

In October, speaking of the family connections of Canada, Prime Minister Mulroney presided over another family meeting in Vancouver, the meeting of the Commonwealth Convention. Now that was an organization from which the Americans had an association but they decided in 1776 that they were going to surrender their perspective rights of membership in the Commonwealth. They weren't at the Commonwealth either. But we are there in the Commonwealth and that meeting, because it is a more mature organization and an older one. It was really quite remarkable to sit at that meeting as I did at the Prime Minister's side in Vancouver, and see issues that in any other forum would divide countries being capable of being the subject of agreement because we were there together as members of a family that share common traditions. The United States is not a member of that family and indeed this country, under Mr. Mulroney's leadership, has been able to exert our influence and our leadership in that family more effectively than we have for sometime in the past. And that means that that is another distinctive characteristic of this country.

Why did the U.S. leave the Commonwealth in 1776 and what does that reason for their declaration of independence tell us about the differences between our two countries now? They left, if you were a student of American history, because they wanted to cut themselves off from the cultures of the old world and to start anew. They were a revolutionary country. That is a fundamental part of their tradition. We have always been fundamentally different. We shared, in common with the Americans, the idea of a new continent. But we took people who came from those old values, who came from those old traditions and we said we will not cut them off in a revolutionary way, we will instead plant those cultures and plant those traditions in a new continent. And that has been a difference which has persisted between our two countries, Canada and the United States, and which is evident in a multitude of ways. One of them being, of course, the fact that we are members in these family organizations like the Francophonie and the Commonwealth and they are not.

Let's take a look at other areas of the world. Let's take the argument that somehow our independence will be lost in the trade agreement. Compare our position with the United States. Let's briefly look at Central America, look at Nicaragua. The United States has imposed a trade embargo on Nicaragua. We have not. The United States assumes that the problems there are military and ideological. We assume that the problems there are social