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QUEBEC IN WORLD AFFAIRS - MYTH OR REALITY?

Speech by Mr. Marcel Cadieux, Under Secretary of State for External Affairs, to the Annual Meeting of the Club des Relations internationales, University of Montreal, March 2, 1968

... Quebec's presence on the world scene is, I believe, not merely a fact; it is an obvious fact. That Quebec must be more active on that scene also appears obvious to me. The real problem is how Quebec is to play its role in the world: alone, by and for itself, or as one element in Canada's representation. In other words, are Quebec's activities abroad to be separate from Canada's or are they to be Canadian?

The problem is basically the same at home and abroad, and amounts to this: is a Quebecker a Canadian as well, or are the two loyalties mutually exclusive? If the answer to the latter question is yes, then, obviously, no compromise is possible. If not, then I think there is every possibility that an accommodation can be worked out.

But let us define our terms: when we say "Quebecker", we mean a person living in the Province of Quebec. We do not mean "French-Canadian". Certainly, 85 per cent of the Quebeckers are French-Canadians, but there are almost one million French-Canadians living elsewhere in Canada, mainly in Ontario, New Brunswick and Manitoba. Bearing this in mind, it remains a fact nevertheless, that Quebec is, to employ a familiar phrase, the "homeland of French-Canadians". But this does not mean that the Quebec government is the only one with an obligation to promote and protect the interests of French-Canadians.

By the time the federal-provincial conference last February had ended, it was clear that the warnings and recommendations of the Dunton-Laurendeau Commission had been understood by the majority of the other provinces and by the Federal Government. Doubtless their motives were not entirely magnanimous; they realized that, if the country was to survive as a unit, equal status had to be given to the French and English languages and cultures. While this reasoning is not entirely selfless, it does show clear recognition of their vested interests. How many world crises and problems could be settled by this kind of approach! Let us examine, if you will, this area of clearly-recognized interests and ask ourselves one question: what is the interest of French-Canadians and Quebeckers in the field of foreign relations?

We all know, and the papers constantly remind us, as they echo the statements of politicians in Quebec and Ottawa, that it is essential for the survival of the French language and culture in Canada that Quebec play a part in the world's French-speaking community, that it strengthen its ties with the French-speaking nations of the world, and with France in particular. I am struck by the fact that, not only does everyone agree on this but both the Federal Government and the provincial governments are taking positive and effective steps to carry out this purpose. To some commentators it even seems as if the governments are attempting to outdo one another. Even if we accept this interpretation, which I do not, what does it prove? Simply that the Canadian Government considers it as much its duty as Quebec's to maintain the closest possible ties with the French-speaking world. In short, there is no difference in this area between the goals of Quebec and Ottawa, both of which are seeking closer contacts with the French-speaking community in order to assist in the development of French culture at home and to make our version of this culture known abroad. But it makes a difference whether this policy is conducted by Quebec or Ottawa. If conducted by Quebec, it will to some extent serve the interests of Quebecers, but only their interests. If it is undertaken on a broader base by the Canadian Government, it can serve the interests not only of Quebecers but also of the French-speaking people of Ontario, Manitoba and New Brunswick, not to mention those English Canadians who are willing to accept the "French fact". But there is an even more serious consideration; if that part of Canada's foreign policy which is concerned with our relations with the French-speaking world became the monopoly of the Province of Quebec, the tendency people have to identify Quebec with French Canada would become that much stronger, at the very time (and this is the supreme paradox) when the "French fact" has finally acquired its rights in the other provinces. In other words, at the very moment when the rest of Canada is discovering that it has a real interest in French culture, and when the French minorities in the other provinces can hope to breathe more easily and, so to speak, in French, Quebec, by insisting that it is the sole genuine representative of French Canada on the international level, risks undoing what is now finally, after 100 years, being accomplished in our country to realize an objective which has always been uppermost for Quebecers. Instead of working for the diffusion of the French language, Quebec may succeed, perhaps unintentionally, in helping to restrict it. It is, in fact, obvious that, if we accept the idea that French Canada is Quebec, by the same token we must accept the idea that the rest of Canada is English. In short, I see a danger that, if we accept the premise that only Quebec is logically entitled to represent French Canada in the world French-speaking community, then we must accept the conclusion that what is not part of Quebec may be excluded from this French-speaking community. By doing this we should isolate Quebec from the rest of the country, deprive French-Canadians outside Quebec of the right to be French, and discourage those English-speaking Canadians who are willing to accept French culture.

If, on the contrary, we accept the fact that in foreign countries it is the voice of Canada that is to be heard, if we accept the idea that it is the Government of Canada which is to make formal commitments on behalf of the whole country, then, if this voice is to be heard in a French-speaking environment, we automatically accept the idea that it will be a French voice. In view of the demographic and political situation in Canada, this voice, if it is to ring true, must have an accent that English-speaking Canadians can recognize without difficulty. There is no reason why a Canadian delegation to a meeting of the French-speaking community could not include, besides Quebecers, French-Canadians from other provinces, and perhaps even a few English Canadians. Obviously, such a

practice would permit Quebec's voice to be heard on the world scene; but it would also give another dimension to Canada's French voice, which could thus reach beyond Quebec's borders and, at the same time, assist in its development both in this country and abroad.

If, as I hope, I have shown that the clear interests and ideals of Quebeckers, French-Canadians and all other Canadians are more accurately reflected in the international French-speaking community by French-oriented federal action than by exclusively provincial and necessarily more restricted action, it goes without saying that, in those fields that do not relate exclusively to the French-speaking community, Quebec's interests must also be served within a Canadian context. In saying this, I may appear to be tilting at windmills, inasmuch as no one, to my knowledge, is contesting the Federal Government's jurisdiction in external policy; the only fields where there is, in fact, any disagreement are those relating to the French-speaking community and those under provincial jurisdiction. But it is essential, in my opinion, to distinguish very clearly between Canada's internal and external relations. Within our borders, there is no hierarchy among the various governments. We have a central government which has jurisdiction in certain fields; and we have provincial governments which have jurisdiction in certain other fields. Our constitution (or what passes for one, the British North America Act) was written 100 years ago and naturally contains a certain number of vague points that must be clarified in the light of modern reality. On this, the Prime Minister and the provincial premiers agreed at the federal-provincial conference that took place early in February. Whatever changes they may make to the constitution, jurisdiction in internal matters will remain divided between the Federal Government and the provinces. Education, for instance, is clearly within the competence of the provinces, while national defence is a federal responsibility. Thus, each government, whether federal or provincial, is completely sovereign in its own field.

We are so used to this situation that the division of powers between the Federal Government and the provincial governments seems quite normal - as, indeed, it is in domestic matters. At the international level, however, the situation is quite different. As seen from abroad, Canada, like all countries, whether federal or unitary, is a single entity and international law is not concerned with whether this agreement or that convention falls within federal or provincial jurisdiction. In international law, there is only one Canada possessing international personality and it is the Federal Government which represents this Canada. There could no more be any question of a sovereign country or international organization signing a treaty with a province of Canada than of that country or body signing an international agreement with the Canton of Berne in Switzerland, Croatia in Yugoslavia or the State of Massachusetts in the United States. This rule of international sovereignty, which was not invented by Canada, derives from international law, international usage and plain good sense. Under this rule, therefore, each federal state must settle within its borders the problem of how each of its component parts is to obtain the benefits which accrue from contacts and relations with foreign countries and international bodies. In almost all federal states, the central government has maintained exclusive control over international relations. In Canada, we have acted differently; the central government has long had a flexible policy in the field of external relations. You will not see a

"Valais House" or find representatives of a German land or Mexican state in Montreal, Toronto or Vancouver. There have, however, been delegations from Quebec, Ontario and the Maritimes in London for many years. There are provincial representatives in New York and many other American cities. Quebec also has a delegation-general in Paris, and another in Milan; and this list is by no means exhaustive. Some of these provincial delegations abroad have been in existence for many years, and their existence has never posed any problems or caused the Federal Government to object. Yet they concern themselves with a host of matters that could be considered rather directly connected with international relations. Anything, in fact, can be considered as coming under the heading of international politics and anything can, moreover, change its nature under certain conditions and become highly political. That is why, for example, commercial or cultural relations with a friendly country are not in themselves political matters. But if the same type of relations are established with other countries, the case may be quite different. Recall, if you will, the uproar caused by the sale of trucks to Cuba by France and Britain a few years ago. Imagine the reaction in certain countries if Canada or one of its provinces decided to negotiate a cultural agreement with Communist China. In any case, these provincial houses or delegations in other countries have concerned themselves for years with tourism, immigration, trade, teacher exchanges, investment, etc. - all matters that may serve the interests of the provinces concerned and come within provincial jurisdiction.

No problems arose, since these provincial delegations did not claim to be embassies or consulates. These provinces were successfully engaged in promoting their own special interests. The Federal Government has encouraged, and continues to encourage, the international activities undertaken by the provinces to promote their own interests in matters within their jurisdiction. This is a reasonable approach; yet very few federal countries allow such freedom of action on the international scene to their provinces. Such an arrangement does not and should not create any conflict between the Federal Government and the provincial governments as long as both respect the basic principle that, on the international plane, there is only one Canada. Basically, what this means in practice is that only representatives of the central government may represent the country in its dealings with other countries or on international organizations and that only the representatives of the central government may sign international agreements. Essentially, this is all a question of procedure, and heaven knows how important procedure is in diplomacy.

In substance, Quebec loses nothing in respecting this procedure; on the contrary, it is in Quebec's interest to play a role both on the world scene and in Canada - to play its part in the French-speaking community of the world, benefiting from the cultural enrichment which it may derive from exchanges, and also to play its part in the national life of Canada. There would, of course, be a conflict between these two aims if the Federal Government opposed the movement toward closer relations with the French-speaking community. But the fact is that Canada is becoming bilingual; it is opening its doors to French culture. Quebec was isolated for many years. This is no longer true. From now on other provinces are going to be bilingual and therefore increasingly interested in the French-speaking world, as has been the case for some time now with the governments at Ottawa and Quebec. What was once a dream can now become a reality. It is this

reality which must be developed and reflected abroad. By working in co-operation with the Federal Government, Quebec gains in two ways: first, by ensuring its contacts with the world French-speaking community just as though Quebec itself had dealt with these countries directly; secondly, by helping to develop the French fact in Canada in association with other provincial governments and with the Federal Government.

You may, perhaps, be familiar with the document entitled Federalism and International Relations. From the legal point of view, this paper makes a number of clear-cut statements. Indeed it asserts, and supports the assertion with evidence, that only the federal authorities may represent a federal state in its relations with other states. I repeat that this is true for all federal states and that the Canadian federal system is as flexible in its attitude toward the provinces as any. However, in the manner in which it recommends that this federal control be applied, this document is very broad and flexible. The document, in fact, opens the way to all possible forms of co-operation with the provinces and allows them full scope in this area, on the condition that a certain form of procedure or, better still, a certain attitude, be respected.

I mentioned a moment ago certain provincial delegations abroad which were set up with the approval and co-operation of the Federal Government. It was also the Federal Government that authorized the cultural exchange between France and Quebec. This exchange was negotiated directly between Quebec and France but, following the usual practice, before it was initialled, federal approval was given in a diplomatic note to the French Government. Why should it be otherwise? In substance, this agreement benefits Quebec and, by the same token, Canada. In form, the result would have been the same if Quebec had signed the agreement itself, but with this difference - it would have been contrary to practice and to international law and, above all, the signing would then have had solely provincial, rather than national, significance. By initialling the exchange of notes, the Federal Government signified its approval of the policy of closer relations between France and Quebec, which, of course, was and still is in line with the Federal Government's policy of drawing closer to France.

That simple gesture of initialling had a symbolic value. It was a sign of co-operation.

So it is in the other fields of international politics. If Quebec is represented in a national delegation to an international meeting, the Federal Government is thereby aided by Quebec in developing the Canadian "French fact" to the fullest extent on an international level, by ensuring that the interests for which the provincial government is responsible will be directly represented.

Moreover, the interests of French-Canadians are not limited to the French-speaking world. These interests include all areas of external affairs. Conversely, the French-speaking world should not interest only Quebecers, or even French-Canadians, but all Canadians. When the Commonwealth Conference on Education was held in Ottawa in 1965 (and another will soon take place in Lagos), it was not only English-speaking Canadians who took part. French-Canadians were also there. This is only reasonable. In addition, the Quebec provincial government is invited to appoint representatives on such occasions, and does so. For my part, I should like to see the French-speaking world do the same: allow English-speaking people and provinces with English-speaking majorities to be

represented as well. In this way the problem of the French-speaking community would be of concern not only to French-Canadians or to the Quebec Government but to all Canadians. Is this utopian? Perhaps. Yet five years ago, if anyone had said that Ontario would become a bilingual province, he would have been called a dreamer. Why should it be thought advisable for Quebec to participate in the Fourth Commonwealth Conference on Education and inadvisable for New Brunswick, for example, to participate in a similar conference dealing with education in the French-speaking countries?

The basic ideal for French-speaking people, and, in particular, for the people of Quebec, is to develop their culture as far as possible. However, in order to do this, we must go out into the world, not shut ourselves in. Going out into the world does not mean locking ourselves safely inside our own little world but, on the contrary, being seen and felt in as many areas and places as possible. It is important for French Canada, all of French Canada, to be represented in the French-speaking community, but it is also important for it to be represented in Washington or at the United Nations. That is what we are trying to do in the Department of External Affairs. In the field of foreign relations, the policy of the Government and its officials is very clear - it is to reflect abroad, to an ever increasing extent, the image of a bilingual Canada.

If this action is to be pursued and developed, the Federal Government and its officials must obviously maintain contact and co-operate with the provincial governments and their officials. And that is precisely the intention, and increasingly the practice, of our Department. When an international conference which may be of interest to the provinces is announced, the provinces are informed and invited to appoint someone to the national delegation. If a group of provincial officials wishes to negotiate some arrangement with a foreign country, we facilitate the matter. What more can you ask in the way of co-operation? All we ask is to be consulted in time, so that we can assure ourselves that the projects do not conflict with Canada's national policy and that the arrangements observe the proper forms and respect Canada's international personality. And I am not speaking here of what we intend or plan to do, but of current and accepted practice.

... In closing, I wish to say that the Department of External Affairs is your Department and that it is trying to serve the interests of French-Canadians, as well as those of all Canadians. This task it cannot do alone. If Quebec and the other provinces are to make their presence truly felt in world affairs, the Department needs their co-operation. With this co-operation, the Department can succeed in ensuring that Canada, all of Canada, will always be represented on the world scene, serving the interests of all the people of Quebec and of all Canadians.