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Canada's Ninetieth Birthday

THIS is a birthday tribute to Canada, a country old in terms of human age but youthful among the nations.

It was in 1534 that Jacques Cartier made his first voyage to Canada, but the event we celebrate on July 1st did not take place until more than three centuries later.

Those three centuries were filled with pioneer toil, with a thousand rugged experiences for which the first French and British settlers were ill prepared. They contended with harsh winters such as they had never before known. They were surrounded by hostile tribes. They had to cope with war and famine and hardships of every sort. But worst of all was the loneliness of people cut off from the amenities of life, separated from relatives, governed by rulers who knew nothing of the hard conditions of making a livelihood in this new world.

Our ninetieth birthday is a fit time to shine up the trophies our forefathers earned in those days, and to pay a small tribute of praise to their foresight, their hardihood, their determination and their work.

People all over the world look with respect, and sometimes with envy, upon living conditions on this North American continent. Life here is not the frugal, often barren, existence it is in so many other countries. We take for granted an ease of living that is beyond the day-dreams of people elsewhere. But we should remember that today's prosperity is built upon the lion-hearted endurance of far-off days.

To survive as an independent people on this strip of earth between the world's most rapidly developing industrial nation and the barren land the early Canadians had to be tough and adaptable, and they had only a narrow margin for error. Our growth into a settled nation is due largely to the fact that in no other land has there been such a genius for making full use of opportunities as they develop.

It is worth noting that Arnold J. Toynbee, the eminent historian, recognizes — even stresses — the virtue of adversity. It is, he says in *A Study of History*, difficult rather than easy conditions that produce achievements. People in lands where life is easy remain primitive savages. Canadians responded to the challenge of their environment in this new land.

Our Canadian way

It would be surprising, in view of our stern history, if we had developed into a gay and frivolous people. We do not resent it when we are accused of having in us something of the canniness of the Scottish people, some of the coldness of the English, some of the attentiveness to precedent of the French, and some of the deliberativeness of the German.

The mixture of all these may have given us a certain perceptiveness, out of which will emerge a unique culture. Of one thing we may be sure: we are not following any ancient pattern blindly, nor have we been lured into following some utopian trail. It has been said of us that we tend to conduct even our business booms with good sense, and to keep our heads when things aren't so good.

There may be sound philosophical and psychological reasons for this. While the first adventuresome men who came here from France and the British Isles were not trained in the skills needed to exist in the wild-woods, they did have behind them many centuries of culture. They came of races that had learned to think. They had access, through their ancestry and experience, to the principles by which men live, and these they have passed on to us.

During these ninety years our country has, with some measure of success, united an Anglo-Saxon and a Latin culture, found a middle way between the British and the United States philosophies of life, and made a place for herself as a nation desirous of living her own life peaceably but yet willing to share the burden of world affairs.

What sort of people?

Let us look at what sort of people we have in Canada. This is a bilingual country. More than thirty per cent of our people are of French origin. In the Province of Quebec this large minority has maintained a cohesion of custom, religion and language that distinguishes it nationally and internationally.

Because of Canada's dual base and mixed immigration, it will never produce a narrow racial nationalism. This is made evident by figures provided by selected censuses:

<i>Origin</i>	<i>1871</i>	<i>1931</i>	<i>1941</i>	<i>1951</i>
	<i>per cent</i>	<i>per cent</i>	<i>per cent</i>	<i>per cent</i>
British	60.55	51.86	49.68	47.9
French	31.07	28.22	30.27	30.8
Others	8.38	19.92	20.05	21.3

We can with advantage go a little farther in analysing the racial composition of the Canadian people. At the time of confederation the largest individual British racial group was Irish, and the Irish and Scottish together outnumbered the English almost two to one. After 1881 the English predominated, and the Scottish moved into second place after 1911.

By the time of the 1951 census the numerical strength of the principal racial stocks was in the following order: French, English, Scottish, Irish, German, Ukrainian, Scandinavian, Dutch, and Polish. We had, at the time of the census, 165,600 native Indian and Eskimo people.

All of these people could not have been brought together without difference of opinion about this and that. Some sandpapering of the edges of belief and custom was needed.

Our great contribution to the amalgamation of many races in one people is due to the success we have had in going only far enough and not too far in this process. It is our individual right to be different, but our strength lies in being united on the important and basic things in economic and national life.

Under the impulse of confederation in a common citizenship we are, as the years pass, blending the best attainments, beliefs, customs and traditions of all the world into a Canadian culture.

Many organizations and many people help in this momentous and inspiring task. Of special significance now, because of our stepped-up immigration projects, is the Canadian Citizenship Council. Formed in 1940, it has continuously stimulated and assisted in increasing Canadians' understanding and appreciation of the basic values in our society. It is a federation of the ten provincial departments of education, several federal government departments, and about sixty national and

provincial voluntary organizations. It provides basic factual information and suitable literature to all who are interested in education for citizenship.

Freedom and democracy

Canada is a free country. Its people are at liberty to worship according to their consciences, choose where and at what they shall work, think and discuss all manner of things, express their opinions without fear, and read a free press. Canada has a democratic government, elected by the people and responsible directly to the people.

Canadians believe in independence, and part of independence is individual responsibility. We do not wish to make men good citizens by compulsion, by statute or by fear. We believe that more good will be accomplished by applying the Golden Rule in all phases of life than by any number of government edicts. A deep feeling of regard for the rights and beliefs and even for the idiosyncrasies of fellow citizens is a cardinal principle of Canadian life.

No matter from what country a new Canadian comes, he is assured of three important principles that guide our way of life: government according to law, the recognition and assurance of certain rights of individuals, and change, if change is to be made, under due process of law. Within this framework every new-comer of goodwill has the fullest opportunity to develop his talents and aspirations.

Canadian culture

We sometimes hear people talk about culture as if it were something apart from everyday life, made up of music and painting and sculpture and the dance. It is not so. These are some forms of expression. Our culture is something inside us. It grows out of our past, is developed and enriched by us, and unfolds into our future.

Canadians are close to nature. There are still places to go in Canada where never the foot of man has trod. We are not effete, we have had no time to get bored. When you take the representatives of forty racial stocks, with all their traditions and customs and all their centuries of slow advancement in science and industry, and set them down in such a land as this, what a superlatively great culture they can bring into being!

Fortunately for us and our future, Canadians are not standstill people. They never cease to wish to learn about their environment, their place in the world, and themselves. This reaching toward knowledge and understanding, first catered to by such institutions as the Mechanics Institute, is met today by manifold opportunities provided by universities, institutions

such as the Y.M.C.A., community study groups, branches of the Great Books Foundation and the General Semantics Society, and specialized associations like literary clubs, handicraft guilds and historical societies.

From a broad base, then, of many national qualities, Canadians are deepening their experiences so as to approach with intelligent discernment the building of their own truly Canadian way of life.

The pioneers

If we have a fault, it is to take too much for granted what has been won already. This free society, in which men and women may develop to their fullest capability, was gained by the struggles and sacrifices of the men and women from whom we inherit it. We must respect the past for how great it was.

This has not been an easy country in which to live and work. Once our people hewed farm plots out of the wilderness, built their own homes, made their own clothes and grew their own food. Children and women laboured hard in the fields, and there was no diversion but sleep.

It was out of their pluck and energy that Canada grew to the scattered settlements of the year of Confederation, and then, despite obstacles that might have frustrated and disheartened lesser people, to the high living standards of today.

About confederation

In 1867 a small, struggling, competitive group of colonies merged into a confederated state. Queen Victoria's proclamation giving effect to the Union Act was issued on May 22nd, declaring that "on and after the first of July, 1867, the provinces of Canada, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick, shall form and be one Dominion, under the name of Canada."

Confederation was an attempt to solve many political and economic problems. Politically, it was sought to establish a new nation to meet the changed conditions of British policy and to unite the scattered provinces against pressure and possible aggression from the south. Economically it was designed to spread dependence over many industries instead of only a few, and thus lessen exposure to the effects of economic policies then being pursued by both the United Kingdom and the United States.

Enactment of the British North America Act establishing confederation did not of itself assure solution of either political or economic difficulties. It did, however, provide a framework within which we are still working to bring about the balance of loyalties and interests, of needs and supplies, which an effective federal system requires.

Throughout the years up to 1931 Canada advanced toward full nationhood. First there was undeniable gaining of equal rank within the Empire, and then followed, in the Statute of Westminster, the legal step which capped the arch. That Act declared the dominions to be equal in status, in no way subordinate in any aspect of their domestic or external life. Today, Canada is given a respectful hearing when her representatives speak for her among the nations of the world.

As things were

In celebrating a birthday we go back again and again to the beginning. The environment in which a person was born remains important to him for all his life.

The Canada of 1867 would be unbelievably foreign to young people of today. It had none of the features they take for granted, such as great factories, large cities, paved highways, automobiles, airplanes, radios, electricity. There were only a few miles of railway along the St. Lawrence.

About 3½ million people lived in all Canada, and four-fifths of them were on farms. Cultivation of the soil and extraction of raw products from the forest and from the sea supported a small group of manufacturing, handicraft and service industries in the settled areas.

Families were largely self-sufficient, as was to be expected in a pioneer society. Material income was limited to the basic requirements of life — food, clothing and shelter — and there was little left over for luxuries and amusement: if, indeed, there were any luxuries and amusement to be had.

People were hopeful, even optimistic, about the future of Canada. The *Canada Year Book* of 1868 remarked: "We may, with some pretension to probability, assume that the rate of progress of the population of all British America will be as rapid for fifty years or more as it has been for the past decade, and this would give as the population . . . in 1951, 58,361,000." Alas for the prediction of that ninety-year-ago economist, our census in 1951 showed that we fell short of his figure by 44,351,571. At the end of 1956 we had an estimated population of 16,344,000. Just a few months ago the Royal Commission on Canada's Economic Prospects estimated that by 1980 our population may reach 26,650,000.

But large segments of our economy have made advances that would have more than satisfied those who ushered in confederation so hopefully.

There is not much point, obviously, in giving detailed statistical comparisons of the Canada of 1867 and the Canada of today, because there is so little resemblance

between them. But it is interesting to look at some figures, just to get an idea of the progress these ninety years have brought to us.

This bank, then called The Merchants' Bank, had deposits totalling \$100,000. Its latest annual statement, at the end of 1956, showed deposits totalling \$3,278,375,435.

Agriculture is not mentioned in the index of the 1868 book, but it takes 62 closely-printed pages to cover its activities in the 1956 *Canada Year Book*.

In 1871, four years after confederation, manufacturing industries had 188,000 employees, paid \$41 million in wages, and the gross value of their products was \$222 million. In 1955, employees numbered 1,290,000, wages amounted to \$4,111 million, and the gross value of products amounted to \$19,469 million.

This expansion in industry has been based largely upon hydro-electric power. At the end of 1956 this country's installed capacity of hydro developments was 18,356,000 horsepower. New plants and extensions coming on line during the next two years will add some four million horsepower. Less than 28 per cent of our known hydro resources have yet been developed.

World traders

Canada is rich in resources, and her people are energetic and efficient, but her market of consumers has been too small to absorb the production of her farms, forests and factories. In 1956, for example, our wheat production was 538 million bushels — a quantity that we could not possibly use in feeding our 16 million people. That year, we exported 302½ million bushels.

Everyone has heard of Canada's treasure caves of minerals vital to modern life. Our forests are exceeded in size by those of only two other countries. We have the largest sea fishing grounds in the world. We are the world's largest producers of newsprint, platinum, asbestos and nickel. We are second in aluminum, zinc, and wood-pulp. We are third in producing gold, and fifth in copper. During the past ten years something new has been added. There had been oil discoveries and developments in Canada in earlier years — at Turner Valley and Lloydminster — but Canada really broke into the big league of petroleum producers in 1947 when the Leduc field in Alberta was discovered. In 1955 we produced 129½ million barrels of crude oil valued at \$305½ million.

And yet, and this is the rub, we have only six one-thousandths of the world's population.

A large export trade is, therefore, necessary to the health of our economy. The stuff we produce as a nation, plus the stuff we import, less the stuff we export, is a measure of our standard of living. What we export enables us to pay for what we import.

Our nation today

Our increasing foreign trade has expanded our horizon. Our neighbours are no longer the people in the next county or province, but people in continents at the other side of the earth. Every day sees thousands of transactions pass through this bank's foreign department, evidence of business being done by Canadians in Australia, Africa, Asia, Europe and all the countries in the Americas.

Canada stands between the great powers and the small nations. Our manpower weight is light, but our economic weight entitles us to a seat near the top in world planning, not alone because of our natural resources but because of our ability to process them efficiently.

Sir Anthony Eden, in an address to the Canada Club in London, credited Canada with growing influence in international affairs, but warned that its position would bring a growing number of headaches. He praised Canada's ability to provide sane guidance in international conferences without favour and in words at once reasonable and firm.

Our border marches with that of a powerful nation which shares our ideals of freedom. Our agreements are arrived at by law or by arbitration or by talking things over in a friendly way.

That bold step

It is difficult for us to realize today how bold was the step taken ninety years ago. The Governor-General, Lord Durham, had reported optimistically to the British Government thirty years before that time: "These small and unimportant communities (Upper and Lower Canada, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland) could be elevated into a society having some objects of national importance."

Adventuresome people brought about the union, and today when we see Canada against its background we are comforted by the thought that they did well. No one need live meanly in Canada except by choice. Everyone has the opportunity to progress. We live comfortably, but not so easily as to stagnate. We wish to live richly, rather than to be rich.

But we have reached the stage in our national life where we can no longer boast of our youth or plead out of mature responsibilities. We have no guarantee of continued improvement. While applauding the pageant of the past this first of July, in which each passing birthday is decked with laurel for achievement and rosemary for remembrance, we need to recall that 1957, whatever we make of it, will take its place in the cavalcade of the years.