of excellence, or all will be nothing more than a flight of fancy. It is the most demanding way, but it is also the only one that can lead to concrete truth.

Your university is a privileged instrument in this wide-ranging and demanding undertaking. Today it operates through its faculties of administration, arts, science and engineering, education, social science and law, its schools of domestic science and nursing, its university centres covering the three francophone regions of New Brunswick, its Master's and Bachelor's programs in fifteen or so disciplines, through the arm of adult education, courses on Acadian history, literature, Acadian sociology, society and language, through the Acadian Studies Centre, which was established in the interest of recovering the cultural heritage, and which includes a museum with almost 10,000 artifacts of Acadian culture, and through the publication of the university review, which has gone out beyond the borders of Canada.

It is our deep conviction that through its faculties, its schools and its programs, the University of Moncton is making an important contribution to the development of Acadia, the Maritime Provinces and the whole country. Need I mention the successful first world conference on the legal sciences which was held at your university?

This brief listing should convince those who need convincing how justified the Acadians were in founding this university. It has indeed become the main instrument for the socio-economic progress of your society, by training the specialists and technicians needed for its development. The strength of this society depends essentially on the dynamism of its university.

Not only is the university the gateway to higher learning, but by its very existence it gives you the autonomy and the confidence needed to face the challenges presented by the business world, the public sector and the academic community. It is no mere coincidence that over the past twenty years, we have seen many of your compatriots rise to prominence both nationally and internationally.

We therefore have all the more reason to admire those who are responsible for this success, beginning with the various employees right up to the Rector and his assistants. Your generosity during the subscription campaign is ample proof of your cooperative spirit. I am confident that with the cooperation of all, and with the active assistance of government, you will successfully meet the challenges of the eighties.

You have broken two centuries of silence. You have been experiencing a renewal for the past twenty years. Yours is indeed a society that is on the move. The third millenium is at the door. It gives me pleasure to think that Acadian society is preparing for it in a resolute manner, not without a flexible attitude that harmonizes with the spirit of the age, and with an intensity that is in all respects equal to the rigour of modern science and to the quiet determination of your ancestors.

On behalf of my colleagues Mr. LeBlanc, Dr. Fulton, Dr. Aubin and Dr. Bastarache, let me express our sincere congratulations to the graduating class, and again, our profound admiration for the authorities of the University. My thanks to each and every one of you.