



Statements and Speeches

No. 76/27

FIRST CENTURY OF CANADA'S JAPANESE COMMUNITY

Remarks by Prime Minister Pierre-Elliott Trudeau at a Dinner in Honour of Prime Minister Miki of Japan, Tokyo, October 25, 1976.

It is an honour for me, Mr. Prime Minister, to welcome you here this evening. Your presence and that of Mrs. Miki permit me in some small way to thank you for the gracious hospitality that your Government has extended to my wife and to me since our arrival in Japan a few days ago.

Neither of us are strangers to Japan. Yet each time we return we realize how very little we know of your country and of your customs. I hasten to add that on each visit we are renewed in our desire to acquaint ourselves with as much of Japan as we are capable of absorbing. To visit Kanazawa and witness its beauty, to view the *Noh* drama, to attend as a guest functions in the Imperial Palace -- these are moments we shall long treasure.

The purpose of official visits of this kind, Prime Minister, as we both know, is not simply to engage in formal conversation and to conclude agreements, important as these functions are. The purpose as well is to invite the people of each of our countries to focus their attention on the other, to gain through the cameras and the pens of the journalists observing us a better understanding of one another's homeland and policies. All these objectives have been met, and well, on this trip. Yet there is another dimension of poignant impact for each of Canada and Japan.

In coming months, tens of thousands of Canadians of Japanese origin will celebrate the centennial of the arrival in Canada of the first *Nisei* settler. His name was Manzo Nagano. He was born in Japan in that momentous year of 1853. He sailed from Yokohama in 1877 and disembarked in British Columbia.

I wish I could say, Prime Minister, that the many Japanese who followed that young man to Canada were made welcome and were recognized for the hard-working, law-abiding people they were. I cannot, for the record of intolerance in Pacific Canada in the decades around the turn of the century was not a proud one. No more exemplary was the decision taken by the Federal Government in the heat and fright of the Second World War to evacuate Japanese Canadians inland from coastal communities and to deprive so many of their civil rights. In the past 30 years, however, the record has been a much happier

one. In that period, *Nisei* have been accepted with enthusiasm into Canadian communities and have demonstrated again and again their talents and their skills. In the highest ranks of business, *academia* and the public service are found persons with Japanese names. A number of them are so well known as to be virtual national celebrities.

Your presence here tonight, Prime Minister, on this small part of Canada, is symbolic as well as actual. By your presence you anticipate the formal launching early in the New Year of this important centennial. By your presence, too, you give me the opportunity to thank Japan, on behalf of all Canadians, for the contribution made to Canada by the men and women of Japanese origin who have shown through their courage, their tenacity, their industry and their skills what gifted Canadians they are. Their contribution to Canada is out of all proportion to their numbers, and we are grateful to them for their many qualities.

One of those qualities, Mr. Prime Minister, is forgiveness. In Lethbridge, the Japanese-Canadian community -- a good part of which consists of persons moved involuntarily from the Pacific Coast -- designed, built and presented to the city a beautiful Japanese-style garden on the occasion of Canada's Centennial in 1967. Next year, in celebration of the other centennial I have mentioned, a number of Canadian communities will be the beneficiaries of *Nisei* gift projects.

Today, *Nisei* are valued members of the Canadian community. They remind us all, in Canada and out, of the richness of diversity, of the benefits of tolerance, of the liveliness of a community of multiple origins. It has been the policy of my Government to create in Canada the conditions for such a society, to emphasize the multicultural character of Canada, and to encourage each of our ethnic communities to preserve and honour its own language, customs and cultures. We want every Canadian to be knowledgeable about his own identity and confident of his own personality.

I look forward, Prime Minister, to the day when you and Mrs. Miki are able to visit Canada, as I hope very much you will soon be able to do, so that you may become reacquainted with this aspect of Canadian society.

May I now, in addition to extending that invitation, issue another? It is directed to all present, to join with me in a toast to the health of Prime Minister Miki and of his charming wife, to the happiness and prosperity of the Japanese people, and to the continued friendship and co-operation between Canada and Japan.

S/C