

This September, in Quebec City, Canada hosted the summit of the Francophonie. That is a unique family of all the nations in the world that have in common the use of French. It's a family in which we as a country used to be less active. Why were we less active? We were less active because we had not resolved at home the place of the French language and the french fact in our country. We had not matured to the point where we could come to terms with the distinct society that Quebec provides. We hadn't matured to that point. Now we have. Because we have grown more mature at home we can act within a maturing world. That means that we can become a full member of the international Francophone community. With all of the contacts that gives us - contacts in trade, contacts into Egypt, into Africa, into other countries of the world; contacts in diplomacy - for those who forecast that Canada will become a pale imitation of the United States, let me make the evident point that the the United States is not a member of La Francophonie.

In October, the Prime Minister presided over a quite remarkable conference of another family of which Canada is the proud and leading partner. It is the family of the Commonwealth. Now, the United States was a potential member of the Commonwealth until 1776 when it decided to depart. The important point is that we stayed.

One of the realities of that is, not to give you a history lesson, among the distinctions between the society in the United States and the society in Canada, is that the United States in 1776 took a revolutionary decision to leave Europe behind; to cut off, to establish that kind of independence to be a light upon a hill; a beacon to other nations. Cutting itself off from other traditions. We have never done that.

What we have done is said that we respect those traditions and we want to plant them in a new continent. There is a difference of continuity between this country and our society and the United States and their society.

One of the examples is the family of the Commonwealth from which the Americans departed and in which we are playing, under Brian Mulroney, an increasingly active and leading role.