

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES



INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 53/21

CANADIAN-UNITED STATES PARTNERSHIP
IN WORLD AFFAIRS

An address by the Prime Minister, Mr. L.S. St. Laurent, made at the National Press Club, Washington, D.C., May 8, 1953.

...I came to Washington at the cordial invitation of the President to discuss some of the many matters of common concern to two neighbouring households whose properties adjoin one another for some five thousand miles; and whose relations differ from those of any two other countries on earth. We are citizens of two neighbouring nations who have never looked on one another as foreigners..

That does not mean that, in these neighbourly relations between us, there have not sometimes been complicated and even vexatious questions to settle; but, most of the time, we have settled them like good neighbours who want to remain and, indeed, feel it is essential that they remain good neighbours.

This feeling of neighbourliness has been reflected in relations of the warmest friendliness which have existed for many years between the man who happens to be the President of the American Union and the man who happens to be Prime Minister of Canada.

This is not, of course, the first time I have met General Eisenhower, though it is the first time that I have seen him since he became President of the United States.

In Canada, we have never forgotten his visit in 1946 as the victorious commander of the armed forces of many nations in the Second World War. On that occasion we named one of our greatest mountains in his honour. As I recall it, he pretended to find some reflection in the fact that the mountain was bald. It is, in fact, snow-capped and we in Canada are proud that one of our highest peaks will always bear the name "Eisenhower".

Then two years ago, when General Eisenhower was serving as supreme commander of the forces of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, I had the honour of welcoming him to Ottawa. On that visit we discussed some of the great problems which were involved in the erection of the defences of the North Atlantic community to which he has made so indispensable a contribution, and which remains our strongest bulwark in the defence of peace.

On both sides of the boundary we have come to realize how much these personal contacts between heads of governments can supplement our normal diplomatic relationships. I hope and believe that for many years to come it will be possible for an American President to be greeted in Ottawa and a Canadian Prime Minister to be welcomed in Washington with the warmth which has been characteristic of such visits over the past thirty years.

This visit is giving me the opportunity of discussing a wide range of subjects with the President and his colleagues in your government; and I dare say you gentlemen in the press will speculate with a good deal of accuracy about the things we will have talked about and that some of you may even venture to report both what we will have actually said and did not say to each other.

We Americans and Canadians occupy most of the area of this continent. As we look out on the rest of the world from our North American homelands we are, all of us, very thankful that we live in lands that have been so favourably endowed by Providence and we want -- Americans and Canadians alike -- to do everything we can to preserve our heritage from aggression and from the threat of aggression.

In most respects, Canada is much the smaller of our two countries. We have only one-eleventh of your population and despite the rate at which we have been developing, our developed national wealth is proportionately even smaller. That means that in looking after our joint defences the United States inevitably has the bigger share; though we feel that between individual Canadians and Americans there is no similar contrast.

The one respect in which we are bigger than you are is that we have more square miles of territory. Because of our size, our colder climate and our relatively sparse population, we in Canada have to devote proportionately a much greater number of people and a larger share of our resources to maintaining our "national overhead".

The maintenance of communications over great distances and difficult terrain, the provision of essential services of government, both national and local, and the many problems of protecting our people from the rigours of the Canadian weather necessarily absorb the energies of a certain proportion of our population which in the United States would be available for more definitely productive effort. I mention these special problems we have in Canada because they do help to explain why our developed wealth per capita is not as great as yours.

They are circumstances also which we in Canada have to take into account in determining what proportion of our national energies and resources can be devoted to defence.

We all entertained high hopes of a peaceful world in 1945; but our disillusionment came with unhappy speed. The United Nations was not able to organize the police force envisaged in the Charter to provide adequate security for those of us who really wanted peace, and as a second best we were obliged, for our security, to enter into regional or limited arrangements for which the Charter provided.

One such regional arrangement, the North Atlantic alliance, has been in existence for four years; and there is no doubt that its existence has helped the free world muster its strength; and has thereby removed the temptation to easy aggression in Europe.

The North Atlantic alliance was not made in opposition to the United Nations, but, as I have just said, within the framework of the Charter. For us in the free world both have the same aim - the preservation of peace. The U.N. was true to that aim when it decreed and organized resistance to naked aggression in Korea, a resistance which thanks largely to the heroic and massive efforts of this country and the Republic of Korea, has also reduced the dangers of a third world war.

In these enterprises for the achievement of a peaceful world Canada has been proud to march at the side of the United States, and to recognize the leadership this great country was providing for the free and independent nations. We are proud also that, so far, we have been able to meet our military and political commitments to the United Nations and the North Atlantic alliance.

Though our contribution and our sacrifices are not mathematically comparable with yours, we Canadians have the third largest force of the United Nations in Korea, aside from the courageous South Koreans themselves; we have a brigade group - I think you would call it a regimental combat team - in the integrated force in Germany; we have nine fighter squadrons equipped with the most up-to-date jet fighter aircraft already in Europe, and we plan to have our air division of twelve squadrons completed by the end of this year; we are adding considerably to our naval strength for the defence of the North Atlantic and the Atlantic sea lanes; and we are providing mutual aid to our North Atlantic partners at a rate which is comparable with yours when account is taken of our smaller national income. In fact our whole defence programme which was put in motion subsequent to the outbreak in Korea now takes up about 45 per cent of our budget.

And I am certain that if the call should ever come again for Canadians to defend the free world against wholesale aggression, that call would be answered with the same response that was made in 1914 and 1939. But, like the United States, Canada wants to prevent a third world war, not to fight one.

In building up our strength to prevent another war, there has been the closest and most continuous co-operation with our opposite numbers here in Washington at every level. We recognize that nothing is more essential to our national security than such co-operation.

But we want that co-operation to remain, as it has been, co-operation between two distinct countries. Much as we like you Americans we want to remain Canadians.

We agree with you on most things that are fundamental - we have the same basic views on liberty and democracy - but there are differences between us, too, and we are

stubborn enough often to prefer our own ways. Canada's decision to be a distinct and independent nation was made many years ago and we can all take it as a fact now that we will continue to exist side by side as two separate nations, though moving along with other free nations to that closer and closer co-operation which is required by the facts of life in this second half of the twentieth century.

Americans and Canadians are proud of their close friendship based on mutual respect. We can be just as proud of the co-operation we have achieved in providing for our common defence. This co-operation is all the more effective because it is solidly based on respect for each other's rights, responsibilities and interests.

Despite what has been happening in recent weeks, the necessity for this defence co-operation remains. I do not think we can afford to act on the assumption that the so-called cold war will thaw out over night. Your President has wisely said that we must be prepared to examine all overtures in good faith, but he has also warned us that it would be very foolish to accept words in place of deeds and to decide that conciliatory gestures can by themselves remove the danger that threatens our security.

We can only afford to lessen the measures we have taken for our defence after positive proof by the Soviet Union that it has truly abandoned any aggressive or subversive designs.

There is however a danger in thinking that the free nations can make themselves secure through military strength alone. Military strength is indispensable, but we must also find the means to maintain and develop the measure of social justice and economic opportunity we have achieved in our own countries, and we must work for the extension beyond our countries of human well-being and of that basic human equality which is the hallmark of a genuinely free society.

If we are not willing to do that, how can we expect to convince others that our way of life has more to offer than Communism?

Therefore, while we are strengthening the free nations of Western Europe and halting aggression in Korea, we cannot afford to overlook those vast areas and populations in Asia and Africa and even in this hemisphere where mass poverty prevails. It is not very helpful to preach the abstract advantages of freedom to men and women who are suffering from misery and starvation.

And here may I say publicly what I have already said privately to President Eisenhower, and that is how impressed we were with the speech he delivered to the American Society of Newspaper Editors about the middle of last month. Then he set forth in clear and simple words the aspirations of freedom-loving men. Let us hope that the Communist leaders of the world will heed them and show by their deeds that they really want peace.

If the free world is to be strong and prosperous and therefore able to deal effectively with threats to its freedom, the economies of the free nations must be as strong and prosperous as they can be made. Free men will stand strong in defence of freedom, even in the face of great hardship; but it is too much to expect them to remain steadfast indefinitely if the future holds little for them and their families but austerity and the fear of depression. Unless the national economies of the free world can be made and kept healthy and productive, Communism could win a bloodless victory without any war, hot or cold. And most of us think that to keep the free nations economically sound there must be a high and expanding level of international trade.

We all know how great was the disruption of the economies of Europe after the last war. We know how shattered Germany and Japan were after their defeats. If all these nations and the nations of the Middle and Far East not now subject to Communist domination are to achieve political stability, it seems imperative for them to have stable markets in which they can sell a reasonable proportion of the goods they produce so they can buy the essentials they need. And for most countries of the world the United States appears to be the greatest potential market and source of supply.

What many of these countries would wish to sell you does not amount to very much in proportion to your total national wealth, but it is often vital to them.

The United States would seem to have little to fear from wholesome competition with the other nations of the free world. Is your economy not too strong and are your industries not too productive to be in any serious danger from imports? American business has always proclaimed its faith in the wholesome effects of honest competition. Is it not then the part of wisdom to widen the area of competitive trade and see if more nations cannot make their own way into prosperity and strength?

Many of us feel that the United States has a very direct interest in seeing the countries of the free world earn more dollars. Since the last war billions of American dollars have been raised every year by taxes on United States citizens to be spent on mutual aid or defence support in other countries - to help in keeping the economies and defences of the free world strong. Canada does not receive such assistance; in fact we also contribute to it.

"Trade not aid" sounds like a good slogan and every North American should consider what it implies.

Every new dollar the free countries can earn through added trade with the United States or Canada will help diminish the burden of special assistance on the American and Canadian taxpayer. Would that not be better for the morale and relations of the free world?

If, however, real progress is to be made in freeing trade, the United States will have to give a bold lead. You have doubtless heard enough of the criticisms which other people - and many of your own people - have directed at the present level of your tariffs, the obstacles presented by your customs procedures and certain other features of your country's commercial policies. These criticisms do not reflect any lack of appreciation of the constructive efforts of the United States in many directions since the war. They reflect rather the recognition by all of us of the crucial importance of your position.

As between Canada and the United States there are special considerations. Over many years now we have built up the highest level of trade between two countries that the world has ever seen. This vast exchange of goods for the common advantage of our two peoples is a thing of utmost value. It is a fundamental part of the good relations between our countries; it underlies the welfare of our peoples and it is essential to the strength and prosperity of this continent - the bastion of the free world. It seems to us of the gravest importance that no retrograde steps be taken that would imperil this great structure and it must be seen as a whole or it can very easily be imperilled. We cannot nibble at this corner here and knock out that piece there to protect some special interest without weakening the entire fabric. That is why we in Canada, like the other free countries, so greatly hope that over the next few months your country will avoid taking any backward steps and will move rapidly as possible towards the kind of commercial policy which is required in your own interest and in that of the whole free world. Both the United States and Canada badly need strong friends and allies. To have them and to hold them requires trade policies that are those of good neighbours.

In addition to defence and trade I think I would be betraying no secrets if I intimated to you that the President and I have been talking about the St. Lawrence Seaway and Power Project. This of course is something mainly of North American concern and of perhaps even greater concern to Canadians than to Americans.

Although some of your compatriots may not agree with us, we are convinced that the completion of this undertaking will make a really significant contribution to the wealth and strength and hence to the security of our two countries.

All American administrations for the past 25 or 30 years have approved of the Seaway, and surely no one can justify opposition to the harnessing of the power which the bounty of Providence has placed in the St. Lawrence River.

In 1941 an agreement between our two governments was made for the joint development of the international section of the St. Lawrence waterway. Your Congress did not see fit to approve the agreement, which of course was within its constitutional right and we Canadians do not complain of that.

But when it appeared to us in 1951 that eventual ratification was unlikely, the Canadian Government decided that it would embark on this project of deepening the existing navigation channels on its own.

We Canadians are most conscious of the benefits that the United States as well as Canada will enjoy in the improvement of this international section of the St. Lawrence by admitting coastal and ocean-going vessels to our Great Lakes ports. We are most anxious to get on with the job, because of the increasing need for water-carried traffic and because of the interest of Ontario and New York in the hydro-electric potential which will be harnessed in conjunction with this development. Approval was quickly received from the International Joint Commission for the power project and, in Canada, the Province of Ontario really needs this additional electrical energy and is able and ready and anxious to build its share of the power works, which, of course, require a dam extending from either side of the river and meeting in mid-stream. In the United States, the New York State Power Authority is anxious to proceed with the American share of the undertaking as soon as it can get a licence from the Federal Power Commission to which it applied last October after the favourable decision of the International Joint Commission was announced. We in Canada are waiting anxiously for the results of that application because without the dam the development of the Seaway itself cannot be started.

These then are some of the matters we have been discussing. Primarily, though, the purpose of my visit has been, as I said earlier, to continue that warm and friendly relationship which has long existed between the heads of the governments of our two countries.

That personal contact helps to maintain the unique relationship between Canada and the United States.

I had occasion to put our relationship in what I believe is its proper perspective two years ago when I had the honour of introducing Mr. Vincent Auriol, the President of the French Republic, to our Canadian Parliament. Since I was not then speaking to Americans, I can repeat my words without any fear of being charged with flattering you. President Auriol had just come to Canada after spending a few days in the United States and that was why I said: "Here in Canada you will not fail to note the close, friendly relations which bind us to our southern neighbours, and also the untrammelled independence we enjoy in our own land. If our frontiers bordered on those of some grasping imperialistic neighbouring state, we might not have this opportunity of welcoming you in a free Parliament as the distinguished and respected head of a free France. Canada is, I think, the best evidence, permanent and historic evidence, of the peaceful purposes of the United States".