

His words demonstrate that protecting the environment has become a priority everywhere, across traditional divisions between east and west, and perhaps even more important, to an increasing degree across traditional divisions between north and south. It is a genuine international issue, and like peace, it requires hard work at the details, as well as inspirational talk about goals. Indeed, what is most encouraging about the challenge of environmental issues is that we are moving beyond words to actual agreements and initiatives. Certainly that was the case at the meeting in Montreal last year, which yielded agreement on the Protocol on Protection of the Ozone Layer. That same spirit was evident at a joint meeting of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in Berlin, where the Canadian Minister of Finance, Michael Wilson, proposed that the World Bank should make more information available about the environmental impact of its activities; develop criteria for its lending that affects such vital resources as rainforests; and examine innovative ways to finance conservation in the developing world.

What is significant about that is, that, if there can be a change in World Bank standards, that change will inevitably affect the standards that are put in place by national governments whether those are national governments that are involved in encouraging development elsewhere or whether those are the site governments of development. It is not an easy issue. None of these issues is easy.

Whether one likes it or not there are competitions among various countries whether they are in the business of encouraging development or being the site of development. Standards have to be set that each one can feel comfortable they can follow without suffering some national prejudice. Working on the World Bank is an important place to start, not alone, but an important place to start. I think it is an indication of the kinds of changes we are seeing in the world that the proposals that Mike Wilson put forward at the Berlin meeting were well received, that there is a disposition to begin to move on that kind of issue as there had not been in the past.

We are the beneficiaries if we are wise enough to take advantage of it, of changes that are occurring generally in the world, not simply in the new prominence of the issue of the environment, but changes that are making it more possible for the international system to work more effectively and to work together.