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MCIS BRIEFINGS

Munk Centre Distinguished Lecture Series
January 17 and 23, 2008

The World's First Anti-Americans: Canada as the Canary in the Global Mine

Richard Gwyn
Author and Columnist

M C I S B R I E F I N G S

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Introduction

Richard Gwyn is one of Canada's finest story tellers and this story of "Canada as the Canary in the Global Mine" is among his very best. It is a compelling tale of the making of Canada at a time when the United States loomed large and significant, if not yet to the whole world, than to those who lived just north. Canadians, even before we were Canadians, grappled with the presence of the United States, its magnetism, what it was, and what it wasn't. Gwyn's story is full of surprises — Canadians in the nineteenth century were more religious than their neighbours to the south and they were more socially conservative. Canadians were, Gwyn tells us in these compelling lectures, one of the earliest anti-Americans even though we shared so much with those that we differentiated ourselves from. We were indeed the canary in the global mine — or perhaps the harbinger of what was to come in the early twenty-first century. Perhaps Canada has something to say to the rest of the world about the proprieties of being anti-American. We excel at our anti-Americanism, a gentle rhetoric, laced with the occasional whiff of smug superiority, but undergirded by affinity and affection. This is the story that Richard Gwyn tells, as new and current as it is old.

Janice Gross Stein, *Director, Munk Centre for International Studies*

The World's First Anti-Americans: Canada as the Canary in the Global Mine

Richard Gwyn

Richard Gwyn is an award-winning author and political columnist. He is widely known as a commentator for the Toronto Star and as a frequent contributor to television and radio. His books include two major biographies, of Newfoundland Premier Joey Smallwood, The Unlikely Revolutionary, and of Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau, The Northern Magus. His 1995 book, Nationalism Without Walls; The Unbearable Lightness of Being Canadian, was selected by The Literary Review of Canada as one of the 100 most important books published in Canada. His most recent work, John A, The Man Who Made Us; The Life and Times of Sir John A. Macdonald, Volume One, 1815–1867, has been widely praised and was awarded the 2008 Charles Taylor Prize for Literary Non-Fiction. Mr. Gwyn is an Officer of the Order of Canada.

Mr. Gwyn spoke in the Munk Centre Distinguished Lecture Series on January 17 and 23, 2008.

First Lecture: The Americans and Us

I want to start by talking about what I'm not going to talk about. I'm not going to talk about anti-Americanism in a judgmental moralistic manner. I will be making no attempt to say that it's good in this circumstance, bad in that circumstance, is justified in that circumstance or unjustified in that circumstance, is a good thing or a bad thing. I will be treating anti-Americanism purely as a thing, as a force, as a major factor in international affairs. Really, I'm using anti-Americanism in the sense of relations with America or of a nation or society or people pushing back against America in order to gain room to breathe.

As we all know, the issue “anti-Americanism” has salience in just about every country in the world. As needs also to be appreciated, it affects countries not just in terms of their foreign policy, but also in terms of their domestic politics. In many countries, the issue of how to relate to America is a major factor in purely domestic politics. An extreme example at one end would be Israel. The prime minister of Israel has to show that he or she can get on with America. They’d never win an election if they aren’t able to show that and would have great difficulty governing. At the opposite pole, consider President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in Iran. Much of his power comes from the fact that he can infuriate America and get under the skin of America, can taunt it. He is, though, currently encountering an interesting difficulty. The recent National Intelligence Estimate report¹ judges, “with high confidence,” that Iran is not pursuing a nuclear weapons policy. This is bad news for Ahmadinejad, particularly at a time when parliamentary elections are coming up: without the distraction of America-bashing, the election issue is going to be the economy, which in Iran is in terrible shape and for which Ahmadinejad is responsible. In Canada, anti-Americanism or relations with America has always been both a major important policy factor and a major domestic factor and it’s no coincidence that the subject of my biography,² John A. Macdonald, was both the most successful politician of the nineteenth century and was also the most anti-American in our entire history.

Anti-Americanism has been a major force in international affairs for fifty years. It really began on a global scale with the Vietnam War, with a widespread revulsion at what was happening in Vietnam and next door in Cambodia and Laos. This was preceded by the assassinations of John F. Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, and Martin Luther King, and these triggered in many countries a feeling there was something fundamentally wrong with the United States. This is where anti-Americanism in the conventional sense of the term began.

The best research on anti-Americanism comes from the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press in Washington, an organization

1. National Intelligence Council, *Iran: Nuclear Intentions and Capabilities* (National Intelligence Estimate, Office of the Director of National Intelligence, Washington, DC, November 2007).

2. *John A, The Man Who Made Us; The Life and Times of Sir John A. Macdonald, Volume One, 1815–1867* (Random House, 2007), winner of the 2008 Charles Taylor Prize for Literary Non-Fiction.

with an excellent reputation both for competence and for integrity. It's been surveying anti-Americanism intensively since 2002, with major surveys done in 2003 and 2004. In its most recent report, Pew drew this conclusion: "Anti-Americanism is deeper and broader now than at any time in modern times. It is most acute in the Muslim world but it spans the globe from Europe to Africa, from South America to Africa."³

Canada was part of the surveys carried out in some fifty countries at one time or another. Especially revealing was the answer of Canadians to the question asked in many countries, namely "Whether people believe the United States has the capacity to solve the world's problems?" In Canada, the "no" answer was 68 percent. That was higher than in two countries then fighting in Iraq alongside the United States, namely Britain and Italy. It was higher, except in Muslim countries, than all of the other countries surveyed, apart from a small handful like France, Mexico, and Nigeria. Those results were not definitive, though, because other Pew studies found a widespread and considerable liking for America itself. When people were asked, including those in Muslim countries, "If you had the chance to live in any country in the world other than the one you're in, which would it be?" America was way up at the top of the list.

In history, there's never been a force like anti-Americanism. As goes without saying, every empire that ever existed — British, French, Spanish, Roman — was thoroughly detested by most of the people over whom it ruled. Everybody complains about imperialists; that's a rule of life.

What is unique about anti-Americanism is its comprehensiveness. One of the best comments on this was made back in 1982 by the French, as you'd expect, Minister of Culture Jack Lang, who made this very apt observation that the United States "no longer grabs territory or rarely, but it grabs consciousness, ways of thinking, ways of doing." What Lang was talking about here was the fact that the United States possesses immense soft power as well as the hard military power and political power. And what the United States does by that soft power is to create all around the world quasi-Americans, or wannabe-Americans.

3. Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, "Global Opinion: The Spread of Anti-Americanism," in *Trends 2005* (Pew Research Center: Washington, DC, January 2005).

As good as any example of the pervasiveness of American soft power that comes to my mind involves this “Action Man” that I’m holding up, namely this plastic figurine of John A. Macdonald. His face actually is rather poor, but his clothes are very good; if you look at his trousers, they’re pure twenty-first-century cool, which is to say they’re baggy, they’ve got no crease, and they’re bunched up around his ankles. It was made by a small toy company in Montreal, on commission, but it was conceived by and distributed by a major chain of retail stores in Canada called WalMart. That is pure soft power.

The United States has really only possessed global hard power in addition to its soft power since the Second World War, if earlier briefly near to the end of the First World War and through the subsequent Versailles Treaty negotiations. The United States was, of course, a hard-power power within the Western Hemisphere from early on. As a soft-power power, though, it’s been that from its very beginning.

At the very start of the American Revolution, extraordinary ideas went out from America in the writings of people like Thomas Paine and Thomas Jefferson about the equality of man. The equality of white man, and only of men, I should add, but nevertheless a revolutionary idea. This, as well as ideas about liberty and ideas about democracy attracted people and turned on people the world over (the “world” then really meant just Europe). Today, as you all know full well, soft power encompasses everything, from *The Sopranos* to Hollywood movies to pop music. The best example is the Internet: the world now talks to itself by means of a communications system of which almost all of its operating programs are American and of which the great bulk of its content is American in origin. Moreover, to confirm the pervasiveness of this form of American soft power, the enemies of America use the Internet to disseminate anti-Americanism and to plot how to attack America.

One of the features of anti-Americanism that differentiates it from all comparable forces in history is that a major source of anti-Americanism is Americans themselves. Indeed the first real expression of anti-Americanism came almost a decade before the Vietnam War, in the form of a novel published in 1958 and written by two American journalists with the title *The Ugly American*. At that time, the French had left Vietnam; the Americans hadn’t yet arrived, but there were some American advisors and trainers there helping the South Vietnamese deal with the Viet Cong insurgency. The theme of this

book was that these CIA types and other Americans were crass, coarse, had no interest or knowledge of the local culture and history, and believed that all problems could be solved by power and money, and so were harming America. What is fascinating about *The Ugly American* is that in the book the character “the ugly American” was actually a good guy who was in the villages working with the people on economic development. He was like a Canadian, in fact — or at least as how we see ourselves. But the phrase “the ugly American” was seized on by people all over the world to express their unease about how America conducted itself abroad.

Not only were Americans the first anti-Americans but they have been among the harshest of all anti-Americans. Noam Chomsky comes instantly to mind. In the midst of an American war against global terrorism, Chomsky has described his own country as “a global terrorist.” The novelist Kurt Vonnegut wrote, “America is the most hated nation on earth.” Susan Sontag, the cultural critic who died a few years ago, wrote, “America has become a criminal country bemused by the monstrous doctrine that it has a mandate to determine the destiny of the world.” The nearest equivalent today would be Lewis Lapham, who in *Harper’s* magazine denounces, month after month, Iraq, Guantanamo, torture, and the rest.

The converse of Americans being anti-American is that of non-Americans being anti-anti-Americanism. In this country, one of our most distinguished historians, Jack Granatstein, wrote just over a decade ago a book called *Yankee Go Home?*, denouncing anti-Americanism in Canada as mindless and self-indulgent. In France, predictably the international centre of anti-Americanism, a well-known leading leftist intellectual, Jean-François Revel, wrote a book in 2003 with the title *The Anti-American Obsession*, denouncing anti-Americanism as infantile.

A last comment needs to be made about the nature of anti-Americanism. Often it is not really about America. Rather, it’s about modernity. A good insight has been provided here by Paul Hollander, the leading scholar on anti-Americanism and a professor at the University of Massachusetts, in his *Anti-Americanism: Critiques at Home and Abroad, 1965–1990*. Hollander has written that anti-Americanism is often “an expression of anger and anguish at the decline of the sustaining bonds of community.” The characteristic of modernity that it emphasizes the “I” in place of “We” the clan, or sect,

or tribe, or extended family, is shocking and frightening to many people, who react by lashing out against America because they see America and modernity as synonymous.

Now to Canada, or to the “Us” part of the title of this talk. So far, we have performed only a couple of brief, walk-on parts; from this stage on, we are going to be full in the footlights.

The reason for our prominence is that we are indeed the Canary in the Global Mine. We’ve been the canary for longer than anybody else. We’ve been that from our very beginning at Confederation. We’ve been that for a full century before our beginning in 1867. We were indeed that before America became America. In fact, we were the world’s canary before there ever was a mine.

Our journey as canary, which, as both a challenge and an opportunity, has developed into our mission, our fate in life, began in 1775. The Americans have rebelled, but they’re not yet a nation (which they didn’t become until the Treaty of Paris of 1783, when Britain recognized the independence of the new nation-state). The Americans at this time haven’t even yet decided whether they wanted to become an independent nation-state. The Declaration of Independence, with Jefferson’s famous invocation to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,” comes in 1776. But the Americans have rebelled and immediately they dispatched a whole lot of letters and pamphlets to what they termed “the oppressed inhabitants of Canada,” calling on them to join them. The response from Canada was no response at all. America’s response to the lack of any response from Canada was to send up an army, actually two armies, one headed by General Richard Montgomery and the other by General Benedict Arnold, better known for later changing his mind about rebelling. They captured Montreal and besieged Quebec City, but failed to capture it and were compelled to retreat. Canada thus experienced America’s first attempt at regime change in its history.

Our particular nature as a canary from this time on is unique in several critical respects. The most important is that we, exactly like the Americans, are North Americans. Nobody else shares that defining commonality. If you go back to the late eighteenth century and the nineteenth century, it’s easy to assume that we were British who happened to be in North America because our title was that of British North Americans. Rather, we were North Americans who happened to be British.

Then, most Canadians, excluding of course les Canadiens, were immigrants from the British Isles. There was a substantial group of Loyalists who left America after it gained independence, but by the mid-nineteenth century, the great majority of English-speaking Canadians were British immigrants, including, because of the Great Famine, a great many Irish. What happened to them is that almost from the moment they arrived they became, comprehensively, North Americans.

A beautiful example of this process of instant assimilation is contained in a letter written early in the nineteenth century by a man called George Forbes, who had come from Aberdeenshire in Scotland and had settled in Upper Canada, now Ontario, and had hacked out a farm from the primeval forest. Forbes wrote to his brother to urge him to join him, and he made this argument: "We in Canada have this glorious privilege that the ground we tread on is our own and our children's after us. Here we are lairds ourselves." In those two sentences, Forbes described the essence of the difference between being North American and living anywhere else in the world. He was no longer trapped by history, as he would have been had he remained in Scotland. Rather than being a tenant farmer working the land of his laird, his lord, Forbes now owned, as was automatic for all new settlers, a small farm, however stony and swampy it might be. By changing his status to that of an independent small farmer, Forbes had put his first foot on the very bottom rung of the middle class. This is the transformational change that happened to almost everybody who came to North America: whether in Canada or in the United States, they all belonged to the middle class, either in fact or potentially so.

The other comment is by Susanna Moodie. Those of you who have read that beautiful book *Sisters in the Wilderness* by Charlotte Gray will know that Moodie and her sister Catharine Parr Traill came out here with their rather hapless husbands and somehow survived in a clearing in the wilderness. Moodie had a succession of Irish girls as servants and she wrote about them this way: "They no sooner set foot upon Canadian shores than all respect for their employers, all subordination is at an end." But Moodie then added, "With all their insolent air of independence I must confess that I prefer the Canadian to the European servant." Those girls, if they hadn't come to North America, would probably have never moved more than five miles from where they were born. By crossing the Atlantic, they had broken that chain. Once in North America, it didn't matter where any immigrant went, nor whether they later moved on to some other place. In Ireland, in

Europe, anywhere in the world, what those servant girls did was unthinkable. It — their common North Americanness — is the essence of the similarity between Canadians and Americans. Today, as the entire world becomes modernized and globalized, the cultural differences across oceans are less marked. But they remain substantive. To be a North American is to have space, the option of mobility, to share the universal assumption of all on this continent that it is possible for them to undergo renewal, reinvention, redemption, that just by becoming a North American, they can become a new person. In North America, there are no limits, all the way up to inventing the Internet. Because there are no pre-set limits on anybody, everybody is potentially equal; that's why democracy bubbled out of the very soil of the United States and also, if less clamorously, of Canada. Of course, it is not true that everybody in North America is equal in actual fact. But the presumption is, no less in Canada than in the United States, that anybody can make it from almost nothing to the top. In the United States, thus, the son of an absent Kenyan father is able to become a serious candidate to be leader of the most powerful nation by far in the world. In Canada, the sixteenth child of a machinist in a paper mill in the Quebec backwoods was able to become prime minister and then to win three majority elections. This is a fundamental quality Canadians share with Americans, and so understand them as does no one else.

The Mexicans, of course, have also experienced American hard power, having lost California and Texas. And while you can argue whether they really owned these territories, it doesn't matter because Mexicans felt that they did. But although geographically North Americans, Mexicans have always been unlike other North Americans, whether because of their climate or history or the legacy of the Spanish culture or because of the Catholic religion being for the experts to argue.

The other unique aspect of Canadians' relationship to Americans, and a major cause of the anti-American streak in the Canadian psyche, derives from the fact that we're not just pushing back against Americans to gain room to breathe. We're pushing also against the fact that we are "Not-Americans," as is how the world sees us, as we to considerable degree sees ourselves. The awkward truth is that just about any description of Canadian identity has as its first line: "Canadians are Not-Americans." It is exasperating and depressing and infuriating to have to start off your identity with a negative. One of our responses to this circumstance has been the endless search for

differences between us and Americans that comes under the title of the “narcissism of small differences.” One such list of differences across the border included the bizarre detail that in Canada, but not in America, electric kettles are legal. Incidentally, the actual author of the phrase “narcissim of small differences” was Sigmund Freud.

The other aspect which irritates us about our relationship with America is the claim that it was the threat from America that caused us to get our act together and to become a confederation, as if we depended upon the Americans to form us into a nation. In fact, this claim is wholly true. Had there not been, because of the U.S. Civil War of 1861 to 1865, the development from out of almost nothing of huge Northern armies which, the Civil War won, might very well have then turned northwards, it is somewhere between a high probability and a virtual certainty that there would have been no Confederation. And the consequence of no Confederation would have been, in my judgment, no Canada. It was John A. Macdonald who pulled it off, something which no other Canadian politician around at that time could have done.

There are reasons, though, why Canadians should not allow themselves to get too frustrated and depressed at that “Not-American” first line in any description of Canadian identity. The fact is that other nations have also been born, as it were, out of the side of other nations. Thus, Pakistan is in many respects a Not-India. The logical consequence of British withdrawal was the creation of a new nation-state of India that would fill up all of the Indian subcontinent. Confronted by this geopolitical reality, many Muslims became determined to create their own, separate state even though the two principal languages of the subcontinent, Urdu and Hindi, are virtually the same, the culture of both peoples is the same, and, likewise, the geography and climate.

Palestine, likewise, was in part created out of Zionist nationalism. Originally, the Zionists claimed they planned to create a nation for a people without land, that is, the diaspora Jews, from out of a land without people. This was pure self-delusion, or simply propaganda. There were people in the area before the Zionists came, namely the Arabs. Israel's creation turned them into Palestinians, and God willing and Yahweh willing and Allah willing, they will, one day, become citizens of the nation-state of Palestine. Had Israel never been created, that part of any contemporary map of the Middle East would be filled

up by Jordan instead, still with its original title, Transjordan, and stretching on both sides of the Jordan River to the Mediterranean.

As a last example, consider modern Japan. In the form of a nation-state it was created by the United States. In 1854, Commodore Matthew Perry entered Tokyo Harbour, then Edo Harbour, and compelled the Japanese to open themselves to the world. That shock caused the Japanese, previously a nation culturally but not a nation-state — a collection of principalities and territories and statelets run by warlords — to turn themselves into a nation-state by the Meiji Restoration, which, by coincidence, took place in 1867.

A last reason for not being overly upset that we should have come into existence out of the side of the United States is that the reverse is also true. Americans, this is to say, in part came out of Canada's side, even they don't know it, as neither do many of us. In 1759, by one of the greatest military victories in the history of the British Empire, James Wolfe captures Quebec. That victory was also one of the biggest disasters in the history of the British Empire. This is because all of the huge French Empire in North America, owned by the then most powerful nation in the world, thereafter became part of the British Empire in North America. As a consequence, the British army in Northern America, which previously had protected the American colonists from the French, was turned into an army of occupation. Taxes were imposed on the American colonists to pay for these Redcoats, who now are not only no longer serving as a shield against the French but are preventing the colonists from crossing the Alleghenies to seize the land of the Indians, the native people, with whom the British had signed treaties. This, while not the entire cause of the American Revolution, was a significant cause of it. Just as the American military threat in the 1860s caused Canadians to get their act together and become a confederation, so, a century earlier, the absence of a military threat from Canada after the French had been evicted, enabled the American colonists to get their act together to seek independence.

How and why Canadians made this choice — to confederate in order to ensure their independence from the United States — and the challenges they would have to overcome at that time and afterwards, are for the second lecture. Here, I want to finish by asking a question that I'll come back to in the second lecture. This question is, "So what?" This is to say, if nineteenth-century Canadians had not determined that they would not become Americans, what difference would that

have made? Here, let me talk first only about some of the personal consequences had nineteenth-century Canadians said, “So what, why not become Americans?”

Consider first the changed circumstances of many in this room who are immigrants to Canada. Had nineteenth-century Canadians decided differently, some of you would not be here, nor would be anywhere in North America at all. The reason is that for roughly four decades now, Canada has run an exceptionally large and open immigration program. Proportionate to our population, it is about three times the size of the American program. If the American immigration system applied everywhere within a single North America nation-state, some of you would not have been able to enter.

Second, any of you in the room who are Francophones would now speak English as your first language. You might also speak French, much in the manner of second- and third-generation Polish-Americans and Italian-Americans and Italian-Canadians and Polish-Canadians. But, if you were bilingual, it's more probable that your second language would be Spanish.

A third fact, which would affect everybody in this room, is that none of you would be living in Toronto. You would be living in a town or city called Toronto, but it would be like Rochester, Buffalo, Cleveland. There is absolutely no way, in a single-country continent that a city like Toronto would exist on the north shore of Lake Ontario: there would be no economic or any other reason for it. I would argue that Toronto, in part because it is a Canadian city, in part because of some luck, has developed into an extraordinarily rich metropolis. I don't mean by that financially, but rather in terms the range of opportunities — professional, intellectual, cultural — this metropolis makes available to all who live here.

Lastly, there are all the other differences that all of you experience by living above the border, such as, obviously, that if living below it many of you would be without the safety net of medical insurance.

These are all strictly personal differences which I cite to try to make the cross-border differences alive, and personal, rather than abstract. Nevertheless, the most important difference caused by the decision those nineteenth-century Canadians made is an abstract one. Had they decided otherwise, there would not be today two ways of being North American. There would not be two voices that speak in quite different ways both to each other, that is, to their own fellow-citizens, and to

the world. I am well aware that not many people around the world know this, and of those who do know, few care much, if at all, about Canadian-American differences. I would argue, though, that if you live in a mine, as most of the people in the world now do in one way or another in terms of their relations with America, then it makes a good deal of sense every now and then to check up on the condition of the canary.

Second Lecture: Us and the Americans

Accepting that the phrase “anti-Americanism” broadly means relations with the United States, it is possible to identify four distinct phases of it through Canadian history. The first is the one I’m going to be talking about most and spans the nineteenth century, when, for a good deal of the time, there was an active fear of invasion. There was of course an actual invasion in 1812, and there were lively fears of invasion during and immediately after the Civil War, as well as indirectly of attacks by Fenians. During this period the anti-Americanism in Canada was explicit and intense. Today, we fervently deny that any critical statements we may make about Americans are motivated by anti-Americanism, and attribute them only to criticisms that we have about this or that act of American foreign policy, or to George W. Bush personally. Back then, Canadians were openly and uninhibitedly anti-American in the term’s ordinary meaning; we disliked Americans because they were Americans.

The truth is that anti-Americanism has always been part of Canadians’ DNA. In the nineteenth century was the “X” factor that ensured that Canadians did not become Americans. But for the blatancy and fervour of our anti-Americanism then, it’s very possible, more likely is probable, that we would have joined them.

Fear of an invasion from the south ended in the early 1870s, when the British pulled out their troops; thereafter, Canadian defence policy rested on the secure foundation of a mutual recognition that it was indefensible. The old fear was replaced by a new fear. The old fear was that of a takeover by invasion. The new fear of Canadians was that we ourselves would sell out ourselves for the sake of economic advantage. Reciprocity was the term used; it meant free trade. We might well have adopted it, particularly during the period of severe economic distress in the latter part of the century. Two factors stalled us — the root, instinctual force of anti-Americanism and the adroit, guileful appeal of John A. Macdonald.

The second phase of our relations with Americans begins around the turn of the century. The decisive event of this phase happened during the First World War, when those Canadian soldiers over there made the astonishing discovery that they had more in common with Americans than they did with the British. Neither Canadians nor Americans accepted the class system, both were open and naturally gregarious, Canadians no differently from Americans. That wartime kinship between North Americans was the foundation for the policy between the two countries of maintaining between them what came to be called “the world’s longest undefended border.” Then came the Second World War, in which the Americans saved western democracy from Nazism. Afterwards came the Cold War, when they protected western democracy from Communism.

That roughly two-thirds of a century of cross-border amiability and trust began to change in the 1960s. The agent of change was the rise of Canadian nationalism — essentially, English-Canadian nationalism — expressed by a strong sense of anti-Americanism and deriving from opposition to the American dominance, economic, financial, and cultural, of so much of Canadian life. A typical major issue of this period was that of excessive numbers of American professors at newly expanded Canadian universities; a critical event of this period was the publication of George Grant’s seminal elegy, *Lament for a Nation*. Key determinants of Canadian attitudes to Americans during this time were the Civil War, the race riots in American cities, and the general high level of violence in those same cities.

This third phase changed again sometime during the last quarter of the twentieth century into our contemporary state of relations with America. For myself, the best way to describe the nature of our relations with America today is that they are essentially those that exist naturally between any two, closely interconnected countries, both of which have achieved maturity. Two decisive national decisions by Canadians illustrate the character of our contemporary cross-border dealings. The first decision was taken in 1988 when we said “yes” to free trade. The great Canadian gamble that we could survive economically in open competition with our huge and dynamic neighbour, and that we could at the same time survive politically such intimate contact, was taken at last. And we have in fact survived. The second decision was the one taken in 2002 when we said “no” to Iraq. Saying no to our closest ally engaged in a war that it regarded as essential to its national security, constituted our ultimate foreign policy

dare. Not only did we say “no,” but, as a consequence of that decision, nothing happened. This is the mark of a society that has come of age in its relations with the Americans. There will always be stresses and strains in cross-border dealings, as there always are between any two peoples. The huge disparity between our two countries in size and power will make these stresses and strains especially intense. It will also always be the case that the United States will have the unilateral power to make decisions in its own self-interest that will then profoundly affect the interests of Canadians — as, currently, about climate change policy. But while cross-border relations will never be easy or automatic, their nature will be that of difficulties and tensions between two countries rather than, as in the past, and always only on our part, as a matter of existential angst. Also, no matter how well-hidden and despite the vociferousness with which we will deny it, anti-Americanism pure and simple will always remain a part of Canada’s DNA.

Going back from today to consider the decisions taken by Canadians in the nineteenth century is to consider a radically different scene. Between Canadians and Americans there was then a huge economic gap: they were incomparably richer and far more developed as a society in everything from transportation and communications to the quality of the school system to the quality of the network of public libraries. Above all, right after the ending of the Civil War, America exploded with energy, dynamism, confidence, entrepreneurial capitalism, all on a scale for which there was no historical equivalent. Before we built our first transcontinental beltway, they had built five. Well before the century was ended, they had opened up and settled the entire West, all the way out to the Pacific. Not until after the century’s turn did we begin to fill up our equivalent, Tomorrow Country. They were inventing incredible new things like skyscrapers that were ten and twenty stories high. It was an unprecedented explosion of energy and creativity during a period when we, a point that I will return to, were largely stagnant economically and were gripped by national pessimism.

So, to ask the most obvious question of all, why on earth did Canadians not say “yes”? The door was wide open to us; yet we still didn’t say yes. Nor is it as simple as to cast ourselves, then, as the threatened victims of some great plot south of the border to extend northwards the doctrine of Manifest Destiny. That creed did of course exist, as did imperialism and triumphalism. But the reality was more

complicated. Quite a few Americans genuinely felt that Canada would be incomparably better off if it joined America. No less a person than Thomas Jefferson, one of the great political geniuses of history, was deeply upset that the 1812 War ended in a draw and a treaty which changed absolutely nothing; Jefferson wanted the war to continue so that Canada would be, in his own phrase, “liberated.” A good many Americans thought the same way. A revealing book, *The Americanization of Canada*, was written right at the turn of the century by an American journalist and academic, Samuel Moffett. His conclusion was: “While English Canadians protest they will never become Americans, they are already Americans without knowing it.” Published in 1907, this work cites all the ever-increasing similarities between Canada and the United States, such as that both peoples drove on the right of the road, unlike on the left as is Britain. Especially interesting is the book’s original title, which the publisher convinced Moffett to change for the sake of sales. This original title was *The Emancipation of Canada*. As Moffett thought, so did many Americans. Nineteenth-century Canadians thus had to say “no” even though, as hasn’t been the case for decades, the door was wide open for them to join the “winning” side.

To turn to the question, a brutal and basic one that I first raised in the first lecture, “So what?” That is to say, what if nineteenth-century Canadians had made up their minds differently and walked through the open door.

This most existential of all Canadian questions was asked, by pure coincidence exactly a hundred years apart, by two observers. The first was a man called General John Michel, the officer commanding all the military forces in Canada and a British general, naturally so because then all the regular soldiers in Canada were British, Canadians being only in militia units. On August 19, 1867, just six weeks after Confederation Day, Michel had a conversation with Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald. They discussed defence, and undoubtedly the pair agreed quickly that any defence preparations could only be pretend ones since there was no way we could defend against an American attack. Michel then said, with uncommon candour, that another policy alternative was available to Canadians; it was that of annexation, or of union with America. This was a remarkable thing to be said to Canada’s prime minister by a military officer, one known to be strongly anti-American. Yet Macdonald lets Michel have his say. And what Michel says to him about annexation is this: “The worst that

could happen to Canada would be to be annexed to a free and prosperous country. To England pecuniary ruin and loss of prestige.”

About England, Britain really, Michel was in fact dead wrong. His native country would have suffered a loss of market for its goods and for its surplus capital, but this would have added up to a loss, not to ruin. As well, Britain would run the risk of suffering a loss of prestige, although the word could have been spread that Britain had acted generously by granting to its own people the free chance to make their own decisions. And Britain could have followed up by signing an alliance with the United States as a signal to rising powers like Germany that in any general war the lion would not be alone.

About Canada, though, Michel was dead right. What annexation would have done then to the vast majority of Canadians would have been to make them more prosperous and freer given the far more developed state of democracy in the United States than in Canada. To which the only response can be, “So what?”

The other comment, a century later, in 1967, was made by a pair of Canadian historians, Sydney Wise and Robert Craig Brown, in a book — really, an elongated essay — titled *Canada Views the United States*. They ask the same question as Michel, if in more elegant phraseology. They do this by describing as “a seeming contradiction of nature, environment and proximity” the fact that “the bulk of Canadians standing on the very threshold of liberty were so little susceptible to American institutions.” Again, why on earth didn’t we become Americans?

To add tension to that question, it’s important to appreciate that in the mid-nineteenth century, most Canadians were fully aware that America was much richer. Canadians knew this because almost every Canadian, including Canadiens of whom a large number had emigrated to New England to work in its textile mills, had relatives in the United States. They thus knew from people whom they trusted, members of their own extended family or people from their own village, what things really were like south of the border.

Further, all these people, or at least all the English Canadians, had come to Canada specifically to better themselves. They had taken big risks to come here, leaving behind all their support networks and the security of the familiar. Now a chance existed to better themselves again by making another jump, from Canada to the United States. Why on earth not take it? As enticingly, the door to the United States not only was wide open but had large signs pointing to it. Back in

1774, at the start of their rebellion, the American colonists passed a resolution granting Canada automatic entry to the Union. The entry would require no call of votes to be taken among the existing thirteen colonies, nor, as would be required of all later entrants, would there be any requirement for Canadians to go through a transition phase as a territory before being accepted as a state. Despite all this, nineteenth-century Canadians chose not to make that easy, certain jump into an outstretched hand. Why?

I have three reasons to suggest, the first two to be set out here with the third to follow after a pause.

One was the incredible power of the tug of loyalty, it having dimensions far beyond the obvious one of loyalty to Britain. The second, which I hope may cause a certain uneasiness in the audience, was that Canadians in the nineteenth century were absolutely convinced they were morally superior to the Americans. Some of you may think you've heard that condition applied to us today. Indeed, we today regard ourselves as morally superior to Americans, we indeed know we're morally superior. We don't, though, like to say this out loud. In the nineteenth century, Canadians were less hypocritical. They went around saying, yes, we're morally superior, we're superior to the Americans. That attitude was written down and it was said, openly, without any pretense and without any apology.

Loyalty, first. A particular aspect of the loyalty of nineteenth-century Canadians was that the only way they could be loyal to their own country was by being loyal to another country. It was, in fact, the first version of the phenomenon of "multiple loyalties," so often debated as an attribute of contemporary Canada whereby many immigrants, while gaining a loyalty to Canada, also retain a strong loyalty to their country of origin. Back then, loyalty to Britain constituted the essence of loyalty to Canada. This was because the notion of being loyal to the brand new Canada carried then little, or no, emotional value at all. Loyalty to Canada for its own sake didn't really begin until the great victory by the Canadian Corps at Vimy in 1917. That's when Canadians began to have a sense they belonged to something with substance. In mid-nineteenth-century Canada, the best description of the ambiguous nature of loyalty was expressed by a T. L. Wood, who spoke during a debate in the British Columbia legislature about whether B.C. should join Confederation. About Canada, said Wood, "There is not natural love and feeling of loyalty." By contrast, Wood

continued, “The feeling of loyalty towards England is a blind feeling, instinctive, strong, born with us and impossible to shake off.”

That is a brilliant summation of how Canadians felt toward Britain at that time: it was like the loyalty people feel towards their own family. It was automatic, unthinking, reflexive. As the Arab saying goes, “Me and my cousin against the world but me and my brother against my cousin.” We, all of us, are the same: we may hate our own family, but we cannot help loving it.

The tug of loyalty Canadians then felt to Britain was almost feudal in its nature. It was like that of a pageboy to his liege lord: there was a fierce pride in being loyal for the pure sake of being loyal. In Canada then it also had a powerful religious dimension. Egerton Ryerson, the great educational reformer in Ontario through the nineteenth century, said, “If a man does not love the King he cannot love God.”

Moreover, loyalty then was not just to the British monarchy and to the British Empire, the greatest since Rome. It encompassed almost every aspect of life. Loyalty to family was an absolute; divorce, thus, was unthinkable. Loyalty to employer, which today few feel, was then an imperative: you owed your loyalty to your employer and your employer owed loyalty to you. Loyalty also to religion. Anyone who changed religion, that is, broke from the religion of their fathers, was called, quite openly, a “pervert.” That description, obviously a corruption of the word convert, was applied by Lady Macdonald to one of John A.’s cabinet ministers because he, once Protestant, had married a Catholic and had then become a Catholic.

Loyalty to Britain entailed in particular loyalty to the British parliamentary system, to its legal system, to its constitutional monarchy, and to all the British ways of doing things, whether imagined or real, such as keeping a stiff upper lip, treating your word as a bond, regarding a man’s house as his castle. Canadian historian Carl Berger in *A Sense of Power*, though, makes a shrewd point when he writes about the “inner spirit” of the nature of this loyalty to Britain. Berger goes on to comment that the sense of loyalty encompassed “the primacy of the community over individual selfishness. Society conceived as an organism of functionally related parts. Religion as the social mortar of the social order and distrust of materialism.” You can indeed compress all of that into that iconic phrase, “peace, order, and good government.”

About the importance of this powerful sense of loyalty some additional observations need to be made. One is that it was shared by French Canadians, if for a practical reason, not an emotional one. They recognized that right after the conquest of Quebec, their language, their law, and their religion had been accepted by and protected by the British government. Indeed, Roman Catholics were emancipated in Quebec within Canada long before they were emancipated in England.

As well, as I've already indicated, there was absolutely no shyness about expressing this loyalty: as expressed in songs and parades and pamphlets and popular doggerel, it was all entirely open. Our awkwardness about patriotism, our famous deference about waving the flag, is relatively new; it's taken us time to feel comfortable about feeling loyal to our fellow-Canadians. Then you waved the Union Jack as hard as you could and bellowed out "God Save the Queen." That was then our version of Canadian nationalism.

The downside of loyalty to Britain, of course, was that it cramped Canadian consciousness, which, as the B.C. legislator Wood pointed out, was by comparison pallid and tentative. It, though, possessed immense nation-building value because loyalty to Britain and its obverse of anti-Americanism was the single thing that all Canadians could readily agree on. They certainly didn't all agree on Confederation, they didn't like each other much. But they all agreed on anti-Americanism. French Canadians, again for the practical reason that if Canada became America, French Canada would vanish.

Now onto moral superiority, and here I hope to provoke a certain discomfort among members of the audience as I describe some of the reasons why, a century and a half ago, we knew, knew absolutely, without question, we were so clearly morally superior to Americans.

Start with the fact that one of the principal reasons why Canadians in the nineteenth century were convinced of their moral superiority to Americans was that Americans were insufficiently religious. Some of you may think I have just misread my notes. I haven't. We were shocked, deeply, by the comparative lack of religiosity south of the border. The best example involves President James Polk, an otherwise unremarkable, one-term president. The year is 1849, and Polk, not that long after retiring, falls fatally ill. During his last days, a small item in the New York newspapers reveals that President Polk was baptized on his deathbed. The *Church* magazine in Toronto picks this up and is shocked and horrified because this meant that for four

years the Americans had been led by an unbaptized Christian. The *Church* magazine continues, “The anomaly must bring disgrace and possibly something worse to a nation professing to honor Christianity. Could such a thing happen in our monarchy or in any other Christian kingdom in the world? No!” The other thing we didn’t like about American religiosity was, of course, that they separated church and state, absolutely. We did not believe in separation of church and state; indeed, as historian W. L. Morton has commented, “there was no argument between church and state in Canada because the church was the state.” That was certainly the case in Lower Canada, Quebec, but we in Upper Canada, Ontario, had the practice, as they did not in the United States, of public funding for separate schools.

Another reason we were morally superior to Americans was they were too multicultural. The successful Nova Scotia humourist Thomas Haliburton, author of the *Sam Slick* series, described as “human refuse” all the people pouring into America from Europe. The popular historian George Parkin, talking about people from these outlandish countries like Italy, Greece, Poland, Ukraine, Russia, Romania, dismissed them as “people unaccustomed to self government.” Which is to say they were lesser breeds without the law.

Yet another reason for our moral superiority was that women in the United States were far too independent. This had two consequences. One was that it induced among American women what was described as “nervous irritability.” The other was an appallingly high — to us — divorce rate. In the last three decades of the nineteenth century, the number of American divorces stood at 1.3 million; in Canada, it was 431. The view here was that female independence brought about the breakdown of the family as well as general immorality, leaving us clearly morally superior. Today, of course, we regard Americans as much too puritanical, while we are properly liberal and secular. Certainly for Canadians, and very probably for quite a few other peoples, it’s the specific justification for anti-Americanism, not the phenomenon of anti-Americanism itself, that changes over time.

We have no other reasons to be embarrassed at our nineteenth-century attitudes. The other causes for our presumption of morally superiority were, at the very least, arguable wholly valid. Thus, we abolished the slave trade in 1793; it took Americans another two-thirds of a century to do this — by Abraham Lincoln during the

Civil War. During the nineteenth century, there were large and violent gangs in all the major U.S. cities, especially Chicago and New York, but no equivalents in Canada. Three presidents were assassinated in the nineteenth century. (Here, I'm cheating slightly: William McKinley was assassinated in 1901.) Lynching was common south of the border; in some years, there were hundreds of lynchings, not only of blacks but of immigrants, Italians for instance. In America there was simply a great deal of violence and of vigilante justice, but none in Canada. One of the big shocks to Canadians, because we were able to make a direct cross-border comparison, was that of the Indian Wars. They were constant in the United States, not truly wars because the odds were so uneven, but really slaughters of Indians or native peoples. Something like fifty thousand Indians were killed by American soldiers in the nineteenth century, but in Canada only a couple of dozen during the second Riel rebellion.

The most dramatic cross-border difference was not between nice orderly Ontario and, say, New York State, but out West, where the border was invisible. There, the Canadian way of doing things was radically different. South of the border there was constant violence, of whites killing whites, of whites killing Indians, of Indians killing whites, of Indians killing Indians. In Canada's West, there was, for almost all practical purposes, no violence at all. There was this extraordinary force, the Northwest Mounted Police, today the RCMP, which ended all violence in Canada's West that at one time had seeped across the border, and which ended stone cold the liquor trade that killed as many Indians as did bullets. Here resides one of the great might-have-beens of Canadian history. We all know that where we have failed most abysmally in national policy is with our Aboriginal people, and we don't know what to do. Something almost happened in the nineteenth century that you have to believe might have made a difference. John A. Macdonald conceived of the idea for the Northwest Mounted Police, and in his first discussions of it proposed that half of its members should be Métis and Indians. Then the first Riel rebellion happened and Macdonald's proposal was never enacted. If native people had formed part of the force that went on to gain iconic status as the symbolic and substantive expression of Canadian values, all the subsequent, infinitely sad history of our dealings with native peoples might have been radically different.

Whatever the might-have-beens about our policy with native people, the cardinal fact here is that the most important might-have-been of

Canadian history — whether we might have become Americans — in fact never came close to happening. A complete chronology of why this never happened would require far more time than is available, but at least the main elements of the story can be described.

In terms of Canadian history, the U.S. Civil War was the forcing agent of change. Its principal effect upon us was that it completely changed America. Before the Civil War, the American Army was 13,500. It was actually smaller than is ours today for a similar-sized population, there then being some thirty million Americans. Within about two years of the start of the Civil War, the Northern armies were up to two million; this was larger than the army that Napoleon took into Russia. Henceforth, there could never again be a War of 1812 or a conflict in North America that might end in a draw. While the Royal Navy remained supreme at sea, after the Civil War and the demonstration of American industrial power, it was impossible for Britain to engage in a land war in North America. Quite clearly, the United States was emerging as the superpower of the Western Hemisphere. Thomas D'Arcy McGee, whom I describe as Canada's first nationalist in *John A; The Man Who Made Us*, had lived in the United States and had a sense of America better than anybody, much better than Macdonald. He understood the meaning of the transformation America had undergone: "It is not the figures [of soldiers] which gives the worst view, it is the change which has taken place in the spirit of the people." McGee went on to warn, "We [Canadians] cannot overlook this, the greatest revolution of our times." McGee's appreciation was absolutely correct: a revolution in human energy and dynamism without precedent in history was taking place south of the border, and from it would emerge a radically new nation that was going to change the world.

The energy triggered by the Civil War was incredible. Even during the war itself Americans continued building their first transcontinental railway (it opened in 1869). They took in enormous numbers of immigrants. Post-war, they settled the entire West in just three decades, and they developed and implemented an entire new system of entrepreneurial capitalism.

With all this energy and accomplishment came a national confidence and assertiveness. During the 1860s, both Lincoln's Secretary of State, William Seward, and the Chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Senator Charles Sumner, the two most powerful people in matters of foreign relations, were strong annexationists and unafraid

of saying in public that Canada should join or should be added to the Union. A contemporary equivalent would be if Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Senator Joseph Biden were to go around saying Canada should join the United States. Seward's particular notion was to start an incident on the border that would escalate and set off a war with Britain, which, on land, would be bound to be won by the United States. Sumner's notion was to let the South go and do a deal with Britain, itself increasingly uneasy about the rise of Germany in Europe, for Canada to join the Union as a replacement. This same idea of a swap of Canada for the South may have been held at the same time — it is probable but cannot be proven — by British Prime Minister William Gladstone. Instead, Lincoln ruled “one war at a time” and the Civil War continued to its appalling end. Right after it ended, Americans demobilized at incredible speed, reducing their army to just fifty thousand within a few months of the war's end. Not counting the cross-border raids by Fenians, or anti-British Irish-Americans, all fear of an invasion thereafter ended.

Before these events, and before the end of the Civil War in April 1865, Canada had at last developed a response to the new geopolitical reality of a larger neighbour transforming itself into a hemispheric hegemon. That response was Confederation. From this perspective, from my perspective that is, Confederation had far less to do with collecting together the scattered colonies of British North America into a new system of government, as is recounted in most of the history books, than with using the device of Confederation to make a declaration to the two places that mattered to Canadians, London and Washington, that Canadians really did possess the nerve and will to be a nation. And a nation that demonstrates that it has the will to survive has just taken the first, and longest and most critical, step towards survival. Confederation, in this interpretation, constituted a declaration by Canadians that they did not want to become Americans. The individual who expressed this most clearly was Macdonald himself. In October 1864, he gave the major, introductory speech at the start of the (second) Confederation Conference, the one held in Quebec City, and that did indeed end in an agreement by the delegates from Canada and from the Maritimes to form a confederation. In his speech, Macdonald addressed two fundamental issues: that Canada could not be a weak nation because otherwise Britain might pull back from North America; that a centralized confederation was necessary to show that Canadians were serious about becoming a nation.

Macdonald's words were: "We must, therefore, become important, not only to England but in the eyes of foreign states. And most especially to the United States...The great security for peace is to convince the world of our strength by being united." By this policy, Macdonald won Confederation by winning Britain's support for it.

In 1867, the actual year of Confederation, cross-border tensions were heightened by two related incidents. The first was the purchase by the United States of Alaska, from Russia. During the Senate Foreign Relations Committee's hearings to ratify the purchase, Sumner, the committee's chairman, declared, "I know that nature designs this whole continent and not merely the thirty-six states shall be sooner or later within the magic circle of the American Union." Sumner, and as well Seward, the Secretary of State who by now had adopted the "ripe fruit" doctrine which held that Canada would naturally and painlessly sooner or later seek to join the United States, thus both retained their annexationist instincts.

Indirectly, another signal was sent northwards on Confederation Day itself, on July 1, 1867. Conspicuous by its absence was any message of congratulations to the new nation from President Andrew Johnson, who had succeeded the assassinated Lincoln. Far more alarming, but unknown at the time was a memorandum to his chief in Washington dispatched by the senior American Consul in Canada, a man called Avril who has based in Montreal. In it, Avril proposed that to influence the outcome of the election due to be held in Canada immediately following Confederation, \$50,000 should be dispatched northwards, half to be spent in swing ridings where anti-Macdonald Liberals might win and the other half to be spent bribing journalists. Avril estimated that "\$100,000 would be required to make certain the defeat of the Tory party." No action was taken on Avril's advice, but memorandums of this kind are only written if those at the top are at the very least predisposed to consider them seriously.

The tensions continued. Ulysses S. Grant, president from 1869 to 1877, once informed his cabinet he personally favored annexation. Thereafter, Grant's Secretary of State, Hamilton Fish, had a discussion with British Ambassador Edward Thornton, and came back to report that Thornton had said, "Great Britain is quite willing to part with Canada," but on the provision "that Canada request it." Britain thus didn't want to be seen to be abandoning British subjects, but should they want to go, they could.

Through the 1880s until Macdonald's last election in 1891, the nature of the cross-border tension changed when the Liberals committed themselves to Reciprocity, or free trade. Macdonald opposed it and in that election uttered his famous war cry, "A British subject I was born, a British subject I will die." Macdonald opposed Reciprocity because he was convinced that free trade would lead inexorably to economic union, and that that in turn would lead inevitably to political union. One person who agreed with John A. Macdonald, without, of course, saying so publicly at that time, was the president of the United States, Benjamin Harrison. He remarked to his secretary of state, "I've never seen how we could arrange a basis of reciprocity with Canada short of a complete customs union." Harrison then went on to observe that such an economic union "can probably not be practical and practicable unless it is accompanied by a political union."

Here resides the third and the last explanation for why nineteenth-century Canadians refused to become Americans, despite all the self-evident attractions of doing so and, no less, the ease of doing so. That reason was John A. Macdonald himself. That's why I have called him "The Man Who Made Us." He did that far less by Confederation, although he achieved that as could no one else then. He made us because he ensured that Canadians didn't remake themselves into Americans.

There is here a consistency to Macdonald's thinking that is equaled among all our prime ministers only by Pierre Elliot Trudeau. Trudeau had a view about Quebec and its place within Confederation that he never changed, whether right or wrong, through his entire life. Macdonald similarly never changed his position that Canada should not become part of America. He made it a principal plank of his first campaign in 1844, when he was running to be a backbench member. It was the theme in his last election in 1891, when he declared, "A British subject I was born, a British subject I will die." What he meant, because, then, Canadians could only avoid becoming Americans by remaining British, was that a Canadian he had become, and a Canadian he would remain.

It was the search for a way to ensure that Canada did not become America that persuaded Macdonald, a good deal later than many others, to take up the cause of Confederation, It was, specifically, the motivation for his determination to create a centralized confederation that would impress others, the British and the Americans above all,

that Canadians possessed the will and nerve it took to become a nation.

Post-Confederation, Macdonald's objective was to fill out the nation by stretching it from sea to sea, thereby, as he put it, turning gristle into bone. The most dramatic illustration of his nation-building policy was bringing in British Columbia, at no matter the price required. Macdonald committed himself, and Canada, to build a railway five thousand kilometres over empty space and across impossibly high mountains to a market of, then, just fifteen thousand European-Canadians. Objectively, this policy was clear economic lunacy; even the B.C delegates themselves never asked for such a railway as their price for entering Confederation. Yet, without that railway, the West would have gone into the U.S. orbit, initially economically and commercially and financially, and, eventually almost certainly, politically. No West, no sea-to-sea Canada, and, sooner or later, no Canada. That's how he made us.

To complete the story, it's necessary to describe briefly one final contribution to Canada's survival that Macdonald made during this period, it now being the late 1880s and the early 1890s. By the end of the nineteenth century, Canada was very close to being a failed state. By then, almost everything had gone wrong. To justify a railway across the Prairies it was necessary to have large numbers of farmers who would use it to bring in their supplies and to send out their wheat. To have enough farmers to fill out the empty West, there had to be immigrants, huge numbers of them. Yet from the mid-1870s on, Canada attracted very few immigrants, while at the same time losing many of its own people to the United States. The reason was because all the potential immigrants were going to the United States, attracted by the same free land, and better land and milder climate, and going there at a time when the United States, unlike Canada, was booming economically. Indeed, for the greater part of the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Canada endured a depression, the Long Depression, as it was called, and the worst we've experienced but for the Great Depression of the 1930s. Except, as wasn't the case in the 1930s, the United States was booming then. In 1894, our total trade with the United States, imports and exports, was exactly the same as in 1874, despite the huge expansion in the American market. More depressing still, by the end of the century, one and one-quarter million native-born Canadians were living in the United States, this at a time when our total population was less than five million, or one in four. All these Canadians had

said yes to the United States; among them was the author of “O Canada,” Calixa Lavallée.

What kept Canada going as a nation was, I think, the aura of John A. Macdonald. A similarity exists with the contemporary circumstances in Cuba. As long as Fidel Castro is still there, even if no longer in power, Cubans will not give up on the communism and the national independence that is his legacy to them. In Canada, in the late nineteenth century, the same instinctual resistance existed, I believe, to giving up on the grand old man who had created the country, who had nurtured it along for so long. While Macdonald remained, Canadians simply couldn't bring themselves to say yes to America. He died in 1891. Just a few years later, a kind of a miracle happened. Right at the end of the century, the global economic climate changed. There was a world boom, and commodity prices soared upwards. Simultaneously, the American West was by now completely filled up. Immigrants thus were at last ready to come to Canada. And from the early 1900s, attracted by the policies of Macdonald's Liberal successor, Wilfrid Laurier, they poured in. It was a close run thing, but without the aura Macdonald cast about him, it's very likely that this country might not have been able to hang on. But the Canadians of those days did outlast the hard times, and because of their decisions, we, all of us in this room and all those outside it, are Canadians today.

About 150 years ago, Canadians made the decision that there was going to be a Canada. This decision wasn't about Confederation, important although that choice was. The critical decision Canadians made, in the face of all common sense and of any objective analysis of their best option, was not to become Americans. This is the reason for calling Macdonald “The Man Who Made Us.” He won for us enough time and space for us to become Canadians. It took us a long time to do this, but that is what we have done.

