

1978

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Recommended Citation

John Holmes, *Heads Across the Border*, 1 Can.-U.S. L.J. 145 (1978)

Available at: <https://scholarlycommons.law.case.edu/cuslj/vol1/iss/17>

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Address

Heads Across the Border

John W. Holmes

WHEN I WAS FIRST HONORED WITH THIS INVITATION, I was told I could use a text I had prepared for delivery at Harvard a year ago—a lecture never delivered because I spent the time circling Boston airport. It was intended as a down-to-earth lecture, a bit aggressive perhaps, and I called it “Divided We Stand.” I replied that in any case it would have to be turned inside out for a Canadian audience, but my proposal to rename it “United We Fall” was rejected. When I inspected the text, however, I realized that even inside out it would not do. It had already been laundered for Duke University in April, and that would not do either. The clear fact was that what I almost said in October, 1976, was quite out of date a year later—and thereby hangs a lesson.

I began by saying the times were out of joint, our countries were out of phase, and the mood across the border decidedly bitchy. The United States Ambassador recently began a speech by saying that, in the last three years, there had been a great deal of talk about how we had “gotten out of synch,” and went on to illustrate how many of the issues I had looked at then are being ironed out now. I am forced to agree with him. We are not, after all, going to have a replay of Queenston Heights, much to the dismay of some of my academic colleagues. (I confess that I had become fascinated by the scenario for a replay of Queenston Heights. What if we had to replay the match according to the rules of the Canadian Football Association, with ACTRA determining the quota of Canadian players and limiting the number of British actors in leading roles? Fortunately for our side, we could, as we did in 1812, use native people—except that we might then have had to buy back Niagara.)

In looking at Canadian-American relations, we need the historic perspective. The relationship has been going on for several centuries, and there have been sharp fluctuations. The reason the situation I espied in 1976 is not that of 1977 is, to a large extent, of course, attributable to a change of administration in Washington, a happier personal relationship on the high level and a consequent strengthening of the will, on both sides, to be reasonable. That condition could change next year. There can be no doubt that sweetness in high places is an essential ingredient in our relationship, and I shall begin by stating my unshakable conviction that good will is, for Canadians, a matter of hard importance—even though I may seem, thereby, to be emphasizing the “hands and hearts across the border” theme which it was my intention to disparage. Let me recover, therefore, by inserting the argument that the change in the Canadian-American disposition has, as always, a lot to do with changes in the world situation. We have, in 1977, a more modest assessment of our resources, for example. In that state we are more disposed

to raise our sights above the parochial calculations of advantage and see our interests in a universal setting.

It seems to me that the mood of the moment is auspicious for the kind of rational calculations in which this conference has been indulging. Should we not seek to persuade our governors to seize it, to make if not a great leap forward, (leaping is the wrong pace), at least some shift in direction? We are, I hope, recovering from two maladies—one apiece: neurotic disorders which have interfered with intelligent analysis of the relationship and its better ordering.

There must be some heart in our relations, as I have suggested, but there has, of late, been too little head. I need not point out why hating each other is not only immoral but also impractical. Americans have tended to rely on love. That approach is more attractive, but it is misleading in that it is based on a denial of conflict—a conviction that contrary interests are a form of sin. We have to begin with the recognition that since the founding of Quebec and Jamestown, we have had as many conflicting as common interests, that this is a natural state of grace which will continue, and that the essence of a good international relationship is not the solution of conflict. Rather, it is the provision of civilized means for containing it and guaranteeing, insofar as possible, equitable progress. "The simple fact," as Mr. Enders said recently, "is that Canadian-American relations are not a zerosum game. If we play it that way, we are both going to lose." It was nice of him to put it in those terms, but I suspect it is the weaker partner who would lose his shirt.

We can hope for equity, but never for equality. To say we are free and equal partners might be good rhetoric, but it is poor political science. However, for the purpose of appearing equitable, (a calculated ploy), I am, in exposing the maladies which have blurred our vision, going to assign one to each. The diseases are largely semantic in origin. They are brought on by the uttering of two frightful words. South of the border, the horrid word is "nationalism;" to the north it is "continentalism." Perhaps I should have just bleeped twice. I am not at all sure the infections are comparable either in virulence or the extent of the contagion.

I must leave the cure of the American disease to Americans, but I would just like to identify its nauseous symptoms as I see them. Unlike what the French used to call the English disease, and vice versa, it afflicts the sweet and innocent: the good liberal internationalists who are our favorite Americans most of the time. Nice Americans ask me constantly, but shyly, about the reports of nationalism which, they are told, as by travellers to an antique land, has infected Canadians. Could not the WHO do something about it? How could it happen to good people—"just like us" you know—people of the same breed as Lester Pearson, Marshall McLuhan, and Mary Pickford. I am tempted to remind them that we also bred the Philadelphia Flyers. They are also, as usual, dreadfully out of date with these symptoms. They get news much faster from Peking or Kuwait than from Canada. The neurotic symptoms which muddled the good cause of Canadian nationalism in recent years seem to me to have subsided dramatically, although the anxie-

ty to preserve the national heritage has not diminished, and Americans had better not count on it doing so. Towards our sick nationalists, with their unworthy myth of victimization, I hope the American will be rough. If only they knew more about the subject, Americans could answer back. However, they need a better understanding of other people's nationalism.

Their blindness is particularly enflaming in the cultural field. Roger Swanson has called it "the first amendment optic." It is the sweet belief that culture and commerce are matters for universal free enterprise, that any control of the air waves is a first step to totalitarianism, and that clamping down on *Time Magazine* and deodorant commercials from Bellingham will shut Canadians off from universal culture. I think we Canadians have a real argument among ourselves as to whether our tactics achieve their ends. But Americans must understand that there is a point at which a healthy nationalism can be swamped by internationalism, that the cause of CBS or the National City Bank is not internationalism but good old American nationalism, and that Thomas Jefferson was an old windbag. He preached but contrived nicely to die for grandiose concepts of freedom, which should be countered with a strong dose of Canadian functionalism. The latter, as I see it, is essentially a philosophy of applying precisely the appropriate force and appropriate principles to particular situations. It is a philosophy by which, alone, middle powers can survive.

If the higher law of a free market is to be applied without discrimination to this continent, then the clock has, indeed, been put back to at least the time of W.H. Seward. (Seward, however, should, at last, have a statue in Confusion Square as the stepfather of Canadian confederation. He has long been given credit for threatening us into unity from coast to coast, but we have never adequately recognized how, by taking over Alaska, he saved us again. The oil of Prudhoe Bay we could use nicely. It would have been so easy to change the name. But the appalling defense responsibility for Alaska, during the late hot and cold wars, would have led us into defeat by Japan, then bankruptcy followed by war on two fronts with Russia and the United States. Happily, some Senators in Seward's tradition still bellow at us when we need them.) That the emissaires of the United States should seek to protect the interests of their subsidiaries in Canada or their television stations from discriminatory treatment, is entirely in accord with international practice. It is the conflict of interest we must recognize as endemic. We would just like them to lay off the cold war arguments about the free world.

I have one dubious, but fashionably introverted, diagnosis. The problem may be that American liberals comprehend foreign issues better when they can feel guilty and responsible. They do not really feel guilty about Canada's struggle for economic and cultural survival as they do about Latin America or even southern Africa. They cannot see, therefore, how there could be a problem. The Canadian simplicity is in failing to understand that there can be a predicament without a villain. The lack of Canadian content in our social sciences is, for example, one of our most worrying predicaments, but Americans are perfectly justified in not feeling guilty.

The American record towards Canada over two hundred years has had some ungraceful aspects and episodes, but on the whole it has been remarkably decent. (It is too bad the Americans, as usual, were so unaware that they failed to notice their good record with Canada during the Bicentennial year.) Nevertheless, the problems of Canada in resisting the enormous vitality of American culture and economics is real and serious. There is not much the United States Government can do about it, except display the forbearance implicit in the doctrine of 1776 that has so often prevailed over the missionary zeal which, in Canadian eyes, has always been the threatening aspect of that great declaration.

It is also too bad that Americans, by not regarding relations with Canada as a foreign policy, failed to learn one good lesson it might have taught them: the inefficacy of a policy of nonrecognition. The creation and survival of Canada was regarded by Americans as an affront, and quite properly so; we meant it that way. Far from welcoming a new nation achieving self-government by quiet revolution, (in those days un-violent revolutions were regarded as clearly un-American activity), Washington insisted on dealing with London and ignoring our constitutional existence. Malign nonrecognition eventually gave way to benign nonrecognition, which was perhaps less dangerous but more infuriating. However, in the early years of this century, good men, most of them lawyers, insisted that facts had to be lived with and that there was, implicit in the better principles of the Republic, an obligation to respect the will of other peoples, even when they were being so damn stupid as to reject their manifest destiny.

Divided we stood and would remain, and maybe we were both quite large enough anyway. What we needed were rules based on equity, but not in the illusion of equality, and so we got the Boundary Water Treaty and the International Joint Commission. That Commission, it seems to me, is one of the nobler creations of Americans, but you will find scarcely a reference to it in those American text books on international institutions which I must perforce use for Canadian students. (You will find whole chapters on dubious enterprises such as the Latin American Free Trade Association, SEATO or the European Community, but there is nothing concerning a great international institution which really works.) It is a superb application of functionalism, and it is based on a recognition that borders are not matters to be solved, but to be lived with and provided for.

This is an obvious enough truth, (hardly worth mentioning, one would think), but it leads me to look at the Canadian disease: fear of "continentalism." If ever a neurosis was Freudian, this is it! It is hard to define the word because it has been used so irrationally. Yet I am quick to say that there is an intuitive Canadian fear which is valid: the realization that good means can lead to bad ends. It would be better, however, that this take the form of native canniness rather than the abject fear which paralyzes the brain. The indiscriminate way in which the word "continentalism" has been flung about of late, as an unchallengeably pejorative term, has too often

reduced the political economy of the Canada-United States relationship to a swamp.

Our history has been seen in terms of conspiracy and treachery, and the real causes of our discontents have been removed from serious study. Canadians were being encouraged to believe that they inhabited a heavenly and peaceful kingdom in which they could float independently, and, of course, prosperously detached from the geography and the history which had made them what they are—facts which our tougher-minded forefathers set out deliberately to live with and make the best of. In wringing their hands, our so-called nationalists failed to celebrate the remarkably good job our forefathers made of it. (Forepersons? I must not forget Laura and Madeleine).

It is tempting to linger longer on this fantasy, but there is a danger of tilting at straw men who have lost their stuffing. We have been sobered by the recent turn in our fortunes, but we could swing too far into what might be called lazy continentalism. A danger, perhaps, is that the slobs and the vested interests will run for shelter in the embrace of bigger business and sell out their heritage for the work ethic of a Florida condominium. My concern is not just with infantilism on the Left. What heartens me is my exposure to students. They seem to me to have tired of the absolutism of Left and Right and are disposed, in a mood of pragmatism and functionalism, to clear their minds of phobias and exotic ideologies and take a fresh look at ends and means.

I could try to define good and bad forms of "continentalism," but I suspect that it is a word we should give up using entirely until we have recovered our wits. We must, however, exorcise the irrational fear of "bleep" which has persuaded us that any kind of continental institution, agreement or structure is a threat to Canadian freedom. My own prejudice, I confess, is to be exceedingly wary of continental institutions and to reject, in advance, any which claim supranational powers. American fairmindedness, which I greatly respect, is no guarantee against the system's bias.

The I.J.C. and the Permanent Joint Board on Defense, however, are designed to promote equitable policies but preserve the guarantee of national sovereignty. We should be less inhibited in studying the possible extension of this principle. We should not, in doing so, lapse into the folly of an earlier breed of internationalists who thought issues between countries could be purged of political content and settled by pure reason, law or morality.

I am not at all sure that the basic principle of the I.J.C. and the P.J.B.D. can be extended, either by expanding their own agendas or setting up new bodies in their own image. They, themselves, differ from each other. The I.J.C. recognizes an inescapable and continuing conflict of interests, a conflict which can sometimes, of course, be sublimated in promoting a greater common interest. The P.J.B.D. is based on a will to reconcile conflicting interests against a third party—the unnamed challenger of the security of North America. Having a common enemy helps, but we cannot count on that boon most of the time. The Defence Production Sharing Arrangements, we

might recall, caused trouble when the United States defined an enemy which Canada did not regard as such.

That we have a very basic common interest in a certain kind of world need not be denied. But the assumption that because we look alike, our interests are or should be common, leads to expectations, the fracturing of which is bound to raise tension. We also need to distinguish between interests which are common and those which are coincidental. In GATT or other international economic consultations and negotiations, Canada and the United States frequently argue for similar positions. But that does not mean that we can be regarded, as Europeans have too often implied, as a bargaining entity called North America. Our two countries may want freer trade, not to put up a common front, but in order to compete better with each other. We may pursue a similar kind of regime for the seabed, but we have conflicting interests over nickel. Because we must walk warily, however, and not be beguiled by postprandial slogans, we ought not to think that we cannot move forward at all. If our professors and other specialists are on the job, they should be the mine-detectors. Their warnings will not be credible, however, if they holler "foul" at every step.

I have suggested that we should seize the propitious moment to move ahead, and that the mood was good. The discussion, even in academic circles, is less shrill. What is more, even American political economists are beginning to devote attention to the relationship. There is much good material in, for example, the quarterly, *International Organization*, setting examples of empirical analysis that Canadian political economists must heed. Gone are the happy days when we could simply shout down the Americans at Canada-United States gatherings, because we were able to count on their sublime ignorance of the subject and their infallible trust in good will as a solvent. We also have a United States Ambassador who seems more interested in provoking a dialogue than a petting session. He is not in the tradition of the aforementioned Seward, nor of Harry Truman, who said there had ceased to be any Canadian-American problems since Lord Ashburton and old Dan Webster came to the conclusion that the part of the country west of Lake Superior "was not worth anything anyway"—and this was after they had had a few good cocktails. They took a ruler and drew a line down the middle of Lake Superior and said you take this and we will take this. And it has turned out to be a very satisfactory settlement.

For many Canadians, the change in the United States demeanor is disconcerting, but I think we should welcome a principle of equality in candor if, as a former President said, our relations have reached maturity. In the spirit of the times, perhaps we should recognize that adult states can experiment in various relationships without marriage. Specifically, I think we might take up the challenge Mr. Enders presented in a recent speech in Toronto. He began with a generous view of Canada's economic problems and suggested that our predicaments were comparable or complementary. Touching on the delicate subject of oil, he referred to the present state of United States oil surplus on the West Coast and the Canadian surplus of refining capacity in

the Maritimes. Then he asked: "Shouldn't we try to work out a comprehensive solution to these imbalances on a basis of strict reciprocity?" When that sort of thing used to be said, many Canadians would shout 'bleep,' shut their ears and write fierce letters to the nearest editor. It was assumed, and with considerable justification, that those talking that way did want to share continental oil and water on a per capita basis. Much has been learned in the past few years. It had always seemed to me that although we should firmly reject talk of continental resources, there was an argument for mutually advantageous understandings which did not challenge Canada's sovereign right to use and dispose of its own resources.

I hasten to say that I am not an energy economist, and I would not dare speculate whether a "comprehensive solution" could be worked out. Washington may have some devious plan to get the better of us, and it is Mr. Enders' professional duty to press the American interest. My only point is that we should not be mesmerized by a word. Our relations with the United States could be worse, and they could be better, but I think there will always be a few better ways of dealing with them, and we should keep an open mind. The myth that Canadians have always fared worse in dealing with the Yankees is an offense to this country which we should all resent. Professor Nye, of Harvard, has presented evidence, in a study of Canada-United States crises that Canada came out better during periods of mutual benevolence and the United States came out better when we were at odds. Did we not make them abandon their opposition to the Seaway? Did we not defy them on our Arctic pollution zone until they saw the light and roared off to Caracas as converts? And have we not bamboozled the simple souls for years into believing that we alone produce \$100,000 hockey players? Perhaps we might seek a "comprehensive solution" for hockey, football and baseball.

I do not know whether Mr. Enders had in mind, as has been suggested, a package deal linking oil or potash, sea beds and votes in the General Assembly. I doubt if he had. Some Canadians scream for their government to play that game: two months gas supply if you will let us send Edsels to China; cheaper oil if you stop abusing Chile! It is not a good idea for the lesser partner to encourage the stronger to play package deals. It has, indeed, been a mark of our civilization that, although some element of intimidation is inescapable in such a relationship, there has been little cross linkage. Calculated threats of economic sanctions have been, for the most part, fantasies of our paranoiacs, or malign misinterpretations of clumsy behavior. Such suspicions have, however, poisoned the atmosphere and intimidated our political masters from looking some good ideas in the face. Perhaps some provisions, even new instrumentalities, for consultation would help clear the air. I remain dubious about formal provisions for consultation because of the implied commitment to a joint position. But, at least on strictly bilateral issues, (if there are any), we should be prepared to look at new ways and means. We do not have to accept foreign models. What about that unquestionably Canadian device called a contractual link?

We have a special relationship with the United States. The United States

also has special relationships with Britain and Germany, and another kind with the Soviet Union. Those relationships are constantly being analyzed. The special relationship between Canada and the United States is in dire need of defining on its own unique terms. It is not simple, and it is best grasped and lived with if we avoid pejorative terms. If we can describe it adequately, it will be easier to prescribe for it. Prescriptions need not be institutions, but they could be. The Canadian-American relationship may represent a higher degree of integration than is found in all but a few other dyads, but it is one of the least institutionalized. Americans, perhaps, tend to think institutionally. They know they can never lose their identity. Because of the prevailing bias in Canada against what is so imprecisely called "continentalism," there is an assumption that continental institutions and bilateral agreements are designed to promote continental integration. History shows, however, that their principal purpose has usually been to prevent it. That was certainly the design of the I.J.C. The Permanent Joint Board on Defense was not designed to remove the border in the interest of more efficient defense of the continent. It was intended to see that in defense cooperation, which was inevitable, the Canadian interest was maintained.

The other Canada-United States agreements which have been regarded as indicative of the desire of our governments to continentalize—the Defence Production Sharing Arrangements, the 1947 agreements on the principles of defence or NORAD—were intended to stake out the Canadian interest against the submersion which would ensue if there were no protective devices. A myth has developed that the postwar Canadian government deliberately promoted a policy of continental integration. Thanks to the thirty years rule, however, scholars are now recognizing that circumstances produced a Canadian rush to the American supermarket which the government did its best to restrain. Given the present intentions of both our governments to keep the continent nationally divided, we need to seek the right kind of rules or institutions to see that each country's interest, and particularly those of the weaker, are not overridden by powerful cultural and economic forces.

I have not the head, and this is not the occasion, to reveal blueprints. Furthermore, the occasion is too convivial. Remember how Lord Ashburton drank cocktails and Canada was raped. My intention is merely to suggest that you, as wise men, should be emboldened to be soberly experimental. In the Harvard speech, I argued for the same spirit of investigation because our countries were suffering from bad vibes. In sweeter times, we have a better chance to move ahead to provide against the bad times. With a better agreement on beef prices, we can each, in better spirit, slaughter sacred cows. Is not this effort of two democratic peoples to find ways and means to live happily together without political integration as challenging as the effort of the West Europeans to do the reverse? Frankly, it seems to me that ours is more relevant than the Treaty of Rome to the needs of the present world, *mais chacun à son goût*.