

But the Canada of 1985 is not the fragile newcomer to the family of nations that it was at Confederation. We have come of age, and the expectations of our citizens have matured. It is now appropriate for Canada to be more assertive, both as to who we are and what we can achieve.

As I indicated earlier, our economic relations with the United States have grown steadily closer over the past 40 years. Does anyone seriously believe that Canadians have less sense of national identity today than we did in 1935? Is our sense of ourselves less vital now than fifty years ago?

Consider even more recent times. In the 1970's we witnessed seriously division between Quebec and the rest of Canada, and there were bitter quarrels between the eastern and western regions of our country. Those divisions had nothing to do with our closer economic relations with the U.S. They sprang from indigenous and historical sources. And we have overcome them. Canada today stands as a mature, united, country ready to assert its position in the world.

The decision to open negotiations with the United States will not weaken our sovereignty. It is an assertion of sovereignty in an increasingly interdependence world. It demonstrates our confidence that we can be as productive, innovative, ingenious, and efficient as our American partners.