

External Affairs  
Supplementary Paper

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to the Canadian Club of Toronto, January 18, 1954.

An editor is, among other things, a person who is supposed to know something about his fellow citizens and the way their minds work. I'm not sure if it's true, for I know that, after about 30 years in the business, I am always meeting with surprises; and what I want to talk to you about today is one of the most recent of these, the instantaneous and all-- but unanimous reaction of Canadians to the proposal made late last year by a sub-committee of the United States Senate, that Igor Gouzenko should be made available to it as a witness. We Canadians don't very often do something all together. On this occasion we all got angry together, and we stayed angry for some time, which, so it seems to me, to be a significant thing to have happened, and I thought it might perhaps be interesting to discuss its significance, and to place this really rather unimportant incident into the wider context which it seems to deserve.

I call the incident unimportant because, in itself, it was just that. Senate sub-committees are interested in a very wide range of subjects, and call a very large range of witnesses. On occasion, too, Canadians appear before them and there is nothing very startling about it. George McIvor of the Canadian Wheat Board has often gone to Washington and has given evidence, and so have many business men, as part of the normal routine of business activity. You or I, for instance, could go and give evidence on any subject if we were able to persuade the committee we had something useful to say. We would have to ask no one's permission. We would just get on board a train or a plane, and make our appearance.

The only thing that made the invitation to Gouzenko something a little out of the ordinary was that the sub-committee in question, the Jenner sub-committee, did not know where Gouzenko was, and also, I think, seemed to have no idea whether or not we, as Canadians, didn't have to ask the Queen's permission before we could leave the country. There remains a great deal of ignorance about Canada's status in various circles of the United States. You will remember Mike Pearson remarking that it might not be a bad idea to stage a sham battle between some Canadians and another group dressed up as red-coats, to convince such Americans that we had in actual fact fought our way to freedom.

In any event, one of the hirelings of Col. Robert McCormick of Chicago, arranged to see Gouzenko who told him that he had some valuable dope on spies which he would make available to Senator Jenner. Senator Jenner, who hails from McCormick country, asked the State Department to ask our Department of External Affairs if arrangements could be made to have Gouzenko appear before his committee as a witness. My belief is that, at this point, our Government made a mistake, which makes all the more striking the public reaction which followed. The Government sent officials to see Gouzenko. They reported that he had changed his mind since he had been interviewed by the Chicago Tribune, and that he really had nothing to add to the information which had long before been transmitted to Washington. The Government therefore sent a note to Washington which, though not a blunt refusal of the request made, was something akin to a refusal.

My own belief is that it would have been wiser to have taken another tack. Gouzenko is, after all, a Canadian citizen with all the rights of citizenship. If he wanted to appear before a congressional committee, that was his business, that he was a free agent. The Government should have said so, at the same time pointing out, that if Mr. Gouzenko sought to make such an appearance, it would be obviously impossible to continue the special protection which he and his family had been receiving since his departure from the Soviet embassy in 1945. No one could have objected to that, for Gouzenko could hardly expect to have his bread buttered on both sides in the shape of television appearances in Washington on the one hand and continued shelter from the outside world on the other. If Gouzenko felt that the danger period had passed, and that he and his family could live without fear, he could then come and go as he pleased, and appear before any committee in Washington or elsewhere to his heart's content.

I don't know if I was right about this. To be sure, when the State department asked again, and the Canadian Government replied, this was the line that was taken. But that is beside the point. What interests me -- and what I hope has also interested you -- is that even before the first Canadian note was dispatched, Canadians, from coast to coast, were showing every sign of wanting to tell the Americans to go jump in the lake. Their inclination was increased by certain reactions in the United States. A paper like the New York Mirror, for instance, was demanding that Canada "yield Gouzenko", and I am using quotes. This made almost every Canadian who was vocal say that Canada, under no circumstance, should yield this unfortunate gent, just as if, in the last analysis, we could prevent Gouzenko yielding himself, if he wanted to be yielded. Newspapers from the Pacific to the Atlantic were publishing editorials saying that the Government should not permit the committee to have Gouzenko as a witness; and the mythical man in the street (whoever he may be) was equally emphatic. There was, indeed, a certain amount of genuine regret when the Government, in its second note, did suggest that, under certain conditions and safeguards, it would be glad to make arrangements for Senator Jenner to interview Gouzenko. One of the conditions made was that there would be no unrestricted publicity, a condition which appeared to cool Senator Jenner off, in spite of his

assertion that he would employ his usual good taste and discretion about the revelations Gouzenko might, or might not, make.

Now, this is all by way of a preliminary. These are the facts about this sudden and, by our standards, violent outburst of public opinion, and I would like to add to them the comment of a more or less impartial observer of the situation, Mr. D. W. Brogan, who, writing about the whole episode to the London Spectator, had this to say, and I don't think he exaggerates. Here is what he said:

"The last, and, probably, most disastrous result of the White revival has been the repercussions in Canada. Here certain preliminary remarks are necessary. Most Americans know very little about Canada except, possibly, that the Canadian dollar is at a premium. Many think that Canada pays 'tribute' to Britain. (It is not long since an Illinois Congressman suggested that England 'transfer' Canada in payment of war debts, lease lend, etc.) Many think that the real centre of Canadian authority is in London (England), not Ottawa. Martin Chuzzlewit is not yet totally out of date. How many people in this country realize that the Chicago Tribune tower not only houses a newspaper, but serves as an elevated rampart from which Colonel McCormick can watch and give warning of redcoats coming from Ontario to burn Fort Dearborn all over again."

"It is not unlikely that Senator Jenner has as little knowledge of the realities of Canadian government as he has of the nature of international relations. Inducing the Secretary of State to act as a post-office for increasingly impudent demands on a sovereign state has been one of Senator Jenner's most disastrous triumphs. The Canadians, who may well think that they handled their spy troubles with more skill and success than either the Americans or English and who have at least as much confidence in the 'Mounties' as in the FBI and have already some serious causes of irritation with the policy or non-policy of the United States are not amused."

"Senator Jenner's assumption that a foreign government has any obligations to a committee of either house of Congress (a body of which it has no official cognisance) is only equalled by his assurance that any secrets confided will be kept, although his committee leaks like a badly-patched inner tube. I spent a few days in Canada very recently and that normally phlegmatic people were already developing what Americans call a "slow burn". After all, Canadians of all parties think that they have a real government. Mr. St. Laurent and Mr. Pearson are members of a government that has adequate authority to serve the country. Should they do much, or anything, to please whoever is at the moment on top in the Washington version of an all-in wrestling bout? No, a hundred times no! (The Canadians are given to under-statement)."

"And as for their views on the general situation? They can, I think, be summed up in a famous American story. A lone cowboy is riding across the lone prairie when he comes to a single-track railway down which two express trains are dashing at full speed towards each other. He thinks a moment and, addressing his faithful

steed, remarks: "That's a hell of a way to run a railroad."

This is a good summation, so far as it goes. I do think Canadian standards of taste are deeply offended by the kind of performance which is commonplace in the kind of committees run by people like Senators Jenner and McCarthy. This is not the way we do our business. Just the same, the way our neighbors do their business is not our business, and we should not slip into the error of criticizing them because they do it differently from us. We should do that only when their methods, which we don't like, impinge on us. But, so far as possible we should not go out of our way to behave like Pharisees and turn our noses up when our American friends propose and employ techniques of which we profoundly disapprove. There are a lot of factors involved. There are differences of taste, of legal practices, and, above all, of political tradition. We are -- the United States and Canada -- both democracies, but we should never slide into the error of thinking that we operate in the same way just because we speak the same language.

We should have learned that by now, and the question of espionage is a good case in point. The United States has never had a Gouzenko. It has never had the experience of going through the revelations which we endured when our Royal Commission held its hearings and made its report in 1946. I don't know what the consequences would have been, if that had been the case. But I do know that the way Canadians faced up to that situation is, looking back at it, pretty good. Gouzenko told us about the operations of one spy ring, which was cleaned up. But he also told us -- and the Royal Commission so reported -- that it was only one of several; and the others have never been uncovered. Or, if they have, we have known nothing of it. In our own way, we went to work. The evidence was handed over to the Mounted Police, and they have handled it since. We have also conducted a thorough survey of the connections of our own public servants, and this has been carried out, I am sure thoroughly, but without fanfare. Now and again some case is reported to Parliament, but the Government, to its very great credit, refuses to be drawn into making detailed statements about it. The job is done quietly and, I am sure, competently, and we feel happy about the results. That is our way of doing things, and it suits us better than the different methods employed by our neighbors.

But there was, and there is, something much more important to be considered than questions of taste and decorum. We may consider the methods used by Senators Jenner and McCarthy both vulgar and destructive, but that fact does not account for the outburst of public sentiment in this country last November and December. It is something far more deep-seated and fundamental. It is something about ourselves of which we are, as a general rule, barely conscious; and it goes to the very root of our nationhood.

It is not a simple nationhood. Far from it. We have spent most our time in Canada looking for what we learned in school about the largest common factor, and it is not always as large as we would like it to be. However, let's take a look at it. We have to begin with the French of the St. Lawrence Valley. There has never been any doubt

about their Canadianism, for Canada is all they have known since the last immigrants from France arrived in Quebec about 1700. Whatever may be their outlook and their defects, they are nothing but Canadians, even if they maintained, long after the facts were against them, that Canada could live in isolation from the rest of the world.

There were next the United Empire Loyalists, a large and influential group which, from the beginning, though they retained a massive resolve to remain British, preferred to live on this continent than to return to the land of their forebears in England. If they were not Canadians, in the Quebec sense of the word, they were certainly not English. They were, in fact, Americans, if we use that term in the broad, and not the narrow, sense; and their fellow-citizens, though not their compatriots further down the St. Lawrence, were Americans too. Here was the first small beginning of that common factor of which I spoke a moment ago.

If you remember the French Canadian resistance to Arnold and Montgomery in 1775, it's as well to remember that when John Macdonald was a young man in Kingston in 1838, as Donald Creighton reports in his great biography, "the reports of assemblies and drilling on the American side became more frequent and detailed -- the Kingstonians assembled in public meetings, divided the town into five wards for protective purposes and re-established the night watch which had been formed first nearly a year before. Four days later, Sir George Arthur issued his proclamation warning the people of the possibility of invasion -- the second regiment of Frontenac Militia was called out; the volunteer company of artillery at Fort Henry was called out; and at night the civic guard perambulated the streets and cavalry patrols trotted through the silent streets." Creighton's narrative goes on to tell of the battle of Windmill Point, a mile and a half below Prescott, and of the successful Canadian repulse of the raid. It goes on to tell how "it was nearly midnight when across the dark harbor, the citizens could see at last the twinkling lights of the approaching steamers. The houses were illuminated; the crowd rushed down to Brock Street to Scobel's Wharf. And then, between guarding rows of red-coats, a long double file of prisoners began to wind its way down the dock to the street. A tall, well-formed darkly handsome man strode at its head. His clothes hung in ribbons around him; his shirt had been nearly torn off his back. A great rope was knotted round his chest, and behind him plodded his followers, in two long silent rows, each with his right or left hand tied to the rope. They marched through streets which were lurid with lights and torches and excited faces, and clamorous with exultant cheers. They marched past the town and over the bridge, and out through the friendly darkness to Fort Henry."

Young Macdonald, Creighton, that ornament of the University of Toronto, goes on to tell, defended the leader of this abortive raid on Canada at his court martial and listened to the sentence of death by hanging which was imposed. He concluded:

"The rebellion had made him as a lawyer; it had given him the reputation of a conservative who was not afraid to battle for liberal principles; and it had left him with one clear and uneffaceable general impression. For him, and for Kingston and the whole Midland District,

the "rebellion" had been not so much a native uprising as a succession of American raids; and from then on, he never quite lost a certain lingering anxiety for the problem of British North America."

This just comment of Creighton's, it seems to me, throws a flood of light upon much of our later history. Here was the potential meeting-ground for the French Canadians of the Lower St. Lawrence and the United Empire Loyalist and immigrant stock of the upper St. Lawrence and Lake Ontario. It took a long time indeed to bring the two together. It is a process that is not by any means completed. But it continues, and not least of the factors that has brought them together has been that "certain degree of lingering anxiety for the problem of British North America."

We have been, as Canadians, singularly unconscious of our history and the influences that have gone to our own making as a people. Yet it is distant, far-off events such as these that I have mentioned that provide the tap-roots of the emotions and instincts that now stir us. There has been, deep down in us for generations, an instinctive sense of caution in all our dealings with our great and more numerous neighbours south of the line, and it is a theme I will return to, after suggesting briefly one or two reasons why the theme has been until recently so largely obscured. I deal with it, not with any dogmatism but with the suggestion that we might talk about ourselves in terms of power politics instead of in the phrases which, in my young days and in yours, we used about them. I belong to a generation which, like most of you here today, talked of Canada's external relations in terms of colonialism, imperialism and nationalism. I belong to the generation which, like many of us, 25 or 30 years ago, was engaged in a great political and ideological struggle over what we called "Dominion status."

The term is one which, I am astonished now to learn, means hardly anything to my own children. They hardly know what I'm talking about. Yet, when I was young, it was a phrase which, to exaggerate a little, roused wild passions. For the assertion of it, my old newspaper in Winnipeg and its great chief, John W. Dafoe, were denounced by many decent and law-abiding citizens. Copies of the paper itself were once burned at the corner of Portage Avenue and Main Street in Winnipeg. My old boss, Dafoe, never one to take such things lying down, retorted in kind; and a wide vocabulary of invective and vituperation was richly used. The idea in those days was that anybody who fought for Dominion status was a traitor to the British Empire; whereas anyone, contrariwise, who withstood the movement to autonomy was a base-minded colonial lackey. No wonder we all got hot under the collar about it, and certainly we all said and did things which today can hardly remain, if I may use a famous phrase, "unrevised and unrepented." I think perhaps the time has come to try and put this controversy and those events into slightly wider context.

Let me try, and let me assure you, as I try, that I am only trying. I'm not being dogmatic about it. It does, however, seem to me now that what we were then doing as a nation, slowly becoming conscious of its own peculiar and distinctive place in the world, was to work out the transition from colonial status into something new. The predominant influence on the Canada of that day

was the British influence, and a majority influence in Canada reacted against that influence just because a small country always tends to react against a bigger country which attempts to exert any influence over it. That influence was present as anyone who has read the letters of Laurier or the Memoirs of Sir Robert Borden can testify. Canada had, in those days, already won its autonomy in actual fact, but political controversy always lives on after the basic realities which began it have died; and the fight over Dominion status -- in my lifetime -- was a fight already won. It was -- if I may inject a note on another key -- the political merit of Mackenzie King to associate himself with that majority movement. It was the mistake of his opponents to associate themselves with an idea, sound enough in itself, in certain circumstances, which could be made to look like a refusal to accept facts as they were.

Yet that would not have been possible, had it not been for the fact that the United States, always the most pervasive and penetrating influence on Canadian life, had come to the considered conclusion that it wanted to isolate itself from the rest of the world, and sought fairly steadily to find ways of not asserting the power it obviously possessed. It left western leadership pretty well in the hands of the British who had maintained and asserted it for more than a century, and contented itself with twisting the lion's tail at intervals. The Canadians, in a mild and unassertive sort of way, built themselves up by following suit. We asserted ourselves against British leadership, and because opinion on this count was not a unanimous opinion, we seriously divided ourselves in so doing. Of course, it can be argued, and well argued, that had we not done so, our internal divisions might well have been more serious than they were. But pursuit of this point would be the raking over of coals now not so hot, and I don't want to do it.

The major outline is, I think, fairly sound. That our policy of asserting and re-asserting our autonomy after the first great war, was basically the reaction of a small power against a big power which held leadership in its hands. It was not, basically, a quarrel based on either British or anti-British grounds, though these were the terms which were often used. It was much more, a controversy between one section of Canadians who believed the time had come to stand on our own feet, and to resist outside pressures; and another section which believed that this was premature, that Canada had no proper means of coming to its own conclusions, and that, in these circumstances, the course of wisdom was in large measure to accept British leadership and judgment in matters where our own experience was limited. But that position did not rule out at any time the taking of an independent stand, as was shown by Mr. Arthur Meighen, one of this club's most distinguished members, when the time came in 1921 to decide whether or not to renew the Anglo-Japanese alliance.

Now, if that brief analysis has any merit, let us turn to the situation which now confronts Canada, and see whether the basic proposition is strong enough to stand up to the new set of circumstances confronting us. That proposition, let me repeat, is that it is likely to be Canada's fate to develop a foreign policy which

inevitably reacts against the strongest pressure brought to bear upon it.

The pressure from Britain is at an end. At least it has taken forms far less formidable in scope than those with which we were familiar 50, 40 or 30 years ago. British political power in the world picture has declined. There is a peculiarity about power. If Nature abhors a vacuum, so also do politics; and into the vacuum created by British weakness there has poured the vivid, dynamic, colorful, inexperienced force of American power. The United States, vigorously repudiating its old isolation, has asserted itself at last. If some of us do not particularly care for all the manifestations of that inevitable fact, at least let us remember that the withdrawal of American influence after World War I was deplored by all of us, even if it gave us the chance, sometimes too fully made use of, to blame our own shortcomings in world affairs upon the refusal of the United States to pull its weight. That is no longer true, and, after ten years of it, there are voices to be found complaining bitterly that the United States is not only pulling its weight, but throwing its weight around! Whether we like it or not, we are better off with it, than we would have been without it. We should, indeed, never stop thanking Providence that the United States is no longer isolationist.

But the effect of this sudden and violent transformation in American policy has had the effect on Canada which, in the light of history, I suppose, might well have been expected. It has stirred in us every deep instinct to which Canadians, of both the major races, have been accustomed to respond. Without ever being conscious of it, our forebears' memories of Montgomery and Arnold, of the War of 1812, of the raiding in the 1830's I have previously described to you, of the Fenian Raids, all swam back into some corner of our minds. And there were other, lesser, things too. There were the endless boundary disputes, the Aroostock war so-called, the endless pressures when the British Government negotiated our affairs for us, and we found ourselves more or less on the outside looking in, the fury over the Alaska Boundary award, and the whole series of disputes and difficulties over tariffs which have, so often in the past, meant so much to us, -- and which have so often, from our point of view, turned out so badly. We forget, at such moments, the many occasions when things turned out better. We remember with bitterness what we regard as unprovoked, unwarranted actions which have hurt us, or brought us to fear.

We therefore now keep a most watchful and sensitive eye on our big neighbor, and, if we overdo it sometimes, it's probably because psychologically, we can't help it. Much of it may be unnecessary. Much of it may be unfair. The fact remains that no relatively small nation can live cheek by jowl beside a big neighbor without developing these feelings; and one instance in which they are richly justified probably makes up for the next few when we are unduly suspicious.

The vigor, and sometimes the thoughtlessness, with which the United States presents its point of view, and makes its demands, are of course another factor in the situation. When these wishes and demands related only to Canadian-American questions, it was difficult enough. But

now, with American leadership being asserted all over the free world, it is much more so. Increasingly, other nations turn to us, and ask questions about United States policy. We are regarded in this field as experts. We then have to make up our minds on questions many of which have only a long-range effect on our own immediate interests, and tell them what we think. If we always only echo American policy, these other nations would regard us as a spineless satellite, and this is not a position we want to be relegated to. It is good neither for our pride -- which is important -- nor for our own proper interests. We therefore are bound, whenever we feel it necessary, to take an independent stand. This is perhaps one of the many factors which led Mr. Pearson a year or two ago, to make a speech in which he said that our relations with the United States could no longer be -- and I quote -- "easy and automatic."

Mr. Pearson got a lot of abusive letters from the United States about that speech. They were written, I suppose, mostly by people who were irked by Canada's somewhat independent stand, and by people like the editors of the Chicago Tribune who always refer to Mr. Pearson as pinko, and also by people who regard Canada as a British colony which shouldn't have any voice of its own even if it wanted one.

But the area of misunderstanding extends further than that. A lot of usually very reasonable people across the line are getting a bit confused, and I want to cite one special case which came to my notice. At the height of the Gouzenko incident, a usually sensible and level-headed American newspaper delivered quite an attack on Mr. Pearson. It wanted to know what good reason there could be for Canada to be reluctant to see Gouzenko giving evidence to the Jenner committee. It decided that the only reason could be that Canadian-American relations had soured. And why had they soured? Well, the paper said, they had been quite all right until Mr. Pearson had made that speech about relations not always being easy and automatic, and since then they had gone to hell in a hack. The United States had not changed. It must therefore be that Canada had changed; Mr. Pearson was the nigger in the woodpile.

Now this would be good for a big laugh any time, except for one thing. What is alarming about it is that this great and responsible American daily did not seem to have the slightest idea that the United States had changed in any way. The fact that the United States had changed from isolationism to a position of active and aggressive world leadership did not seem to have made any impression on it. It reminds us of the popular song during the first World War, about the fond mother watching her son's regiment marching down Fifth Avenue to the troopship. The lines I remember were these:

"Were you there? And tell me, did you  
notice  
They were all out of step but Jim?"

We are apparently, more conscious of the changes in other peoples than we are in the changes in ourselves. And I suppose this is easier when you are rich and big than when you are small and, relatively, weaker.

Yet it is a fact that opinions, attitudes and policies have changed in the United States most remarkably. Our own change in attitude has been a reaction to American change. It is not that we have suddenly developed a rush of nationalism to the head, and have become a difficult neighbor, more or less over-night. What we are doing is what we have always historically done. We are reacting against the pressure we most immediately feel; and if the reaction seems odd to our neighbors, it is they, rather than we, who should make the adjustment. If our neighbor is wise, he will realize that our storm signals are flying.

Don't let's forget that one of the big factors which brought the colonies of British North America together in 1867 was the emergence of Manifest Destiny in the United States together with a huge army of warlike veterans who had fought the civil war. The Mexican war had taken place only 20 years before, and the incident we know by the American slogan, "Fifty-Four-Forty or Fight", was more recent than that.

Now I draw near the end of this dissertation, and I bring my argument, such as it is, round full circle. I referred earlier to the fact that we went through a period when we resisted British pressures. What has happened since the war, with the re-emergence of American pressures, is that we seek to find some counterpoise to them, and we have moved into the North American Treaty Organization and toward the Commonwealth. That historic institution has, apparently, felt renewed strength. Our Government, quite consciously, is cultivating our Commonwealth wealth bonds. If economics remain harshly opposed to them, there is much in other fields which has been strengthened.

The reason for this, so it seems to me, is exactly the same fundamental reason as that which lent weight and strength to the movement for Dominion status in the first quarter of this century. We are doing now in reverse the same things we did then. We are creating a counterpoise against the most immediate and heaviest of the pressures upon us. In this our Commonwealth partners are playing an important role. There is, and there can be, no such thing as a Commonwealth bloc. Even were it possible I would doubt its value. But, more than once in recent years, Canada has found itself side by side with Britain, India and Pakistan in joint attempts to moderate the apparent course of American policy in the United Nations. Australia and New Zealand, in spite of the special defence ties created with the United States in ANZUS, have also on occasion played their part.

We have special qualifications for this role. If there is one point at which suspicions are roused in the two republics which occupy the old sub-continent of India, it is their historic fear of white imperialism. The speed and honesty of the British withdrawal in 1947 went a long way to mitigate, even to remove, the old fears of the United Kingdom. But the Indians and Pakistanis, with a keen perception of the realities of power, rapidly transferred their suspicions to the United States and the objectives of American policy. In these circumstances it is by no means disadvantageous to the world picture as a whole that these two new republics should find a friend in Canada. Like themselves, Canada

has peacefully achieved independent status. But, unlike them, Canada is a North American country, living close to the United States. Our chief foreign preoccupation is our relationship with that country. If we can show them that it is possible to live beside it without becoming a satellite, it may well encourage them to attempt the arduous task of working out a close and friendly association of the same kind.

We can easily get tired of talking about our interpretative role in world affairs. Too many people, I think, play it up too much. It is taking the place of the old, favorite motif of luncheon speakers who talked about the famous three-thousand-miles-of-border-without-a-fort-or-a-gun until their audience began laughing at them. I will not therefore emphasize the new theme, or even mention such a thing as The Golden Hinge. Nevertheless, behind the closed doors of the council-chambers at Commonwealth meetings and in the United Nations, good work is being done by Canada and Canadian representatives to bring together peoples who, if they fall apart, will endanger the peace of the whole world.

In the circumstances in which we find ourselves as a nation, it might be easier to relapse into lethargy, and to follow our big neighbor's lead without question. This is a course which has been rejected not only by the Canadian Government, but by the Canadian people, as its reaction to recent events has so convincingly shown.

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