

Mr. Chairman:

I have now been Canada's Foreign Minister for nearly four years. In a man's life, this is a significant period. In the history of civilization it is imperceptible. Yet in those four years we have seen profound changes in our world and in Canada's perception of it. In 1968 the new Government realized that the world was in the throes of the kind of periodic transformation that brings about a fundamental re-alignment of power relationships. I do not suggest that we had the prescience to foresee the course this re-alignment would take, but the indicators were clear enough for the Government to give priority to consideration of Canada's international posture and relationships, and to Canada's capacity to respond quickly and effectively to new situations.

It was for this reason that the Government, as one of its first actions, embarked upon a re-examination of its foreign policy. Not to challenge the past, certainly not in search of change for the sake of change. What we had to determine, and determine quickly, was the future course of Canadian foreign policy in a period of uncertainty in international affairs. As a politician I do not discount the part that chance plays in the affairs of men and nations and it was indeed a fortunate thing for Canada that we took action at the time we did. But good fortune is more often than not founded in good judgement and certainly it takes good judgement to get the maximum advantage from good fortune.

You will have noticed that I have not delivered the customary opening paragraph about the beauties of British Columbia and the superb setting of the city of Vancouver. I am not blind to these, nor am I unaware of the special interests, domestically and internationally, of this part of our country. I think you must all be rather tired of the denizens of the East who come to Vancouver and rave, in a rather condescending manner, about the good life here. You must also be rather tired of politicians who go on ad nauseam about the importance of Canada's Pacific dimension and that curious topographical feature, the Pacific rim. I am going to assume tonight that you know I know how important they are. More seriously, although I recognize that the different regions of Canada have differing and in some ways conflicting interests -- indeed much of the Government's time and attention is devoted to the resolution of these conflicts -- I believe that in international affairs there can only be one Canada. Our sovereignty and independence derive from our essential unity and our economic well-being is in the end indivisible. What is important to British Columbians is important to Ontarians and Quebecois and vice versa. Canada is a unit in international politics and a unit in international trade. Perhaps this truth is self-evident but amid the hurly-burly of Canadian political life it is worth restating.