



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 63/22

SPECIAL CANADIAN - U.S. RELATIONS IN THE ATLANTIC COMMUNITY

Address by the Right Honourable Lester B. Pearson,
Prime Minister of Canada, to the Pilgrims of the
United States, New York, November 6, 1963.

The Pilgrim Fathers have been described as those who came from the Old World to remove forever the mystery of the New. We in Canada share in many ways the Pilgrim tradition, but we have added to its Puritan content a gay and Gallic variation.

One part of our historical, linguistic and cultural background derives from the story of those who came to New France about the time the Pilgrim Fathers came to New England. Quebec was founded in the year 1608, Plymouth Rock unveiled in 1620. The United Empire Loyalists provided another important Canadian link with your early history. In that significant migration, the 13 colonies lost, and Canada gained, many worthy descendants of the Pilgrims.

Your society has, for 60 years, provided an important forum for discussion of mutual interests and international responsibilities in that region which we now know and others often refer to, perhaps optimistically, as the Atlantic Community. With your counterpart, organized in London in 1902, you have epitomized the ever-increasing measure of Anglo-American friendship which has become a solid foundation for the creation and maintenance of a free and democratic Atlantic society. I pay my tribute to your contribution to that friendship and especially, if I may, to your President, who has added to his services in this field important and constructive contributions to better United States - Canadian understanding.

However, as Governor Rockefeller has just said, an Anglo-American axis is not enough. It must be as a stage to something even bigger, embracing the Atlantic Community, and become a part of an Atlantic axis, an Atlantic Community.

The Atlantic Community

This Community, at least in its institutional expressions, has lately been marking time. This is unfortunate, because in this matter we cannot stand still. If we don't move forward, we will slide backwards. Moving forward means bringing Western Europe and North America closer together politically and economically; it means rejecting not only the Channel but the Atlantic as a line which divides the constituent nations into separate groups. "Thus far, and no further" doesn't make any sense, here.

Even if the Atlantic Community is not separated in this way, it must come to mean more than a military coalition of states, each primarily concerned about its own sovereignty, its own prerogatives, its own past, present and future. National values, national traditions, national identities must, of course, be preserved, but increasingly in the context of collective policy and action. There can be now no satisfactory national security or national progress without what used to be called "foreign entanglements".

To stand firmly and exclusively on the immutable and exclusive rights of national sovereignty in this nuclear, stratospheric, jet-propelled age makes as much sense as driving to this dinner with a horse and buggy -- indeed, it doesn't make nearly as much sense. You could have got to this dinner, New York traffic being what it is, just as quickly and comfortably in a buggy as in an eight-cylinder motor car.

Moreover, I repeat, the larger community must be based on something more permanent than a military alliance in the face of a common danger; it must rest on political and economic co-operation, on a growing feeling of Atlantic solidarity and cohesiveness.

May I quote a few words on this point from the 1956 report of the Committee of Three on Non-Military Co-operation in NATO? That report has this to say:

"The fundamental, historical fact is that the nation state, by itself and relying exclusively on national policy and national power, is inadequate for progress or even for survival in the nuclear age. As the founders of the North Atlantic Treaty foresaw, the growing interdependence of states, politically and economically as well as militarily, calls for an ever-increasing measure of international cohesion and co-operation. Some states may be able to enjoy a degree of political and economic independence when things are going well. No state, however powerful, can guarantee its security and its welfare by national action, alone".

This is from a NATO report seven years ago; it remains true, perhaps even truer, today.

Canadian Viewpoint

The compulsion of events and their tragic impact for us in two wars had driven this home to Canadians, along with the importance to us and to the world of Anglo-American friendship. Canada has had the good fortune to share in the benefits and responsibilities of that friendship. Whenever it shows any sign of weakening, we are the first to worry, and for good reason.

Traditionally, Canada's interests have been centred on the North Atlantic area. Economically, culturally, politically and strategically, the relationships within this region have in the past tended to be the decisive ones for us. A hundred thousand Canadian crosses in Flanders and other foreign fields are sad witness of the fact.

Our relations with Asia, Africa and Latin America are developing quickly and significantly. This is important for us and welcomed by us, but the Atlantic triangle, the Atlantic Community, continues to occupy a central place in our affairs and in our concern.

It would be invidious to suggest whether one side of the triangle has greater significance for us than the others. But there is no doubt that the square of the problems on the American side exceeds the sum of those on the other two. So far as we are concerned, the square of the benefits on that particular side may also, of course, be disproportionately large, as we Canadians do well to remind themselves. Both the problems and benefits come from the importance and the intimacy of our relationship with the United States. Canadians and Americans are all mixed-up, together. Mixtures are rarely perfect, but usually stimulating. They develop interesting tastes and an occasional headache.

If Canada and the United States were not trading with each other to an extent, as our chairman has pointed out, not equalled by any two countries in the world, there would be fewer trade problems between us. If Canadian and United States industries were not so closely linked together, there would be fewer problems resulting from investment connections, inter-company relations and control policies. If United States and Canadian labour did not have joint unions, naturally headquartered in the United States, certain serious international labour difficulties that have recently disturbed us would not have arisen.

We should be careful not to ignore or minimize these problems, but we should also be careful not to distort and misrepresent them. When Canada seeks to defend her own national interests, and this causes difficulties, as it sometimes does, for certain United States interests, we are charged by some with being anti-American. The charge is usually made with a feeling of shock and surprise; we are your best friends, and hardly a foreign country, at all. Et tu, Brute!

This flattering identification by assimilation often confuses real issues. The chairman, referring to the closeness of our relationship, said that in Canada you can get your hair cut while you are having your shoes shined in the United States. That's true, I believe; it's also true, you can get your hair cut in Canada and your hair curled in the United States, and vice-versa! This merely means our people are very close together!

Our peoples are so close together, so friendly. They talk together about the same things and in language that is clear and understandable. Our economies and our activities are so intertwined that, when we in Canada do something by national action to protect a national interest, we are charged, more often in sorrow than in anger, with acting not like North Americans but "like Canadians".

Canada - A Separate Nation

It would be wise for Americans to consider any Canadian government as a friendly, foreign government whose first responsibility is the protection of the national interests of its own people, which includes as a very important

element, I hasten to add, the necessity of close co-operation with a good and gigantic friend and neighbour.

It's a tricky, not an easy situation; and is just one more reason why Canada, with its 19 million inhabitants occupying half a continent, but with most of them clustered close to the United States boundary in a kind of continental, 4,000-mile-long ribbon development, it is one of the additional reasons why Canada is one of the most difficult countries in the world to govern. Especially for the head of a minority government!

That difficulty -- and I am not complaining about it -- is increased by the fact that our people have come near to achieving your material standard of living - nearer than any other people - and, living so close to you in every way, we will not now accept anything less. We want to have two television sets in every house, two chickens in every pot, two cars in every garage. But it's far harder for our 19 million to finance all this than it is for our wealthier neighbor. So, we borrow - largely from you.

These borrowings have had happy as well as less-happy results for us. They have been responsible for much - and we should acknowledge it - of the growth and development of our country. Without your capital we could not have maintained the pace and pattern of our development. Your money has saved us from the disastrous consequences of a large, unfavourable trade balance with you. It has also put us deeply into debt and in some danger of mortgaging our future. That naturally worries us. In terms of your income, our unfavourable balance of payments with the U.S.A. during the last five years will have averaged \$17 billion each year.

That gives us, or should give us, furiously to think. I want to assure you, however, that in all this concern there is no anti-American feeling in the sense that there is any unfriendliness to American people. Of course not, and there will not be.

On the contrary, we are so friendly that we feel that we can criticize the United States as a Texan does, and in the same idiom. But, with this friendliness, there is a resolve in Canada, now, to promote and protect our own development as a separate nation as best we can.

We are right in trying to do this, as I am sure Americans will understand. As a former Governor-General of Canada, the Right Honourable Vincent Massey has put it: "Americans do not dislike us when we are loyal to ourselves, and they respect us when we stand up for what we believe to be our rights, as they are always zealous in defending what they believe to be theirs".

But we, and you also, should always be careful to make sure that, in the protection of our national interest, not only our policies but our procedures are fair to our friends; that, if experience shows we have made a mistake, we should try to correct it; that we do not fall victim to a super-sensitive, obstinate and narrow economic nationalism, which would be more foolish to Canada than for almost any country in the world, because we live by foreign trade.

Interlocking Interests

We should not forget that Canadian national interests cannot be considered and safeguarded, apart from yours. Oh, we can build up our made-in-Canada shock absorbers but we cannot secure immunity from the impact of anything you do. When the results of your actions are good, this is to our quick and great advantage; when they are bad, we often are the first and foremost country to suffer.

So, no wonder we worry about what you do. You may worry about us, too, but while we can merely hurt you by some fiscal or taxation measure, you can ruin us by one of yours.

Most of these problems could have been avoided if we had been chosen or been forced to forego the benefits of close relations between our two countries. If, by any stretch of the imagination, we had been able to remain more aloof from each other over the years, we would have fewer problems now. But we would certainly both be the poorer for it, and in many ways; that's not the solution that I am looking for.

Close and varied neighbourly relations inevitably bring varied and serious problems. We should not try to avoid or ignore them. That would be unrealistic and would merely store up trouble for the future. We do better when we recognize frankly that the problems are bound to arise and then try to do something sensible about them as they do arise.

As good neighbours, we must be able to sit down and discuss them, realizing that solutions will not be found without hard work and give and take on both sides. It won't be done by mirrors or miracles, and won't be done by after-dinner speeches.

Notwithstanding the 150 years of peace (and we can take pride in that); notwithstanding the undefended border and our common addiction to the Beverly Hillbillies, Casey Stengel and public opinion; notwithstanding national pride and sentiment, domestic politics and a touchiness native to North Americans; all these will operate at times to the detriment of good Canada-United States relations. They will occasionally get our governments into hot water with each other. G.K. Chesterton once said: "I like hot water; it keeps you clean." Hot, yes, but not scalding!

The inevitable disparity of dependence of our two countries on each other creates a disparity in concern and in interest for each other. This is a source of some of our difficulties and some of our problems, and we have some good examples of that at the present time.

Exaggeration Versus Indifference

What may seem to us, and is to us, a major issue, such as the effect of your tax-equilization proposal, will command big, black and continuing headlines in our press. So will harassment of our shipping in United States Great Lakes ports by some of your unions which disapprove of the action taken by our free and responsible Parliament to settle a Canadian

difficulty in the way that seems best to us. Such events will get little or no attention here unless - and this is a depressing feature - the news seems bad enough to be big.

You tend to underplay Canadian and American problems unless they become conflicts. We tend to overplay them and read a disaster into a difference.

To read some Canadian headlines and listen to some Canadian pronouncements, and a few American, you would think that the unguarded boundary now needs the United Nations police force to keep the peace. I deplore this exaggeration almost as much as I worry about the general indifference on this side to the important problems which are exaggerated. It is shocking, for instance, to see a Canadian headline, as I did recently, that reads: "Angry U.S.A. lashes Canada," when the basis for this "lashing" was a report of a criticism of Canadian grain-trading policy by one unnamed United States official in the Department of Agriculture!

A sense of responsibility, a sense of proportion and mutual understanding is needed on both sides - above all, a sane and mature approach to our problems by politicians, press and public.

Mutual Understanding Necessary

So far as the relations between the two governments are concerned, I am very happy to testify that, though we have had as difficult and sensitive problems to face in the last six months as in any previous period, throughout this time the contacts and the communications between Washington and Ottawa have been continuous, amicable and frank. It makes all the difference (I know from a long diplomatic experience) when you can talk to each other in the friendly, frank and direct way that political leaders in our two countries now do.

It should be no surprise to anyone that, in spite of this, many of our problems have persisted. I myself have never pretended that all differences between our two countries would be resolved by friendly visits or a friendly atmosphere. These things can help - help greatly - but our relations are too complicated and the problems too deep-rooted for that, that kind of easy solution.

Some years ago I ventured to prophesy, and the prophecy came as a shock to some and was strongly criticized, that the days of relatively easy and automatic relations between us were over. Later events have merely confirmed that forecast. This does not mean that the relations between our two countries in the future will be less good than they have been in the past; it does mean that they will require more vigilant attention, a greater effort of mutual understanding.

By reason of geography alone, Canada and the United States are inevitably and inescapably in a special position in relation to each other, and it will continue that way. The special features of the physical relationship between our countries are reinforced by the other special ties which have developed and have brought us so close together in so many ways.

It must be our purpose and our resolve to maintain that good and close relationship. I know that we will do so. I know that the nature and the depth of our friendship will be equal to the challenge of any pressures on it.

We are good neighbours, on this continent. We are the joint heirs in the New World of the great traditions of the British Isles. We are the transatlantic members of the Atlantic Community. We work with men of goodwill everywhere in the world to seek peace and preserve freedom.

So, we will stand together - but, more important, we will move forward together.

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