

Distinguished representatives of External Affairs and International Trade Canada, members of its alumni, ladies and gentlemen. I see many good friends and allies in this audience and I am delighted to see you all.

As an amateur in the field of foreign affairs, I consider it a great honour to have been selected to deliver this lecture by the professionals of the department with which I worked, in varying stages of co-operation and controversy. To be named the lecturer for this year is one of the honours that I will value most highly because of the fact that I value so much the friendship and co-operation that I have enjoyed with the distinguished members of that department.

They are among Canada's finest servants, and, of course, there was no finer than Dr. O.D. Skelton. While I did not have the privilege of knowing him, I have read some of his writings, and, more particularly, I have had the privilege of knowing many of the people who were the product of his genius in picking the best Canadians for the department.

So, to all of you, my sincere thanks. It makes up for the time, some years ago, when I appeared at the Department of External Affairs with a deep fervour and commitment, seeking the personnel officer. I wanted to join the External Aid Office, but I was advised not to fill in an application because I did not have the minimum qualifications.

Some time later, I had lunch with one of the most distinguished products of the department, the Right Honourable Lester Pearson, during which he offered me the job of heading External Aid. I said to him, "Well, Mr. Prime Minister, I actually applied for a position in External Aid a few years ago and you were the Under-Secretary at that time, and they would not even take my application." He said something about which I had not actually thought before: "Well, actually you are very lucky Maurice, because if you had had the qualifications you would likely have got in, and if you had got in, at your age, [I think I was 34 at that stage] no matter how well you performed, in our department you would not be any more than at the lower mid-levels and I could not possibly be offering you this job."