

So I did try to get in. And now I feel that I have really arrived with your giving me the very risky endorsement of the department in asking me to undertake this lecture today.

I also want to make note of another very, very distinguished person you mentioned in your introduction Hugh Keenleyside, one of the finest Canadians to ever serve our country and the world community who passed away recently. I had the privilege of knowing him for many years. We can all rejoice in the service he gave to his country and to the world community. And I join all in mourning his recent passing; he was a great Canadian and a great product of the Skelton era.

O.D. Skelton was one of that exceptional cadre of competent and committed people who shaped the quality and character of the Canadian public service in those dynamic and formative years in the development of Canadian nationhood, during which distinctive Canadian values and interests began to dictate Canada's foreign, as well as its domestic policies.

And no one did more than O.D. Skelton to give our Department of External Affairs the unsurpassed reputation for excellence, quality and effectiveness, which it enjoys among its professional counterparts around the world. This has earned for Canada a respect and a credibility in international affairs far out of proportion to our size as a nation. And it has yielded both practical advantages and universal esteem, which are immensely valuable to our nation.

Those who have served internationally, as I have, perhaps appreciate this more than others for whom the complexities and sometimes the remoteness of diplomacy seem distant from their daily lives and concerns. In an era in which the interests of, and the prospects for, Canadians are more and more affected by what happens in other parts of the world community, our professional diplomatic service is an asset of inestimable importance to our country one that we need and must support more than ever.

I recently had the opportunity of participating in a historic process to which Canada made a singularly important contribution the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development