



# STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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## CANADA'S CENTENNIAL AND NATIONAL UNITY

Remarks by the Secretary of State for External Affairs,  
the Honourable Paul Martin, at the opening of the Jay  
Centennial celebrations, Hamilton, August 13, 1967.

I was delighted to be invited to take part in the "Hamilton Happening" today and to represent the Government of Canada in cutting the ribbon officially opening the Jay Centennial celebrations...

Today is a day for fun. At the same time I think that we should consider some of the more serious reasons why we are celebrating our country's birthday.

One is that we all like a success story - and Canada is just that. Our country was created consciously in defiance of geographic and economic pulls to the south. It was created from many disparate elements. But the obstacles were overcome and for 100 years we have been developing a remarkable web of relations, institutions and understandings bringing together different peoples, regions and provinces. We can be proud of our efforts.

But if we have achieved much, there are many urgent tasks that remain. The most important, in my view, is the achievement of further progress towards national unity.

Some people argue that we shall only achieve unity in this country if we are not self-conscious about it - if we let the problems work themselves out; in short, they say that no special effort is required. I do not agree. Such an approach may have been soothing to some Canadians in the past, but the measure of its inadequacy is that the great majority of Canadians believe that national unity is not something that can be swept under a rug, even one 4,000 miles long!

Canadians across the nation are beginning to realize that this question is central to our future, and they are prepared to do something about it. A few years ago, there was little understanding of the aspirations of other areas of the country. When disagreements were not simply ignored, they were subjected to vitriolic verbal treatment. I believe that today, despite the evident differences between elements in Canada, we have found a new maturity in dealing with our national life.

Besides a wonderful opportunity for a party, centennial year seems to have spurred us to greater efforts in examining our national life and finding ways of settling our differences.

In mid-1967, I think that Canadians recognize as, the Prime Minister said recently that:

"there were ... two founding races and languages and cultures in Canada - the British and the French - and with that foundation our country can only survive, let alone develop, on the full acceptance by the English-speaking majority of the French-speaking minority as a special linguistic, racial and cultural element in this state, Canada. Where the 'Franch fact' has full scope for its development and expansion .., it does not need any separate political entity to enshrine its' cultural and linguistic identity."

We should also recognize that, with the preservation of this identity, French-Canadians are prepared to work on a basis of complete equality with all Canadians toward national objectives.

Yet a total preoccupation with the differences between English- and French-speaking Canadians would not reflect an accurate image of our country or of current issues. More than a quarter of our people descended from or came from neither the British Isles nor France. Canadians with different backgrounds from those of the two founding races have a significant contribution to make to our national life as individuals and as groups and their presence is bound to exercise an increasingly important influence on Canada's development.

The problem of unity in Canada existed in 1867; it is with us today; and I expect that it will still be with our descendants a 100 years from now. But despite the problem Canada became a reality in 1867; it is a strong and dynamic country today; and I have confidence that Canada will be even stronger in its second centennial a 100 years hence. Canadians - of different origins and outlooks - are determined to make it so.

In all our provinces and among all our groups we are prepared to make sacrifices for our country - in our own way.

Our progress in the past was attributable to Canadian endeavour and imagination. Our progress in the future will also depend entirely on Canadians.

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