

Dear Mr. Cellucci:

Remember WWII?

Canada has always been there whenever the U.S. truly needed us. But when we went to war twice in the last century, America hesitated. So don't lecture us about freedom, democracy and friendship.

To: Ambassador Paul Cellucci, Embassy of the United States of America, 490 Sussex Dr., Ottawa, Ont.

By Silver Donald Cameron

To: Ambassador Paul Cellucci, Embassy of the United States of America, 490 Sussex Dr., Ottawa, Ont.

DEAR MR. AMBASSADOR:

Your recent remarks about Canada's policy with respect to Iraq were inaccurate, inappropriate and offensive. Prime Minister Chretien is maintaining a delicate balance between U.S. pressure and Canadian opinion - a familiar position for Canadian prime ministers - and he will not tell you to go pound sand. But someone should.

Fundamentally, you argue that the United States would instantly come to the aid of Canada in an emergency, and Canada should therefore participate in your ill-advised attack on Iraq.

"There is no security threat to Canada that the United States would not be ready, willing and able to help with," you are quoted as saying. "There would be no debate. There would be no hesitation. We would be there for Canada, part of our family."

Codswallop. And that's being diplomatic.

The primary threat to Canadian security has always been the United States. A monument in Quebec honours my earliest Canadian ancestor for repelling an invasion from your home state of Massachusetts in 1690. The very first instance of military co-operation among the 13 colonies occurred in 1745 under the leadership of James Shirley, your predecessor as governor of Massachusetts, whose army invaded Nova Scotia and captured the Fortress of Louisbourg.

Thirty years later, during the American Revolution, your privateers sacked our ports. We were at war once more in 1812-15. The birth of Canada in 1867 was prompted by fears of a U.S. invasion. That's why our railroad runs along the Gulf of St. Lawrence, far from the U.S. border.

Do you remember manifest destiny, the 1840s U.S. doctrine which held that your country had a God-given mission to rule all of North America? Do you remember "Fifty-four-forty or fight," the slogan that rallied Americans to threaten an invasion in 1902 over the Alaska boundary? Yours is the only country that has ever invaded ours, and it would do so again in a wink if it thought its interests here were seriously threatened.

And how does your sentimental mantra of perpetual willingness to spring to our assistance apply to the First World War, which we entered in 1914, while you stayed out for three years? We went to war against Hitler in 1939, while you were moved to join your sister democracies only after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor two years later. A million Canadians fought in

the Second World War, and 45,000 died. We need no lectures from Americans about the defence of liberty and democracy.

Nevertheless, despite the strains of our history, we are probably as close as any two nations in the world. Many Canadians - I am one - have family members who are American citizens. Our two nations fought together not only in two World Wars, but also to repel the invasions of South Korea in 1949 and Kuwait in 1991.

And when great catastrophe strikes without warning, our people have indeed been there for each other.

As governor of Massachusetts, you must have been present at the lighting of the Christmas tree in Boston each year - an annual gift from Nova Scotia to commemorate the immediate and massive assistance of Massachusetts after the Halifax Explosion in 1917.

Our chance to reciprocate came on Sept. 11, 2001, when Canadian communities took in, on an instant's notice, 40,000 passengers from U.S. planes forced down by the terrorist attacks.

Halifax alone hosted 7,200. We housed them in our homes and schools and churches, fed them and comforted them and treated them as family. We probably gave more immediate and practical assistance to Americans than any other country. Yet when your president later thanked nations for their help, he did not mention Canada.

The Iraq conflict, however, is not an unforeseen disaster, but a deliberate choice. Your president has squandered a worldwide outpouring of sympathy and solidarity in less than two years - an astounding diplomatic debacle. Your own remarks, with their dark hints of economic revenge, are entirely consistent with the Bush administration's policy of diplomacy by bullying, bribing and threatening.

A huge body of opinion, even in the U.S. and Britain, judges this war to be illegal, reckless and irrelevant to the fight against terrorism. Your government appears to have forgotten Osama bin Laden, and not to have noticed that the Sept. 11 terrorists were mostly Saudi, not Iraqi. They lived not in Baghdad but in Hamburg and San Diego. The Iraq campaign is a sideshow, a grudge match, a distraction. It will breed more martyrs, and more terrorists.

Back in Massachusetts, in 1846, a young man was arrested and jailed for refusing to pay taxes, to avoid supporting his government's deplorable policies.

He explained this in an essay, *On the Duty of Civil Disobedience*, which has ever since inspired people like Gandhi and Martin Luther King. His name was Henry David Thoreau, and no doubt the governor of Massachusetts thought he was a pretty poor American. He was not; like King, he was a voice for what is finest in American life and values. And the issue on which he took his stand may sound a bit familiar. He was opposed to an imperial war - the unprovoked U.S. invasion which stripped Mexico of 40 per cent of its territory.

Good citizens - and good friends - oppose bad policies. By telling you the truth, they strive to save you from folly. They may be mistaken, but they are not your enemies.

That is the message you should take back to the White House, whether or not there is anyone there who will understand it.

Sincerely,

Silver Donald Cameron