

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES



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MR. SHARP VISITS PARIS AND BONN

A Statement to the House of Commons on April 9, 1970,
by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, the
Honourable Mitchell Sharp.

... I went to Paris to open the new Canadian Cultural Centre there and to talk to Mr. Maurice Schumann, the French Foreign Minister, and to Bonn to return the visit paid to Canada last year by Mr. Willy Brandt, who is now the Chancellor, and to discuss matters of common interest with members of the German Government.

Our new Cultural Centre in Paris will assist Canadians in France, especially students, and bring to the French people information about Canada, reflecting our bilingual and bicultural character and the many cultural strands that make up the Canadian fabric. The director of the Centre is Mr. Guy Viau, who was Assistant Director of the National Gallery here before taking up his new responsibilities. Mr. Viau is particularly well qualified for the job, and I am sure that the Centre, under his direction, will forge new ties between Canada and France.

The interest of the French Government and the people in the new Centre and in Canada as a meeting-place of two great cultures was well expressed by the French Government's representative at the inaugural ceremonies, Mr. Léo Hamon, who said:

"What makes your country unique is the imbrication and the juxtaposition of its two cultures. This Centre will fully reflect the originality and the wealth of resources of a country intent on retaining its own personality in the New World notwithstanding the size and power of its southern neighbour, which can be achieved only by preserving its diversity."

In Paris I met with the French Foreign Minister, Mr. Maurice Schumann. The principal subject we discussed was our bilateral relations, and the most important part for me was Mr. Schumann's categorical statement that the French Government has absolutely no intention of intervening in the internal affairs of Canada. If there is no misunderstanding between us about this, and I hope there is not, our problems will be easier to deal with in the future.

I explained to Mr. Schumann what I consider to be the three basic elements on which good relations between France and Canada should rest: first, that co-operation between France and Quebec, which we regard as being of first importance, must be carried out in consultation with the Canadian Government; second, that co-operation between France and Canada must be practical in nature and not confined to expressions of goodwill; third, that France must avoid taking positions contrary to the Canadian constitution.

As a result of this frank exchange, I feel we have laid a foundation for avoiding in future some of the incidents which have in the past caused unnecessary strain and tension between us.

In Bonn my objective was to establish a better mutual understanding of our respective policies on international problems of common concern, and to prepare the way for more intensive bilateral co-operation between our two countries.

I got a firsthand account from the German Foreign Minister, Mr. Walter Scheel, of the Federal Government's efforts to improve relations with their Eastern neighbours and to develop a more integrated community in Western Europe, efforts which naturally form an overwhelming part of German preoccupations at the moment. I expressed the admiration of the Canadian Government for the courage, imagination and realism of the Federal Government in these efforts.

The Germans expressed their appreciation for Canadian understanding and support. They also stressed the importance they attached to the maintenance of an active Canadian role in both the defence and détente efforts of NATO. I reaffirmed the importance for Canada of our ties with Europe, not only from the security point of view but also as a means of diversifying our external relations.

I discussed with several members of the German Federal Government ways of strengthening the functional co-operation between our two countries, particularly in the fields of science and technology, where both countries have something to contribute and something to gain from more intensive and systematic exchanges. We agreed to proceed in a pragmatic way to identify specific areas where the prospects for such exchanges are most promising. I hope it will be possible to send a mission to the German Federal Republic within the year to follow up these initiatives in greater detail.

I took the opportunity of these visits to let both the French and German Governments know of the Canadian Government's concerns about the repercussions of certain commercial and agricultural policies of the European Economic Community, particularly in relation to grain production and trade. Our desire is to increase consultations with the EEC on these matters so that the transatlantic co-operation to which we attach so much importance will be strengthened rather than weakened.