



Statements and Speeches

No. 82/31

CALL FOR MORE SOLID LINKS BETWEEN FRANCE AND CANADA

Speech by the Right Honourable Pierre Elliott Trudeau, Prime Minister, to the France-Canada Chamber of Commerce, Paris, November 9, 1982.

Consider the following questions: How should Canada think of Western Europe and France? What should Canada represent for you? It is clear that the links between our two countries are rooted in a past that is replete with moments of glory and in our fraternal affection. But what can we say of our economic, social and cultural links today? Are our continents drawing closer together, or are they drifting away from each other? Is this a decisive time in the relationship between us?

Twice in less than a century our soldiers have died on your battlefields, but we Canadians have been slow to grasp the full meaning of what has been happening in today's Europe. Paradoxically, it has only been with the passing of a generation — the very generation which knew you best — that we have stopped seeing the Old World as being in a state of decline and started looking for Europe in the future rather than in the past. While we are indebted to the French people for New France, and while we are indebted to Europe for the best of our languages, institutions and cultures, we looked to the West in building our country. We have fashioned Canada out of half a continent, open to Asia and the Pacific as well as to the long horizon of the United States. Even if most of our people are of European origin — and even if the 59 000 who in 1759 saw the end of New France have become the six million French-Canadians of today — Europe, while important culturally, was more or less unknown on the economic and theological front.

Let it also be said that perhaps Canada was even further from European minds. However much those who constructed and unified Western Europe tried to be outward looking, their attention was focused on Europe. We were often made to feel that Canada's place in European interests was marginal, and that our interests could not escape the powerful pull exercised by our great neighbour to the south. No doubt, we did not make it sufficiently clear that our efforts to ensure our identity, unity, and independence also served the interests of the larger community of free nations. Because it is better to have a strong, self-confident partner than one that is dependent and unsure of itself.

As for the relations between our two countries, it is even more obvious in retrospect that they have not benefited as much as they should have from the rediscovery by France of a French linguistic and cultural community in Canada. This rediscovery, some 20 years ago, should have drawn us together to pursue our common interests.

On the contrary, it has often been a source of mistrust and disappointment. At the very time when France was rediscovering the French fact in Canada, our nation was searching for greater internal harmony. This rediscovery and searching collided, and when we look at this period today, we can only be surprised and saddened that we did not know how to take better advantage of that period.

By the early Seventies, we had developed political will to expand our trade relations because it was already clear, by and large, that they needed a major push. Was it ignorance, habit, apathy or oversensitivity that caused this will to be frustrated? In any case, it did not suffice merely to give the necessary impetus. So what we must do now is look closely at the obstacles to trade development and industrial co-operation between France and Canada in order to decide whether or not these goals can be met.

**Difficulties
due to
geographic
and historic
contexts**

In my opinion, our past difficulties are due in large part to the geographical and historical context in which our economies developed. Many Canadian and American businesses saw continentalism as the natural economic course. Especially since the Second World War, Canadians and Americans have woven a close network of contacts. We have sought industrial and technological co-operation and the rational division of labour in marketing and production. The advantages of such contacts must be evident to you French who have built a Common Market with your European partners.

While always subject to the pull of our single and giant neighbour, we Canadians have, nonetheless, resisted carrying economic integration in North America to the extent that you have in Europe.

But while we were hoping to establish closer links with Europe — both to offset the weight of our relations with a single partner and to respond to the distinct opportunities offered by your markets — the effect of European intergration has been to give us marginal status. The vast system of trading links that you established favoured trade within the European Community and trade between you and privileged partners such as the European Free Trade Association and the Lomé Group. Canada had no such luck. Moreover, when the United Kingdom joined the European Community in 1972, Canada lost the only preferential access that it had enjoyed to a European market, namely the Commonwealth trading agreements.

It was in this context at the beginning of the Seventies that we Canadians re-emphasized our political desire for closer economic ties with Europe. But that decade saw us compelled to establish new industries, to adapt to energy crises and to survive economic stagnation. We were not able to innovate as we should have. And we were too easily satisfied with a traditional trade with Europe that fluctuated according to circumstances. We neglected to foster those links between men, enterprises — indeed between generations — that had been the foundation of our economic relations with the United States. We gave up when confronted by markets reported to be impregnable. This was a question of determination, no doubt, but it was also one of priorities and

resources. The fact is that the challenges presented by Europe and France in the Seventies have yet to be met.

But the reasons that prompted us to act then are every bit as strong today. The potential for Canada's relations with Europe and France must not be judged by our limited past successes or only by pointing to past constraints. We must base our judgment on a vision of the Canada and France of tomorrow.

**Three
economies**

Canada's economy is breaking out of its traditional mold. In fact, it might be said that three types of economy co-exist in Canada, each complementing or competing with the other. The first, and the best known in Europe, is based on our immense natural resources, the store of which has been remarkably enriched by prospecting during the Seventies. Our policies are not Malthusian, and the future needs of the great industrial economies will lead us to do more to develop our resources. There can be no doubting the potential. Not only can we become a larger supplier of raw materials and finished products for France, but our need for investment, technology and equipment should allow France to play an active role in our development.

Along with this first economy is a large industrial complex that was shaped by our continental context and the historic pattern of our tariffs. This second economy includes industries that are exposed to competition from other parts of the world. In this sector, we share the same problems of adaptation as most other industrialized countries. Like them, we have started the necessary restructuring and modernization, realizing the difficulties that the stagnation of this sector can present for both our partners and ourselves.

But we also have a third economy, a new economy that is undoubtedly little known in France. This is our high technology economy. You will find it already forging ahead in such future-oriented fields as data processing, telecommunications, aeronautics and space. Our presence in the front ranks of international competition is clear evidence of our creativity in these sectors.

With its immense reservoir of resources and its competitive involvement in advanced technology, Canada is perhaps the last frontier of development in the industrialized world. And on this frontier, you will find neither battlefields, nor machines of destruction nor massacres, but stable institutions rooted in tolerance and freedom. This extraordinary potential calls for co-operation between French and Canadian companies. And even if first contacts and co-operative efforts have been made, the real task lies ahead.

I was talking a moment ago about the transformation of the Canadian economy. France itself has undergone a profound process of industrial, technological and social development. Its industry has transcended the narrow confines of our national borders and the traditional trading patterns. France is determined to be present

throughout the globe and our two countries are finally meeting one another in world markets. Naturally we often meet as competitors. But to continue to see each other as competitors and nothing more would be to focus too much on the immediate and to deprive ourselves of the great possibilities opened up by co-operation and association. It would be to cut off our nose to spite our face. Almost too blindly, science is drawing us to the threshold of a new industrial revolution. Like it or not, we are going to have to get used to seeing old habits fall away. The future of relations between us lies in the parallel development of our economies as we move into a new technological era. This process is already under way.

**Question of
choice**

We must pick up the pace. Time slips by ever more quickly and we are coming to a point where Canada must choose its path. There is the option of closer ties with Europe, to which we are drawn by so much tradition and by the achievements of the past decade, however modest they may be. Then there is the appeal of the Pacific horizon and the economic and industrial attractions we have found there. Finally, there is the temptation of North American continentalism, so strongly supported by geography and economic logic.

In fact, it is men and history who have refused to see our continent become a single nation or a single integrated economy, which would assuredly be the greatest, richest and most powerful economy in the world. But faced with the hard choices that will have to be made in the new era, men might have to change their thinking about this option for the future of their continent.

The Canadians of today have rejected it. That they should do so is obviously because of their history and national ideals. Also because this national feeling is based on the premise that Canadians are not only distinctly different from their American neighbours but also have something in common with their European cousins. Our determination to see our French heritage preserved and enriched is part of that self-image of ourselves and gives us a special link with the French-speaking world, notably France.

In speaking a moment ago of Canada's world view, I referred to the attraction of the Pacific countries and the seductive invitation of continentalism. I come back to that to point out that, for Canadians, our shared cultural and linguistic community with Europe is a strong pull in the other direction. Yet, despite the strength of this attraction, we must not exaggerate its effect. In particular, let us not count on language to do our business for us. Language in itself is not a vehicle of trade or of industrial and economic relations. If Canadians needed any proof that in the business world, a common culture is not enough to accomplish this function, we have but to compare the growth of our trading and industrial relations with Japan and Korea to our relatively meagre trade with France — close family connections notwithstanding.

The challenge of commercial and economic relations between France and Canada is quite simply one of will and imagination. That is why I call on you as businessmen and industrial leaders. Because governments will really only be able to give that extra political push to projects when you yourselves get them going in the first place by establishing contacts and lasting — not occasional — co-operation.

**Time to act
is now**

Now is the time to act: now, when the state of the world forces us to look at ourselves and reflect on the future; now, when the Canadian and French governments both seek closer links; now, when the United States is pausing to catch its breath.

The best minds have understood that it is in the interest of Europe that the internal balance of North America be maintained. They know that Canada can open America to France. This is why the future of Canada cannot be a matter of indifference for Europe or France.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, America entered the European consciousness as the fabled promised land. From Rousseau's noble savage to Châteaubriand's Atala, the New World seemed like the rediscovery of paradise on earth. When I call for more solid links between Canada and Europe, when I say that it is time to start a new chapter in the story of loyalty, affection and daring shared by Canada and France, I am not trying to create another mythology.

The time of myths has come and gone. Today we face a harsh reality. But beyond this reality is the future, and it is up to us to shape it to our own advantage. I count on French and Canadian businessmen in the coming years to undertake together economic ventures that will rival in boldness and imagination the greatest exploits in the common history of our two countries.

Ladies and gentlemen, France and Canada are counting on you.