

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have looked forward with a good deal of anticipation to my trip to Australia. It is the first time that I have had the pleasure of visiting your country. Australians have a well-deserved and enviable reputation for generous and informal hospitality, and I am happy to say that the warm and friendly reception by my kind host, Foreign Minister Peacock, the Prime Minister and his colleagues, has more than lived up to your high standards.

High-level visits in either direction are perhaps not as frequent as would be indicated by the closeness of our relations and by the many interests we have in common. I am particularly glad that we had the privilege of welcoming Prime Minister Fraser to Canada during the Olympics and that we could show him something of our country.

But although the vast reaches of the Pacific tend to keep us apart physically, these distances are less important than the ties that bind us together.

English is spoken, albeit with a somewhat different accent, in both our countries. We value the same historical and cultural links that attach us to Europe and the Commonwealth. Our political systems are built upon the same model of parliamentary democracy that in the modern world seems to be the exception rather than the norm. Australians and Canadians take pride and care to preserve and continue the traditions that are dedicated to freedom and human dignity.

With large countries to develop, Australia and Canada have both evolved flexible federal structures to respond effectively to the needs and aspirations of our people, although my friends of the working press often seem to remain unconvinced. As full-fledged industrialized and consumer nations, we both have to meet the challenges of a modern, advanced, and complex society. Our two countries are rich in natural resources which account for a large part of our wealth. Yet we both remain dependent upon foreign capital and technology to exploit these rich resources. The increased pressures put on our governments to deal skilfully with this dependence are familiar to both of us.

It has for some time been my view that our common interest in the Pacific has not played a large enough role in our bilateral relations. This is an important reason for my visit here, during which I hope to gain some valuable insights from my hosts on the general political and economic situation in the Pacific as seen from the Australian perspective.