



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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OUR NORTH AMERICAN PARTNERSHIP

An address by Mr. L.S. St. Laurent, Prime Minister of Canada, at St. Lawrence University, Canton, New York, on June 11, 1950.

I want to begin what I have to say by a word of thanks to the Board of Trustees and Faculty of St. Lawrence University for the honour they are doing me by conferring upon me the degree of Doctor of Laws and thereby making me a member of St. Lawrence University.

This is the second time in a week that I have thanked a university in the United States for conferring an honorary degree upon the person who happens to be the Prime Minister of Canada. And that is not all. The other degree was conferred last Tuesday by St. Louis University. So I am just a little afraid that since my name happens to be Louis St. Laurent - some pronounce it St. Lawrence - there may be a good many people who will think I must be totally lacking in modesty in allowing this to occur.

Happily you here at St. Lawrence know it is only a coincidence and not an expression of personal vanity. I am afraid I embarrassed the President of the University last year by agreeing to come here and then losing my voice in a general election campaign. So what I am doing today is really acknowledging, a full year later, an honour this university had offered, and I had been hoping to accept, a year ago.

Now I will confess to you that there was perhaps just a touch of vanity in the readiness with which I accepted the honour. The name of the University does appeal to me, and the fact that the University belongs to this great river valley, in which so many of your families and mine have dwelt for some three centuries did make an appeal, which it would have been hard for anyone with a sense of history and tradition to resist.

I know, of course, that the honorary degrees which are conferred upon me are given largely because of the position I hold and that they are intended primarily as an honour to Canada. But I can assure you that both as Prime Minister of Canada, as long as I am in that office, and afterwards as plain Louis St. Laurent I shall always be proud to belong to St. Lawrence University. I understand there is usually a question of reciprocity involved in receiving an honorary degree. According to the nursery rhymes even little Tommy Tucker was expected to sing for his supper. Fortunately in the case of an honorary degree, the person who is to receive the degree does not have to pass the examination. But no one wants to fail.

It is a great advantage in examinations to be able to choose the questions to which one thinks he knows the answer. And that is why I have chosen to speak to you on a theme which is certainly not original and about which I realize I have nothing really new to say. Happily, like a lot of other old things, the older it gets the better it gets. I am sure you have already guessed that I am going to talk about our North American partnership.

For two centuries after the continent was settled by Europeans the St. Lawrence Valley was the scene of intermittent conflict. First there was conflict between the French and the British and later, after the British colonies achieved their independence, by a strange turn of the wheel of fortune, the conflict went on between the British and the Canadians on one side, and the French and the Americans on the other side. Now those two centuries of conflict finally came to an end in the year 1815. The conflict came to an end in North America, and what is just as important, it also came to an end in Europe.

Since 1815 English-speaking and French-speaking people all over the world have lived at peace with one another.

It is well for us to remember that the North Atlantic alliance we established only a year ago rests upon a foundation of a century and a third of confident co-operation both in the new world and the old between those who speak the English and French languages.

Though I am going to speak particularly of the development of peaceful co-operation on this side of the Atlantic, let us not forget that on the other side of the Atlantic, Great Britain and France have followed a parallel course. Now those parallel courses, in a happy defiance of both logic and geometry, have been joined together in our North Atlantic community.

The first great landmark in the development of genuine peace between your country and mine was the Rush-Bagot Agreement of 1817. The waters of the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence were disarmed by common agreement, and that disarmament has never been disregarded by either party, and no one has ever seriously suggested that that particular step should be retraced.

Disarmament, despite its importance, is really a negative step. In 1909 our two countries took an important positive step in co-operation - in the case of Canada, it was taken for us by Great Britain - in the treaty between the United States and Great Britain relating to boundary waters.

The most important provision of the treaty of 1909 was one which established an International Joint Commission of the United States and Canada composed of six commissioners, three appointed by the President of the United States and three by the King on the recommendation of the Governor in Council of the Dominion of Canada.

Forty years ago Canada was in fact already a nation. But our international status was still that of a colony. The provision in that treaty empowering the government of Canada to appoint the Canadian members of this International Joint Commission marked an important advance in our national status.

The establishment of the Joint Commission was, therefore, not only an important stage in Canada's relations with the United States, it was also an important stage in the development of a

new relationship between Canada and Great Britain. The Joint Commission was established primarily to deal with matters relating to the boundary between our two countries, and particularly to the waterways which form so large and important a part of that boundary and those other streams that flow back and forth across that boundary.

Those of us who live in the St. Lawrence Valley and the basin of the Great Lakes have an especially keen interest in the beneficial use of boundary waters. I am sure all of us hope that we are really approaching the day when we can start to make full use of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence system both for navigation and power. I know we in Canada are getting rather impatient about the delay. From end to end of Canada there is an overwhelming feeling that a development which will strengthen and enrich this whole St. Lawrence area will benefit all parts of the continent.

I said we in Canada were getting rather impatient. After all, it is eighteen years since the first agreement which we were ready to carry out failed to get sufficient support in your Congress; and it is nine years since we made the second agreement. Our need in Canada is urgent; particularly for more electrical energy. If the Niagara Diversion Treaty can be ratified quickly by your Senate, that will help; but both countries need, and we in Canada certainly want to get ahead with the larger scheme.

Of course, the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence are not the only waterway in which our two countries have a common interest. The devastating floods of the Red River of the North have given new urgency to the problems of conservation and flood prevention in the middle of the continent. And I know all of us in North America hope the day may come when we can give all our attention to co-operation for beneficial and constructive purposes. That has not been the situation for this past decade, and it is not so today.

Our most urgent preoccupation in these latter years has been co-operation for our common security. You are all familiar with the great landmarks in defence co-operation represented by the late President Roosevelt's declaration at Queen's University, and Mr. Mackenzie King's reciprocal declaration at Woodbridge, Ontario in 1938; by the Ogdensburg Agreement of the dark days of 1940 which established the Permanent Joint Board on Defence; and the Hyde Park Declaration of 1941 which enabled both our countries to pool our industrial resources for the common prosecution of the late war.

We in Canada feel that similar co-operation in defence production will increase the post-war security of both countries. Even in wartime we Canadians paid cash for our purchases in the United States. We want to go on paying cash for what we buy for defence. But we cannot buy unless we can also sell. We were particularly pleased by the announcement in Washington a few weeks ago that some of the obstacles to defence purchases in Canada had been cleared away, and that a programme for such purchases on a reciprocal basis was being developed for the year beginning July 1. This programme will assist us in Canada to make an effective contribution to the combined strength of the Atlantic Nations and will thereby strengthen not only Canada's defence but the defence of the United States. We hope it is only a first step.

But defence, like disarmament, is in itself a negative conception, and I am glad to have the opportunity to express in his own country my profound agreement with the views repeatedly expressed by your Secretary of State, Mr. Dean Acheson, that the

preservation of our civilization cannot be assured by negative measures alone. If we are ultimately to win this so-called cold war, we must live by our faith in free institutions and win over the rest of the world by our example.

I said earlier that the Treaty of 1909 marked an important stage in the development of a new relationship between Canada and Great Britain. That new relationship is a relationship of complete equality between our two nations. And with that complete equality has come a closer bond of friendship and a greater fund of good-will than ever before existed between Canada and Great Britain. The same principle applies with equal force in the relationship between the United States and Canada. You in the United States obviously have the power and the strength to dominate our country. But you also have the wisdom and the respect for freedom to refrain from exercising that power and that strength. The fact that you respect our freedom, the fact that you treat us as an equal partner, make our country a far more potent ally than any satellite could ever be.

The United States today is more powerful than it has ever been before, and the Canadian nation today is more securely independent and self-reliant than our country ever was in the past. That relationship is not only a great advertisement of freedom; it surely points the only way towards a peaceful world.

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