



CANADA

# STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION

DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 67/38

## CANADA AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Speech by the Honourable Paul Martin, Secretary of State for External Affairs, to the Biennial Convention of the Canada Ethnic Press Federation, Winnipeg, November 24, 1967.

Tonight I should like to talk about human rights both in the domestic and international contexts.

To define human rights and then to assure their realization around the world are among the greatest tasks which face mankind. The dignity of the individual, the rights of ethnic groups, peoples and nations stand on a par with the economic development of our planet and the abolition of the nuclear threat as fundamental goals for us all in the twentieth century. Failure to achieve any of these goals bodes ill for world peace and stability.

What are some of the questions which might be asked about the protection of human rights in Canada? Are we safeguarding the rights of Canadians "without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion"? My answer is "yes", although I know that there have been problems in the past both as to the interpretation and implementation of the liberties of all Canadians. Official policy, however, is clear and individual attitudes have been, on the whole, forthcoming and tolerant when compared with the policy and action of other countries. One strong indication of the freedom enjoyed in Canada lies in the continuing flow of people to this country from around the world. Would literally millions voluntarily choose Canada if this were not a free democratic and open society?

In examining human rights in Canada, I should like to discuss three relevant issues: immigration, the national unity debate and the multi-ethnic nature of the country.

Traditionally, this country has sought to increase its population through immigration, thus providing new skills, new ideas and new enthusiasms. One of the results of this policy has been the rapid growth since the turn of the century of a population with origins other than either Britain or France.

The census statistics for 1951 and 1961 reveal certain significant patterns. Out of a total population growth of 4,228,818 over the decade,

1,080,620 -- or 25.5 per cent -- resulted from immigration.

During this period as well, important changes occurred in the distribution of the total population by ethnic groups.

In 1951, 47.9 per cent were British, 30.8 per cent French and 21.3 per cent from other ethnic origins. In 1961, the equivalent breakdown was 43.8 per cent, 30.4 per cent and 25.8 per cent, respectively. It is noteworthy that a 4.5 per cent increase in the proportion of the population of other than British or French origin took place in this time-span. In view of the changes made in the Immigration Regulations since 1961, I believe that we can expect a continuation of this trend.

With a constant and large flow of immigrants entering Canada each year, what happens to immigrants is a vital concern for all of us who are interested and involved in forging a strong and united Canada.

We have learned from the postwar movement of peoples that the role which an immigrant plays in his new country depends upon many factors: his legal rights, his occupational qualifications in relation to employment opportunities, the attitude of the receiving population, and his own psychological reactions to this new environment. As Canadians, we must ensure that these legal rights are guaranteed, that suitable employment opportunities are available, that newcomers are treated as equals, and that the immigrant is helped in adjusting to his new environment.

We are in the midst of a vital debate in this country on our future. In our centennial year we have reason to be proud of our achievements in many fields. Our prospects for growth, prosperity and increasing world influence are excellent. At the same time, however, 1967 has brought to the fore some basic issues which must be faced squarely by every Canadian -- whatever his ethnic origin, whatever his place of residence, whatever his occupation. The question of unity involves us all.

French Canada has now awakened to embrace the technological and social advances of the twentieth century. This awakening has altered the terms in which we can look at Canada's future. The French-Canadian has not changed his sense of community -- it is just as strong as it ever was; but his ability to promote the interests of his community has greatly increased. Thus Canadian unity cannot imply a homogeneous society -- the attempt to create such a society would be the surest way to lead to the disintegration of our country.

The people of Canada, I think, appreciate this reality and are prepared to seek ways of incorporating it into the conception of a greater Canada. There are two objectives. The first is to ensure that French Canada can survive and grow as a distinct community within Canada. The second is to convince French Canada that it has an essential role to play in building a united Canada.

The achievement of these two objectives -- in reality the inculcation of that worn but still indispensable expression "unity in diversity" -- requires of all Canadians the highest qualities of understanding, sympathy and goodwill.

The situation vis-à-vis French Canada is only one dimension of the unity question. Equally important is the recognition of the multi-ethnic nature of Canada. Unfortunately, the vocabulary of politics is insufficiently rich to provide us with precise terms to describe its many complex conceptions. So often we must resort to analogy and metaphor more appropriate to the physical than the political world -- we speak of the "mosaic of Canada", its "patchwork quality", the "flower-garden", the "rainbow" or the "kaleidoscope". These similies, although much overworked, do give us a picture of the plural nature of our society.

Although the vocabulary of Canadian politics is imprecise, and necessarily so, there are some basic points which should be clarified.

For example, there must be no confusion in our minds about the meaning of the terms "English Canada" and "English-speaking Canada". Of course, no one for one moment would deny the influence of Britain -- or more specifically of England -- on the institutions and cultural mores of Canada. Regardless of our origins, we all share the benefits of this political, legal and social heritage. At the same time, however, this country has been shaped by its North American environment and by the contribution of people -- as groups and as individuals -- from scores of countries around the world. In addition to the specific gifts which each ethnic group has brought to Canada, the presence of many ethnic groups has given it a character which makes the term "English Canada" completely outmoded in 1967.

As far as the expression "English-speaking Canada" is concerned, we use it for want of a better term when describing the majority of Canadians who are not French-speaking. It is not intended to denote a monolithic English-speaking entity. And in no way should it be interpreted as reflecting a lack of regard or concern for the cultural rights of the large number of Canadians whose mother tongue is neither English nor French.

It is difficult to predict how our society -- which contains two broad linguistic communities, which is British in many of its institutions, which is heterogeneous in its cultural make-up and North American by geography -- will develop. I can say, however, that it is the Government's intention that the country's development will take place freely. In our view, the interplay of various cultural forces will create a Canada in which there will be strong unifying factors existing alongside equally strong factors of diversity. But diversity does not mean division. In Canada, diversity is the guarantee of, not a threat to, our national existence,

Not only individuals have linguistic and cultural rights. Recent trends suggest that there is growing international recognition of the idea that

there are group rights to protection of language and culture. This more liberal concern over the existence of cultural groups is reflected in the UN conventions on human rights. Canada cannot stand aside, no province can stand aside, from the movement for the acceptance of these broad international norms pertaining to the rights and well-being of groups within larger societies. Canada must remain in the forefront of the drive to recognize and implement these rights.

Enshrined in a united Canada must be the conception of the free individual. In the final analysis, whatever the place of groups in the development of Canada, it will be individual Canadians in a free society who will build Confederation in our second century. The rights of all Canadians must be preserved, strengthened and guaranteed not only in official documents but also in the acceptance, tolerance and encouragement of their fellow citizens.

The international struggle for human rights is based upon the Universal Declaration of Human Rights -- one of the great landmarks in the search for a more enlightened and humanitarian civilization. This document, proclaimed by the United Nations on December 10, 1948, was created through the common resolve of the representatives of a large portion of the world's peoples.

Its fundamental purpose has been to affirm that the responsibility for the protection of human rights is a formal and permanent obligation of the international community of nations. The Declaration deals with civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. While it is not legally binding on member states of the United Nations, this solemn Declaration has exercised considerable influence on the rights accorded to people of the world. Undoubtedly, this document had an important influence on the Canadian Bill of Rights.

The United Nations has proclaimed 1968, the twentieth anniversary of the Declaration, to be International Year for Human Rights. To give real meaning to the Year, the United Nations, among other things, has called upon member states to intensify efforts in the fields of human rights legislation and public education.

As I said at the United Nations a year ago: ". . . the most useful contribution Canada could make would be to subject our own record, our own practices, to critical examination, drawing on all the resources of the community for this purpose. Complacency is a disease from which we all suffer. So our objective will be to remove the vestiges of discrimination . . . and to strengthen the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms by a continuing process of education and by subjecting violations to exposure and public attention. I am confident that we shall be able to carry out a programme of this kind successfully because of the enthusiastic support for the cause of human rights which is displayed by voluntary bodies in Canada. . . ."

I understand that many voluntary organizations are now developing International Year programmes. A Canadian Commission for International Year was organized this summer to assist the private sector plan 1968 programmes. This Commission is an independent, voluntary agency aimed at stimulating International Year observances.

It is also assuming responsibility for organizing a national human rights conference in the late autumn of next year.

Many Canadians retain a profound and active interest in the lives of their kinsmen in other lands. Where the fundamental human rights which we enjoy in Canada are denied in countries from which many of us or our forefathers came, it is natural that we should wish to see those rights more widely shared. And it is constantly debated how this can best be done. There may still be some who talk of "roll-back" or "liberation" by force -- who would be prepared in effect to risk the destruction of mankind in pursuit of a freedom which nobody would live to enjoy. But this is a discredited and futile approach, to which there remain few adherents.

Others, more realistically, favour the pressure of public opinion or international bodies and diplomatic contacts to persuade reluctant regimes to grant concessions. There are times and places when pressure of this sort can yield positive results. In practice, however, this approach requires careful timing and often lengthy preparation if it is not to be counter-productive. It is not a lever which can be used indiscriminately. Nor is its effectiveness increased by those whose main purpose is less to advance human rights than to embarrass regimes which they oppose. At best, this method will often be only a palliative, unlikely to lead to any permanent change of heart.

If we are to achieve more lasting results, we must be prepared to pursue an indirect policy. There is now a process of social evolution through which individual freedoms are being slowly extended in countries where ten years ago the prospect seemed bleak indeed. Canada has had an effect on this process by encouraging contacts which have helped to dissipate hostility. We have demonstrated that freedom is not a dangerous weapon and that, in offering to deal with the peoples of the world and whatever governments they may have, we are not conspiring to overthrow the established order in countries where freedom is still suspect. We cannot look for human rights under governments which feel themselves threatened. Nor, in the long run, can we induce such governments to extend the area of human rights against their will. What we can do is foster the will, and I believe that there is now ample evidence that such a policy can succeed.

The media of mass communication are important instruments in promoting knowledge and understanding of human rights issues, and the ethnic press in particular has a vital role to play in this respect. You have the task of encouraging your readers to preserve their cultural values, thus enriching our whole society.

As pointed out at a UNESCO Conference held some years ago, an important problem to which you might address yourselves is that of the different rates of cultural adjustment of the various age-groups in immigrant families as a factor in family tension. Here the ethnic press has a special part to play, for it enables parents to retain cultural contacts they hold dear, while increasing their appreciation of the Canadian environment.

However efficient educational services for adult foreign-language migrants may be, many newcomers do not acquire real proficiency in the English or French languages. A sizeable percentage of them will obtain knowledge sufficient only to cover immediate economic needs and other essential aspects of daily life. The role of the press in the migrants' own language, therefore, has two perspectives -- one as a means of retaining a needed link with the culture and developments in the country of origin, the other as a means of extending the migrants' understanding and knowledge of Canadian ways of life, customs and values.

A responsible ethnic press, therefore, can be a major factor in bringing about healthier intergroup relations and strengthening the fabric of Canadian society. I feel confident that you are playing -- and will continue to play -- a significant part in helping Canada set an example for the nations of the world in demonstrating how diverse cultures can flourish together in peace and harmony.

---

S/C