

Canada can get ready for a Nixon pitch

Richard Nixon will be the fifth U.S. President to address members of the Canadian Parliament in a formal speech.

Franklin Roosevelt visited the capital in 1943 after the Quebec Conference, he raised everyone's spirits with a warm, positive speech. Our Prime Minister then, Mackenzie King, almost worshipped the president. His almost childlike innocence at this first visit and address shows through the prolix sentences of his introduction.

President Truman came to Ottawa in 1947. His speech was less felicitous in phrasing than Roosevelt's but expressed more substance regarding Canada-U.S. relations, particularly about the needed unity in facing up to the Cold War, that disappointing aftermath of the Allied struggle.

President Eisenhower visited Ottawa a number of times, twice as president — and in both 1953 and 1958 he addressed Members of Parliament.

The Cold War warrior

His first visit brought on a demonstration of Ottawa enthusiasm which has only been outmatched (say elderly Hill habitues) once in modern times for the wartime visit of Chaing Kai-shek. In 1953 President Eisenhower was still the Cold War warrior.

The Eisenhower address of 1958 was the first tightly-pursued examination of practical problems between the two neighbors. He noted that two consequences of his earlier presidential visit had been accelerated progress in the building of the St. Lawrence Seaway and the creation of the Distant Early Warning Line of radar. He noted the recent joint decision to create a combined headquarters for NORAD. Then Mr. Eisenhower set out the "troublesome matters" between the two countries:

... the surplus wheat disposal policies of the U.S. the imbalance of our mutual trade, certain aspects of

DOUGLAS FISHER



U.S. private investment in Canada, and Canadian fears of a trend in the U.S. away from forward-looking policies in the field of trade."

President Eisenhower examined U.S. oil policy vis-a-vis Canada. He pointed out that despite our deficit in goods and 'invisibles' with the U.S., our total multilateral trade showed a surplus. He suggested that multilateral healthiness was better than any bilateral artificial balancing.

President Eisenhower underlined one advantage of the massive flow of U.S. investment to Canada. With these funds Canada has easily financed the recent surplus of imports from the U.S., a fact testified to by the premium of the Canadian dollar over the United States dollar.

The flutter in Ottawa in May, 1961, was more over Jacqueline Kennedy than the president. Her beauty had a show-stopping impact, not unlike that demonstrated lately by Margaret Trudeau.

Kennedy's tough speech

Most people probably remember that President Kennedy re-injured his back planting a tree on this visit. The forgotten feature of his visit was the rather tough speech he gave before Parliament.

He braced Canada over its failure to join the Organization of American States — he made a direct pitch that Canada should keep up its conventional forces in Europe, and let some of its planes and weapons be equipped with nuclear warheads. (Remember the Bomarc.) He asked Canada to join with the United States and other affluent countries in a vigorous campaign to help the have-not countries, particularly in this hemisphere.

Dief ridiculed

Later accounts suggested that it was this visit which made the President critical to the point of private ridicule of Mr. Diefenbaker. Certainly, less than two years later, he opened up the marvellous opportunity for Lester Pearson by shafting the Conservative Government over the Bomarc.

Mr. Pearson seems to have had a similar sort kind of misfortune with President Johnson. LBJ touched very briefly in Canada twice, far from Ottawa, breaking the string of Presidential addresses begun by FDR.

It is a good bet that President Nixon, in Parliament on the 14th, will be as plain-spoken as either Eisenhower and Kennedy about some differences between the countries. The quick review of the previous five visits and addresses suggests that they are warmer and more pleasing than many such rituals in Canada — and they can be fairly direct pitches to the Canadian people by the President.