

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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CANADA IN THE AMERICAS

An address by Mr. L. B. Pearson, Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, to the Herald Tribune Forum, New York, March 8, 1947.

I need hardly say how greatly honoured I feel at the invitation to add a Canadian voice to this Pan-American occasion. I should explain, however, that in my country officials in the Government service are normally supposed to be both anonymous and silent. So this afternoon I speak not as an official but merely as a Canadian citizen.

My country, Canada, not many decades ago was a dependent colony but is now a nation with complete freedom - or as much freedom as any nation has any right to have in this interdependent age - to control every aspect of its policy, domestic and foreign. So you can erase that picture from your minds - one which I found to be all too widely accepted when I lived in this country - of Canada as a dependent colonial people paying taxes to an outside King, owing obedience to an outside Government and fighting in far-off fields the battles of other countries at the dictation of others. I can assure you that such a picture is now a mere caricature.

Possibly one reason for the ignorance which still persists about our position is the fact that we achieved our independence without martial drama or drum beating. We won it fighting with, not against, the British. It was the result of evolution, not revolution. The Fathers of our country are not Generals on horseback with drawn swords, but Statesmen in frock-coats with quill pens. Conferences, not campaigns, are the sign posts on our road to freedom. Possibly we should have arranged a sham battle with the British, had a mock capitulation and signed a peace treaty. Then our present status might be better understood abroad. However, our method, though not spectacular, has been effective. So today, Canada stands as a free and democratic nation within the British Commonwealth of free nations but ready and able to co-operate with other American nations.

We are, I think, a nation strong enough to make co-operation with us worth while, both in peace and in war. Please don't believe it if any one tells you that we are just a few frozen farmers and trappers huddled in igloos around the North Pole, emerging periodically to produce wheat, hockey players, quintuplets. During the last war more than a million of our men volunteered to fight. We produced everything needed for modern war from four-engined bombers to uranium. We gave to our Allies under Mutual Aid, our form of Lend-Lease, billions of dollars' worth of war supplies. We are now a strong industrial state.

In peace time, we are one of the five greatest trading nations of the world. You will be interested to know that our trade with the U.S.A., for instance, is greater than that of all Latin American countries combined.

This may all sound like idle boasting for a Saturday afternoon, though I prefer to call it educational information on a very interesting subject. All I want to do is to prove that we are no mean country - in any sense of the word, I hope - but one in a position to play a worthy part in the life and future of the Americas.

What part? We can, I think, make a contribution to peace and prosperity in this part of the world. We are in a position to assist in keeping the peace and preventing aggression by providing our quota of security forces under the United Nations Charter. In our own interest, and I hope in the general interest as well, we are also anxious and able to develop and increase our trade and economic relationships, not only with the United States, but with all our Latin American friends. For Canadians who maintain their high standard of living by foreign trade, it is of the greatest importance to extend that trade with an area of the world which has the promise, as possibly no other area of the world now has, of economic stability and growth and progress.

Man, however, does not live by bread alone and so Canadians are also anxious to widen and deepen their cultural relationships with all their neighbours to the South. In this connection, do not think of us as merely an extension northward of the United States or a projection westward of the United Kingdom. We like to think, of course, that we combine the best features of the Anglo-Saxon culture of both those countries!, but we are not merely another Anglo-Saxon State. We are a nation of many races but we have two main cultures, two official languages and two traditions, French, and (what we call for lack of a better word) English. We do not wish to merge those two strains in Canada, so they would lose their separate identities, for there is richness and strength in diversity. But we do live together in a friendly and equal national partnership. It may be that this partnership of the Latin and the Anglo-Saxon in Canada has a meaning for the whole Western Hemisphere.

You may think from the pages of the more sensational press that we in Canada spend our time these days looking expectantly and somewhat anxiously over the Northern ice. I can assure you we are looking south as well. In fact, we are looking in all directions. Canada, by its history, its experience and its nature, is not likely to become too preoccupied with any one view of its international relations. For one thing, though independent, we cherish our membership in an association of nations which has proved its value and its durability - the British Commonwealth of Nations. That membership, because it is based solidly on freedom, is not any longer a barrier to our participation in Pan-American institutions and activities. But it is also a reason why we are not likely to become isolationist even in a hemispheric sense. It has driven home to us the world-wide character of our interests and the continuity of our history and traditions. The grim fact that Canada 100,000 war dead lie in Flanders Fields and not in the Saskatchewan prairies has shown that isolation is, for us, an impossible delusion.

This international line in Canada has reflected itself in our almost passionate support of the United Nations and all that it might accomplish if it is given a chance. Within that world association, and within the terms of its Charter, there is, of course, room for regional arrangements, but it would not make for peace or progress if those regional groupings obscured the essential truth that peaceful co-operation must be universal. There can be no isolation even on a hemisphere basis. Nor can there even be security on a hemisphere basis. It is now one world, and those who would divide it by "curtains" or barriers of any kind, are trifling with the very existence of peace. All those countries in every part of the world who believe in democratic freedom and the rule of law must stand together. The basic divisions today are not geographical. They are in the minds of men. I recall reading of a statesman who, angered by the competing claims of Pan-Germanism and Pan-Slavism at an international meeting many years ago, impatiently remarked, "Damn the Pans". Well, no one, I hope, can take any exception to "Pan-democracy" or within the larger grouping, "Pan-Americanism".

Ideas, then, transcend national or regional boundaries. But even the old, purely geographical concepts have changed with the conquests of science and especially the conquests of the air. The aeroplane, for instance, has made the Northern Hemisphere almost as great a reality to Canada as the Western. Trans-Atlantic flights have brought our people within a few hours of the other Northern democracies, Ireland, the United Kingdom, Belgium, Holland, Denmark, Norway and Sweden. The deceiving images of Mercator's projection are giving way to the more realistic geography of the air lines. In this new mapping, as in other ways, Canada is a junction point between the old and new worlds.

All that I have said may seem to have little bearing on the question which I feel certain you have been asking me for the last ten minutes. "Why doesn't Canada join the Pan-American Union?"

The short answer is that we have never been asked.

I think I can say, however, without risk of getting into trouble, that this lack of an invitation has not caused us any great distress. This is due, possibly to two things; (1) we are already members of two "Clubs", the "Commonwealth" and the "United Nations"; (2) we are satisfied that our relationships of friendship and mutual interest with the other American countries will continue to grow irrespective of membership or non-membership in any formal organization.

Perhaps our position vis a vis the Pan-American Union - I hope I will not be misunderstood in this - is not unlike that of the maiden who, having been asked why she did not marry her swain, replied that he hadn't asked her. When pressed as to what she would do if he did ask her, she hesitated and coyly admitted that though they were close friends she wasn't sure that they were in love with each other. However, she might add, I will always feel a deep sisterly affection for him and, perhaps, this might eventually develop into love and even marriage.

But whether it is friendship, love or marriage, I can give you an assurance that Canada, which has demonstrated its power and purpose in war and its economic strength in peace, will play its full part to ensure the security and promote the progress of the Americas.