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### CANADA, AN AMERICAN COUNTRY

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by R.A.D. Ford, Canadian Ambassador to Colombia.

The title of my lecture may strike you as incongruous; or perhaps superfluous, since it might seem obvious that Canada is an integral part of the Americas. But I chose this title to try to show that Canada is indeed an American state, but with a difference; and to demonstrate in what these differences lie, how they came about, and what that signifies for Canada's relations with her sister nations of the Western Hemisphere.

This year we Canadians celebrated the 90th anniversary of the Confederation of the British colonies in North America into an autonomous and completely self-governing state within what became the Commonwealth of Nations. The manner by which Canada became a national state is radically different from that of all the other states of the Western Hemisphere. Our national, political, economic and cultural formation when examined objectively demonstrates why Canada, though a firm and loyal member of the hegemony of American states, is nevertheless a unique member of our Western Hemisphere society.

The history of Canada is that of political survival. The task of creating a distinctive society has been achieved in the face of numerous conflicting stresses, both internal and external. Through the history of Canada runs the thread of a constant effort to reconcile the divergent strains inherent in Canada's position and structure, and to harmonize the varied and often clashing forces within a united and independent community.

This process has given a unique character to Canada. Its drama lies less in armed struggles in which the nation's destiny was at stake, though there were plenty of them, or in desperate political conflicts. It lies rather in a slow and tenacious advance along the road to nationhood: a patient evolution of successive compromises in politics and government, and an obstinate conquest of the physical obstacles to national development. Patience and compromise were born of necessity. The alternative would have been the disruption or extinction of the nation.

Every American state, with the possible exception of Brazil, enjoys its independence through a break by violent means from the mother country - England, Spain, or France. In our case the break was not violent, nor indeed absolute. Our political and economic position, and the recurrent threats through history to our national unity, denied us the pleasure of spectacular gestures. It was only by turning to the more modest "possible" that Canada was enabled to survive successive crises and to present to the world today a strong, unified and healthy nation.

Let me now examine some of the reasons why our progress towards nationhood took the form it did.

In the first place, we had difficulty in developing one united national feeling. Until 1760 Canada was a French colony, and except for some small British settlements in Nova Scotia, the growth of the English population after the British conquest was largely deferred until the termination of the American Revolution. From that time on until 1867 Canada was divided not only between the French and the English elements, but also administratively in the colonies of Upper and Lower Canada, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland. Differences were so great between them indeed that Prince Edward Island only joined the federation in 1873, and Newfoundland in 1948. The extent of the differences can be judged by the fact that even today many people in these provinces consider that they were tricked into Confederation.

But this is not to mean that a distinctive attitude among Canadians did not develop. Among French Canadians it was marked by a strong nostalgia for French culture, a devoted attachment to the Catholic Church, and a deep-seated conservatism. After the French Revolution this tended to make the breach between the French of France and French Canadians even greater, the ideas of the Revolution being rejected almost in toto.

As for English Canadians, the bulk of the first settlers were refugees from the United States, who had remained loyal to the King in the Revolution and were either forced to flee after the independence of the 13 colonies, or who chose voluntarily to make a new life in the wilderness rather than remain under republican rule. Their point of view therefore was marked by a fierce royalism, a strong anti-American feeling, and a stout individualism. The qualities which obliged most of the peoples of America to fight for their independence against the mother country proved, in the case of Canada, necessary in a continual struggle for independence against the boisterous American colonies which invaded Canada twice - during the Revolution, and again during the War of 1812. It was indeed this feeling of insecurity vis-a-vis the United States and the need to rely on outside help, which could only mean Great Britain, to maintain the balance in North America, which made the Canadians hesitate to throw off

completely the ties with the motherland. In fact the final factor in bringing about the Confederation of the original three colonies in 1867 was the victory of the North in the American Civil War. Both Britain and Canada had given moral and occasionally material support to the South, and the Canadians feared that the northerners would in the flush of victory turn their armies towards the final conquest of Canada. Therefore it seemed prudent at least to unite the scattered colonies in order to strengthen resistance to the United States.

The British leaders of those days, as in fact in the subsequent years of that century and our own times, were able and far-sighted. They realized in good time the signs of growing national feeling in Canada, nudged a little bit by the revolts in both French and English Canada in 1837. Together with the Canadian statesmen they worked out one of those typically British solutions - independent status within a commonwealth of nations. As a result, we Canadians never had to stage a war of independence, and the limitations which we recognized had by force of circumstances to be placed on nationalism meant that the tie with Britain was never completely broken.

Therefore, on July 1, 1867 a new state was born in the Western Hemisphere. The outlines of its future magnitude, wealth and political and economic status could hardly be foreseen in the weak and struggling country of those days. Gradually its confines spread to encompass the British colonies in the Pacific and on the great plains, and the frontiers were pushed north to the Pole. It seemed at the time like a waste of effort to extend dominion over those terrible and endless wildernesses. It was only generations later that we learned of the immense mineral wealth imprisoned in their fastnesses.

I do not think either the Canadian or British statesmen who worked out the terms of the agreement which federated the British colonies in North America into the Canadian state, and its relations with the mother country, had any real idea what this was going to lead to. Some possibly foresaw that eventually Australia, New Zealand and South Africa might follow the Canadian lead. None could have guessed that eventually the British Empire would be largely transformed into a loose association of 10 states, including five African and Asian countries, all independent, but all still recognizing their common political outlook by retaining a common tie.

This common tie is difficult to explain. It consists, in the case of Canada, constitutionally only in the recognition of the Queen of England as also the Queen of Canada, represented in Ottawa by a Governor-General, who is a Canadian, selected by the Canadian Government. This seems tenuous indeed, and yet curiously enough it works. We do retain a system of political and economic consultation, which has no written constitutional existence, but is based on practice and mutual benefit. This exists not only with the United Kingdom, but with the other

members of the Commonwealth as well. In particular we have managed to establish a very close and profitable system of consultation with India. These consultations do not necessarily result in a united stand. Over the invasion of Suez, for example, we felt it necessary to oppose the action of the United Kingdom and France, and voted with India, Pakistan and the majority of the United Nations, while the other members of the Commonwealth were on the other side. But the very fact of our membership in the Commonwealth, and our intimate knowledge of what the United States, India, and the United Kingdom thought and wanted, enabled us to play a helpful role in bringing the two sides together again.

I have talked at such length about Canada and the Commonwealth because it is one of the main features distinguishing Canada from the other countries of the Western Hemisphere. We have retained the British system of cabinet government, we have retained the monarchy, and we have retained the political link with Europe. With the development of the Commonwealth this also meant a political link with Africa and South-East Asia. Therefore, politically we have tended, and still tend, to look politically east and west, not south, except, of course, towards the United States, the political, economic and cultural relations with which are of such overwhelming importance to Canada.

In addition to the political ties binding us still to Europe, there are very strong racial, cultural and economic reasons why we should still feel closer to Europe than countries like Colombia which established their complete independence nearly a century and a half ago. Canada is closer geographically to Europe than any country of America. It is easier and quicker to go from St. John's, Newfoundland, to London or Paris, than to go to Cuba or even Texas. St. John's is 2,000 kilometres closer to London than is New York.

Racially our country is almost entirely European - British and French to start with, and with a large admixture of central and southern European blood. Therefore it was inevitable that Europe should play a prominent role in our cultural development.

Economically our trade with Europe has in the past been very important, not so important now relatively, but still sufficiently important to make the economic prosperity of Western Europe essential for us.

Before the war our trade was triangular in large measure. We sold to Europe and bought from the United States. Since even today almost 25 per cent of our total production goes into exports, it is clear that the economic prosperity of Western Europe is essential to the economic prosperity of Canada.

Economic well-being and political stability go hand in hand. In two world wars Canada felt immediately at one with Western Europe in the need to preserve the independence of the latter. It was this thinking which made Canada one of the first countries to recognize the need for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. If Western Europe were to fall to the Communists, we felt that an immediate threat to Canada would be presented. The tangible proof of our interest in Western Europe is the fact that a Canadian armoured brigade and a Canadian air division are stationed in Germany and France today as part of the NATO forces.

Thus Canada is obliged to look towards Europe, and to consider the fate of Western Europe the fate of Canada.

Geography helped, though in a minor way, to determine our close link with Europe. It was the dominant factor in forcing us to look also to the East and to the North. Just as Canada is the closest American country to Europe, it also is the closest both to Japan and China and to the U.S.S.R., with the exception of the United States territory of Alaska. We have had therefore to take an interest in developments beyond the Pacific.

An interesting example of the influence of geography in the Pacific on Canadian trade and diplomacy occurred in 1955 when we were negotiating a trade agreement with the U.S.S.R. at the latter's request. At first we could not understand why the Russians were so eager to purchase Canadian wheat, since it seemed incredible that it would be either economic or politic for them, one of the major wheat-producing countries of the world, to buy wheat from us. After we began negotiations, the Russians admitted that it would be cheaper for them to supply the grain-producing needs of Siberia and their Pacific provinces with Canadian wheat shipped from our Pacific ports, than to transport grain from the Ukraine by rail to eastern Russia.

Up until the end of the war, the North was for Canada a vast, largely unexplored region though already producing fabulous mineral wealth. It exerted a tremendous influence on the psychology and thinking of Canadians, but we hardly considered it as a frontier beyond which loomed the immense power of Soviet Russia. With the advent of the jet age it has become painfully apparent that the Russians are only a few hours flying time from North America and that Canada lies between the great giants - the United States and the U.S.S.R. As a result we have had to look to the North in a different way, and have spent billions of dollars in developing our defence net-work in the Arctic, and establishing permanent populated posts in the North.

Therefore the Arctic which in the past had seemed an impenetrable barrier, now looms as a direct frontier with the citadel of Communism. And our new look at geography has also shown that the quickest way from central and Western Canada and the United States is across the northern wastes. Already Scandinavian Air Lines flies from Copenhagen to Winnipeg to Los Angeles; and Canadian Pacific Air Lines from Vancouver across the pole to Amsterdam. Thus, whether we like it or not, we must look to the north, and across the pole to Soviet Russia.

I think we can safely say that Canada, even more than the United States in many respects, has had to have relations well beyond the Western Hemisphere. We have had them for generations with Europe because of our political and economic ties with the old world; with Africa and South-East Asia because of the Commonwealth connection; with China and Japan because we are a Pacific power; and with the U.S.S.R. because of geography. The world-wide connections of the United States arise almost exclusively from the obligations she had to assume as the greatest power in the world.

That is why, perhaps, our relations with the other countries of Latin America have been relatively late in developing. We have had our hands full elsewhere. Our limited resources have been concentrated where we felt they had to be placed if our national existence was to be assured. But since the fifteen or twenty years since Canada began to emerge as an international power, those relations with the other countries of Latin America have developed with astonishing speed. We now have direct relations with eleven countries of Latin America and our trade and cultural contacts are increasing daily.

I have tried to explain why the position of Canada in the Western Hemisphere is quite different from that of the other countries of America. Perhaps I have not been sufficiently specific in showing why it is an American country in spite of these differences.

Geography is clearly not sufficient. It is not enough simply to say that Canada is an American state because it is situated physically in the Western Hemisphere. For the reasons I shall outline below I think Canada can be described as just as fully an American country as the United States or Argentina.

Let me consider first French Canada, about one-third of our total population. Even before the final defeat of the French régime in 1760, the French in Canada had begun to act and behave differently from their compatriots in France. The severe climate, the terribly difficult tasks of building farms and villages out of the wilderness, the constant threat of Indian and English attacks, developed a type of person unlike those who remained behind in the wealth and peace of the richest country in Europe.

This soon became apparent in the second and third generations of French-Canadians - passionately Catholic, sturdy, daring, conservatively attached to their way of life. It was indeed French-Canadians who provided the most daring commanders in the constant wars of the 18th century, and the most fool-hardy explorers in the expeditions which opened up the entire centre of the North American Continent - men like La Vérendrye who explored the great plains and reached the Rocky Mountains; Radisson who explored the North-West; Pierre Le Moyne d'Iberville who, in the dead of winter, crossed half the continent to surprise the British on Hudson's Bay and capture the "impregnable" bastion, Fort Churchill; and his brother, who explored the Mississippi River and founded New Orleans.

These men had all the virtues of the French of France, but they also had that new spirit of intense individualism, love of liberty and freedom of spirit that we associate with the new world. They were, of course, intensely patriotic to the crown, but they were above all Canadians. And when Louis XV finally capitulated to the British and surrendered Canada, very few of them returned to France, though one of the articles of the Treaty of Paris provided for the repatriation of anyone who wished to go. They preferred to take the risks of living under an alien régime than abandon what by then had come to be their native land.

The separation of Canada from France required a very serious psychological re-adjustment. The British conquerors recognised fortunately that the conversion of the French-Canadians into Protestant Anglo-Saxons would be an impossible task, as the expulsion of the French from Acadia thirty years before had proved. The British crown therefore created a system of government eminently feudalistic or seigneurial, which recognised the rights of the Canadians to their language, culture, legal system and religion. Thus the basis for what has been called the French miracle in Canada was created. And it was on this basis that the French-Canadians were able to preserve their identity in an Anglo-Saxon sea - but their identity not as Frenchmen, but as Canadians of French language. Paris still exerts a very strong cultural attraction for Canadians, but it is precisely the same kind of attraction that it exerts for Colombians.

The history of English Canada has been considerably different. From the conquest until the end of the American Revolution, central Canada was indisputably French. Only Nova Scotia had an appreciable English population dating from its earlier cession to Great Britain. After the Revolution came the great influx of British settlers - the hard core, Loyalists from the Thirteen Colonies, and after them a great wave of immigration above all from Scotland and Ireland. The British element in Canada is therefore made up predominantly of these three strains.

The Loyalists were mostly already Americans for several generations. Their principal differences from those Americans who remained south of the Great Lakes lay in their political outlook. In psychology they were people of the New World, but coming largely from the upper and upper middle classes, they had looked with suspicion on the Revolution. They were monarchists, in part because of loyalty to the British Crown, in part because they feared that the establishment of a republic would bring disastrous social consequences.

Thus the pattern of thinking in Canada was set in a strongly conservative mold, both in French and in English Canada for the next 100 years. But the attachment to the crown did not imply to these people any less attachment or loyalty to Canada. There just seemed to be no contradiction in the two so far as they were concerned.

It has been said that the two most characteristic influences in forming the Canadian personality have been Scottish and French. There are, of course, very many people in Canada of Scottish origin, and in some parts, particularly in the Maritime Provinces, this element is predominant, even to the extent of still speaking the Gaelic language. But it was not so much their numbers as their character which influenced our national make-up. The Scots came from a cold and difficult country, and they found themselves at home in Canada. Their habits of frugality, hard-work, obstinacy, ambition, piety, and at the same time love of the arts and education, proved ideal for the new country, and these characteristics have helped to form all of us in this mold. In education, for example, we have tended in English Canada to follow the Scottish model. Indeed for many generations the educational system proved superior to the needs of the country, and thousands of university graduates had to go south to the United States, since their own country could not absorb the annual out-put from the colleges. Someone indeed has compared Canada with United States in this respect, to the relationship of Scotland to England.

Finally, there is in Canada the important racial element from the rest of Europe. At the end of the nineteenth century, they began coming to the great prairie provinces and the new industrial cities - Ukrainians and Germans predominantly, but also in large numbers Scandinavians, Dutch, Belgians, Poles, Italians, Hungarians. And this immigration is continuing, averaging about 120,000 a year since the end of the war, including nearly 30,000 Hungarians in their recent escape from Communist oppression.

Our approach to immigration has been different from that of the United States melting-pot theory. We could not really accept that idea if the concept of a bi-lingual and bi-racial state were to continue. We have, therefore, attempted to assimilate the new elements, at the same time



preserving as much as we could of their cultural heritages from the old world. Thus the Ukrainians, for example, are proud to be known as Ukrainian-Canadians, and their contributions to the artistic, as well as the commercial and political life of the prairies has been very valuable. But these new Canadians cut their political ties with Europe when they crossed the Atlantic, and their outlook on life is strictly North American.

I have talked about the three main racial elements - French, British, central European - which go to make up the modern Canadian nation. Each element, of course, has its special qualities, which could hardly be otherwise when you combine such disparate peoples. But nevertheless, there are a number of denominations common to all Canadians, which distinguish us from the Europeans. Some of these characteristics are also common to all the peoples of the Western Hemisphere. Others distinguish Canada from the other countries with which we share this continent.

These are, in the first place, a strong attachment to individual freedom and democracy and a firm rejection of the class system. In addition we have retained the British respect for law and order, and the French love of logic and the arts.

Perhaps the most important element in forming the Canadian character is, however, the North. Even in Colombia there is a difference between the Bogotano and the Barranquillero. Climate does change a race. Our long, hard winters have a sobering effect on the people. It means, to start with, that we have to work twice as hard as the Texan, say, in order to earn the same living. And the lack of sun makes us more dour and less demonstrative than the southerners.

Finally there is the psychological effect of the vast, unbelievably huge wilderness of ice and snow and tundra which covers the Arctic part of the country, and the huge and often unpopulated distances, even in the south, create a feeling of loneliness and melancholy. This makes the Canadian self-reliant, but often also undemonstrative and silent. And this has little to do with race. It is something inherited from the environment.

I think I might quote some passages from "The Unknown Country", a book by Bruce Hutchinson, which attempts to explain the curious complex which is Canada. "My country", he wrote, "is hidden in the dark and teeming brain of youth upon the eve of its manhood. My country has not found itself, nor felt its power nor learned its true place. It is all visions and doubts and hopes and dreams. It is strength and weakness, despair and joy, wild confusions and restless striving.... Who can know our loneliness, on the immensity of prairie, in the dark forest and on the windy sea rock?

A few lights, a faint glow is our largest city in the vast breath of night, and all around blackness and emptiness and silence, where no man walks..... All about us lies Canada, forever untouched, unknown, beyond our grasp, breathing deep in the darkness".

This is the environment I spoke of; this the atmosphere which forms our special place in the world.

And that environment, as I hope I have shown, is an American environment. And our outlook is an American outlook. We Canadians are above all Americans, though Americans with a difference. And this hemisphere is large enough, and rich enough, to accept gladly various ways of life, so long as they are not mutually contradictory to that basic concept which is Americanism.

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