

in the early years of the next century it will be seventy per cent. That means that when Canadian children now in school go on to post-secondary education, two out of every three citizens of the world will live in Asia. Those economies are innovative, aggressive, looking for partners across the Pacific. For the last ten years, Canada has had more immigration across the Pacific than across the Atlantic. We do more trade across the Pacific than across the Atlantic. That too brings benefits to all of Canada, but proportionately the greatest opportunities from Pacific trade reside in Western Canada.

And a third reason for the new era of opportunity in Western Canada is that, for the last four years, Brian Mulroney's government has been steadily removing obstacles to growth in this region. The NEP is gone. So is the PGRT. So is FIRA. Privatization has begun, of Teleglobe, Canadair, Eldorado Nuclear, De Havilland, and now Air Canada. The Freedom to Move legislation has ended historic discrimination in freight rates. Michael Wilson has reduced the deficit in four budgets consecutively, and followed economic policies that produce consistently one of the best growth rates among the OECD countries. Those are not ends in themselves. Those are means to provide Canadians with the opportunity to excel, and they bring a special boost to Western Canada, because we had so many unusual obstacles to overcome.

So circumstances provide an unusual opportunity for Western Canada to put our stamp on what Canada becomes. Instead of fighting a rear guard action to defend our regional interests, we have the chance to exert real and enduring national leadership. But that requires a political choice. Do we lift our horizons to the whole country, and what it can become, or do we refine our old habit of regional grievance? Do we act as insiders trying to shape national institutions, or do we act as outsiders, treating national goals as inherently hostile to our own?

My own answer is clear. I have always believed that the best way to solve regional grievances is by influencing national institutions. Even when those institutions governed against us, I thought it better to stand at the centre and fight. And now, when we have proven that national institutions can advance our energy and trade and constitutional and agricultural interests, we should focus our ingenuity and our leadership on shaping the whole country.

That, after all, is what Ontario did, during the decades when it defined our country. That is what Quebec has done, consciously, confidently, considering separatism and rejecting it, opting instead to act as a full partner within Canada. When Western Canada was on the defensive, we sometimes took those assertions by Ontario and Quebec as a threat. Now, as opportunities open for us, as we become more confident and more mature, we can apply their experience, in our own way.