

(October 4, 1926)

## Canada from the Viewpoint of a Westerner

BY MR. J. H. WOODS.\*

*President of the Canadian Associated Press*

PRESIDENT GEORGE H. SEDGEWICK: Gentlemen, we are greatly obliged to Mr. Woods for helping us out today. We had made other arrangements which fell through and Mr. Woods, who was to have spoken at a later date, came to us in our distress to speak today instead of later. We are greatly pleased to have him with us because he is familiar not only with the East but also the West. It is of the greatest importance that we should understand each other. I think it is fairly evident that Toronto and the Prairie provinces don't see eye to eye on some things. Some of us sometimes have an idea that if they don't get a good crop out there that will allow them to spend their winter in Los Angeles we have to do some financial alchemy which will supply that which Providence has seen fit to withhold. On the other hand they probably think of us that we are making them pay through the nose for their Ford cars, ploughs and binders in order that we may ride about in our Rolls-Royces. That is not happy. These misunderstandings are unfortunate and perhaps unnecessary. Mr. Woods has been for more than twenty years in the west in charge of an important newspaper and he is fitted by experience both east and west to try and bring the two together. I have very much pleasure in introducing him today.

MR. WOODS: Mr. President and gentlemen of the Canadian Club of Toronto, I have felt it and do feel it a

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very great honor when I was invited by your club to speak to you and I feel it a privilege if in so doing I have been able to be an opportune factor, as I am here today. I am very much interested in the Canadian Club of Toronto because, as I was telling your president, I was one of those who met in the room behind the old Rossin House and formed this club. Sanford Evans was the man who brought us together and the other member I can remember here was John Cooper. About ten or eleven of us met that night and formed this club and it has always been a matter of great pride to me that I was, even in so humble a way, connected with this organization which has done such splendid work not only in this city but throughout the Dominion.

The subject upon which I am speaking to you, that of Canada, is one which we have all listened to many times and I cannot hope that there will be much new to many of you in what I have to say. Yet, it is a subject which never grows stale to us. Love of our Country is deeply ingrained in our hearts and the roots of it will strike still more deeply as the years pass over our heads. In it are embodied those very sentiments which, next to our religion and to our homes, should stir up the highest impulses of our souls. I do not propose to speak to you of Canada in its material relationship. I am not going to tell you of its greatness. I am not going to talk of its deficits or of its policies or its oil wells, nor will I speak to you on prohibition or immigration or any of these subjects which, after all, are merely matters of a day and continually change their texture as the fleecy cloud of an Alberta sky, but I would rather devote the brief time which I have at my disposal to telling you something for which our Country has stood; something of what it has done for us, and perhaps something of what we should now do for it.

Canada has stood now for more than three hundred years as the Land of the Open Trail. To it in the early days, as to the Colonies and later to the Republic to the south of us, came the oppressed and the afflicted of the earth. Hither they proceeded to escape the heavy hand of force, to escape from religious intolerance and civil servitude and from the racking penury of the older and worn out

lands. Setting their faces towards the declining sun they ventured forth over trackless seas, seeking freedom of spirit for themselves and material prosperity for their children's children. And when they landed, beset though they were by thorns of circumstance, faced with dangers and with hardships, nevertheless they found in this new country the open trail bright with the light of hope and broadening in opportunity and adventure as the years passed by. Surely no country can present to the world a finer set of traditions than can our own; surely no people possess a loftier heritage than we do in the indomitable spirit and high courage of these upon whose hardihood and valor the foundations of Canada were laid. We think of ourselves as a young people with little background. We look about us at the brilliant sunshine of the present day. We set our faces with eagerness toward the sanguine but unknown future, yet we should not forget that Canada has a history so full of color, so full of adventure, so full of heroic deeds and of great experiments it cannot fail truly to inspire him who studies its records and ponders upon its past. It has stood for hardihood, for courage and for endurance. Many of us know the story of the Oregon trail. Many of us here have seen the picture of The Covered Wagon, showing how the brave settlers from New England crossed the great and arid plains of the United States about seventy-five years ago to seek their fortunes on the shores of the Pacific Ocean. All honor to their courage, all honor to their enterprise, even although through our own stupidity they stole that western land from us. Yet the true epic of heroism on the North American continent must find its theme in Canada. A full century before those voyagers crossed these great plains the world was being told from the land of the future Canada of the wonders of the west and of the visions of the Pacific Ocean. Our history goes back for centuries. When Cartier first planted his flag on the shores of the River St. Croix, now the River St. Charles, below Quebec, at that very time, so long ago is it, King Henry VIII was beheading Anne Boleyn; was having himself acclaimed the head of a new church and was arranging the details of his succeeding marriage. Even Champlain, the founder of Quebec, was an ad-

vance guard of the great Elizabethan era which is the historical era of our Empire. At the very time when the "No Popery" riots were taking place in London and throughout England on account of religious intolerance, a Legislative Council and freedom of religion for all had already been established in Canada. Call to mind the Jesuits and the Recollets and the other fathers of the Churches, who carried the cross of their religion through the forest and wilds of this new country and suffered even to the utmost on behalf of their faith. Have you read the story of Alexander Henry, the man who, in 1761, nearly one hundred years before the Oregon Trail was trodden, discovered the Peace River? Have you read of Samuel Hearne, who carved his name on a black rock on the shores of the Hudson Bay on July 1st, 1767, little dreaming that exactly one hundred years from that date would bring to light a new Dominion, that would become the brightest jewel in the British Crown? He it was, who first saw the Great Slave Lake and who followed the Coppermine River to its many mouths entering into the Arctic Ocean. Alexander McKenzie, the first man in the world to break trail to the Pacific Ocean, went from Northern Alberta. Simon Fraser, who left Fort Edmonton to cast his little canoe on the turbid waters of the Fraser River and to face death at every curve. David Thompson, the pathfinder and perhaps the greatest geographer the world has ever seen, the man who, seeking a possible passage to the mythical India, fronted the inhospitable coasts of Labrador and actually charted the shores of Hudson's Bay before even a map of England had been made. These are the men who, with dog train and snow shoe, in canoe and dugout, rolled back the mystic cover from the face of a continent and revealed to Europe a new dispensation of freedom of religion, of prosperity and of hope. Travelling up the St. Lawrence, through vast lakes and rivers, savages and death as their companions, they let into this great and vast country the light of civilization. Think of the statesmen, who from small beginnings have built up the legislation, the laws and civil government of this country throughout the past three hundred years. Think of the settlers who have pushed the plough from the Atlantic to the Pacific

Ocean, establishing base after base, pushing westward, ever westward, turning up the soil and making prosperity and homes for millions to follow. Let us teach our children these names and these deeds for in them lies our inspiration to great acts and unselfish devotion in the interests of our country and of our human kind.

That, in a few words, is the romantic history of Canada. Through it half a continent has been opened up to the uses, the comforts and happiness of the world. We hold great material possessions which have come to us through the efforts of those who went before, but it is not in these possessions that we may find our true reasons for pride and satisfaction. There is nothing in them alone to move us to higher thoughts and nobler deeds. It is only in the greatness of our history, in the good that our forefathers have been able to do, in the happiness and comfort, in the liberty and joy that our country has afforded to the peoples of the world; it is only in the obligations that we have assumed, in the high duties that rest upon us as inheritors of so great a past, that we may find the true knowledge and the true inspiration upon which to build a serene and honorable national life. We have accomplished much. We have stood loyal to our King. In 1776; in 1812; in the Fenian Raids; in our own internal troubles, in South Africa and in the last Great War, and we have been tried on many fields. We have built up a Legislative system which has come to be regarded as a model among the modern peoples of the world. We have shown the world how two great Nations can live side by side in harmony and yet maintain in that relationship our independence and our self-respect. All honor to those in the past who have fought for redress of wrong and for political freedom in this land, even though they fought as rebels against the constituted authority of the day. Mistaken, perhaps, in whole or in part, yet they were imbued with a sincere devotion to what they believed to be the good of their country and they have left to us a tradition and independence of thought and a liberty of action of which we may well be proud.

There are three great needs in this country, as I see it. One is, that we should learn to think Nationally. We

should remember that we are a small country living beside the greatest single community in the world, more than ten times our size. It requires a sturdy Canadianism and will require an unselfish consideration of our National problems by both East and West if we are to survive the pressure which is being put upon us today. We must remember that before the war the investments of Great Britain in this country were twice, approximately twice, the amount of the American investments and that today the position is just about reversed and American investments in this country are infinitely greater than British investments. Such facts, welcome though they be in the individual instances, bring with them a menace, bring with them a danger of ethical absorption which it is our duty to rebut on behalf of ourselves as a Nation and it is only by learning to think Nationally, to think for one another, to think on behalf of one another, that we shall be able to stand up against this menace.

The second great need is intermingled with the first. It and the other one I will mention are, I think, perhaps the two greatest needs of this country today. The second is the necessity for an increase of sympathy and unselfish thought as between the East and the West.

We hear a lot about the East and the West and we hear a great deal in our country of the attitude of mind which you eastern men, particularly, have toward our western country. I would like to say, that we in the West find an attitude of mind sometimes in the East which would perhaps be easily correctible, but which is evident to us. It is a surprising thing, that a man may live in Eastern Canada and be regarded as a conservative and reputable and respectable citizen, but the moment he moves further out west he is regarded by those same friends in the East as being "wild and woolly." Statements which, if he had made them when he lived in the East would have been accepted on his general reputation and character are regarded when he comes East and makes them, as the statements of a western boomster, to some extent, and no matter what we do, no matter how earnestly we endeavor to impress upon eastern men the fact that our mentalities and our attitudes towards business are the same as any in Montreal or Toronto we

find it, I frankly say, very difficult to break through that reserve which places a barrier between the things that we tell them as Westerners and the things that they tell to one another as Easterners. Now, that is a slight, but nevertheless a very tangible impression that is in Western Canada, and we often do feel when we come East and see the friends we meet here and tell them the things we have out there, that we are met with either a smile of semi-incredulity, or at least a casualness that would not have appertained to them had they been made by one Easterner to another. And I also find, and perhaps it is a thing that many of you have not thought of, that in the West there is a somewhat intense ignorance concerning Eastern Canada, and one reason for that is the fact that a great section of our population in Western Canada has come to us from the south and does not know Eastern Canada. Just figure the population of Alberta and Saskatchewan and think out of the one and a half millions or so, who are in these two provinces, how many people have come up through the United States, through Winnipeg or through Portal or from Spokane, made their homes up there, even attained to the second generation up there, and yet they have no knowledge of, nor any innate sympathy with, that great and important and major part of our dominion which is represented in Ontario and Quebec. These people do not know you as we know you, and we who live in the West and who have come from Eastern Canada are likely to be in an ever increasing minority in the total population of Western Canada, and we have among ourselves to endeavor to educate and train these newcomers among us to a sense of unity that is essential to the very life of our Dominion. This is no light task that we Westerners have; it is no light job to put a national spirit into so heterogeneous a population as is filling up and will, in the future, to a greater extent, fill up the communities of our prairie. And therefore, while I admit that very often we are apt as Westerners to misjudge our Eastern friends, I would like you to consider in thinking of the West, how difficult it is for a great proportion of our population to have a ready and spontaneous sympathy with the Eastern portion of our Dominion.

These misapprehensions are 90 per cent. error. We are the same kind of people as the Eastern people are; our environment is different, our country is large and our communities are small and therefore, in this different environment we attain different characteristics of thought and of business methods. We attain to new species of thought regarding legislation, we are more prone to experimentation in our public life as we are in our private life, and you on the other hand are different from us. We must both remember that the difficulties that face our united country in working out its destiny will not be met and solved without any doubt whatever. I speak of the material difficulties. They are much like an ant hill that seems steep to you as you see it in the distance, and that rolls away into a reasonable incline as you approach it and commence its ascent. The worst problems in front of Canada are the problems of misunderstanding and lack of mutual confidence and the problem of lack of tolerance for one another's views; and the greatest virtue that we Canadians, East and West, can cultivate, is the virtue of toleration and sympathy for one another, and above all a recognition toward one another that even though we may differ in regard to one another's actions, we may depend on one another's good faith and honesty of purpose. We will best serve the interests of our joint country if we refuse to listen to clamor and think with kindness, and sympathy even, of each other's problems which we do not really know, thinking perhaps if the other fellow has done something that does not seem to us to be fair, that he is faced with difficulties and problems which have made his acts seem necessary or advisable.

I have been East a good many times and I have found down here that the men who do things, who are concerned for the future of Canada are giving a great deal of anxious thought to this subject. I believe, speaking as a Westerner, that the men down east are more concerned in this subject, are doing more to bridge, to attempt to bridge, the mental gap which exists between us than our men are doing out West, and I think out in the west, as here, we must learn to think of our country in its relations to the other parts of Canada. There is no use merely because we are a farming

country in thinking that tariffs and freight rates must necessarily be adjusted in our sole interest and on the other hand there is no use in Eastern Canada thinking that they have built Western Canada and that they, therefore, have a vested right in its traffic and in its trade. Western Canada was built, as Eastern Canada was built, on the life blood and the courage of the men who settled it, and there is no vested right to anyone in the manhood and the womanhood by which our great Western country was created.

And the third great need in this country, perhaps the greatest need, is that there should grow up an increased sympathy and knowledge between the two great races of whom this country is composed. I came from Quebec. I was born and brought up in the heart of French Canada. I know the French Canadians from childhood and I say with my whole heart that in many respects these people form the backbone of our Canadian National life, and that they possess as citizens positive merits which are superior to many of those which we ourselves display. They have always been loyal to Canada. Would you think for a moment that they would have any other country but Canada? We have our country, we have our backgrounds; we look back to the valleys of England, the hills of Scotland, we look back to the mother heart of Great Britain, some of us look back to homes in the United States or in other lands. We have our homeland; We have our deep traditions and when we leave Canada we say "we are going home," wherever it may be, but the French Canadian has no home except Canada. France is not his home. They left France and cut themselves off from France when they left it. The French Canadian who is living here has nothing behind him as a national life, except Canada itself. When we see statements in regard to politics, or in regard to military matters, in regard to the militia, statements in regard to the taking part in wars, which because of our prejudices we are apt to resent, we must remember that these people think first and last of Canada, their own native land, and to it they give a passionate devotion. They are devoted to its soil as we are not. They live simpler lives than we do. They are less complex and more devoted in their religious life than the average English Canadian.

They have a literature. I wonder how many of you know much about the literature of the French Canadian? If you read Hémon's *Maria Chapdelaine*, that many of us no doubt have read, you get there a picture of French Canadian life, such as possesses no parallel in English Canadian literature, concerning English Canadian life. Go and read a book by Adjutor Rivard, a judge down in Quebec, called "*Chez Nous*." It, like *Maria Chapdelaine*, was translated by W. H. Blake, son of the late Honorable Sam Blake, and a man who conferred an inestimable treasure upon his native land by the great way in which he translated French Canadian literature into our tongue. I say read "*Chez Nous*." You all know that the French language does not possess a word for the word "home" and we often hold it against them because they have no such word, because their whole language does not possess any word which says "home". But they do possess the words "*Chez Nous*," "*With Us*," "*in our home*," "*in our hearts*." To *Chez Nous*, the sacred hospitality of the French Canadian homestead, they give a depth of sincerity, and they build upon it an ethical morality which is as deep as that of any people on the face of the earth. Do not let us look upon the French Canadian as a foreigner. We are the foreigners. They were here before we were. They are nearer the soil of Canada than we have ever been, and with us they constitute, and must always constitute, Canada as a homogenous nation, made up of the two of us. It is so that we are in the majority. It is so that we are the wealthier, and that we possess more of authority in the land. But it is our duty to seek them out. It is our duty to learn to know them; if you men would only study the French Canadian literature and the history of the French Canadian people, you would find growing in you a genuine and intense affection for them, which is the very spirit that, at the present time, is most needed in this country to make Canada a nation.

I remember reading a while ago of some British prisoners being released in Germany after the war and they were being addressed by some German statesmen who were, apparently, seeking to get from them the motives that had led them into the war and one expression struck me very keenly.

It was that of a German who said, trying to say something decent about his country, that a barbed wire cage was not a place from which to gain a fair perspective of any people. Whatever we may think of the Germans that is true and the barbed wire cage of the east or west, of English or French-Canadians, is no place from which to gain that spirit upon which we can build up our country.

Such are they and such are our problems. We have troubles, but troubles are just of a day. We will overcome the problems that seem to us so important, as we do our daily task. If we will go forth in mutual sympathy, in national unity and co-operation, joining with one another in loyalty and in service to our country and our Empire, we will cope successfully with all these problems and we will, with increasing unity of purpose and with the cultivation of the highest standards in our public and private life, satisfy the duty which we owe to our country and be worthy successors to our forefathers.