

United States, a course that would take us from interdependence to utter dependency in a very short time.

We at once engaged in a series of conversations with the United States, the European Economic Commission, the member states of the Common Market and the British, a series of conversations that is still continuing. We found that there was an effective role for us to play in furtherance of our national interests and in the common cause of the trading world. We are now negotiating with the Common Market to put our consultations with them on a more systematic basis -- mirroring, if we can, the joint committee at ministerial level that we have with the United States and Japan.

This initiative on our part had two good effects. It enabled us to bring home to the Common Market the reality of our position and our strong and legitimate interest in the freest possible trading arrangements. I believe, too, that both sides, by having to talk to us, were led at a time when both were concerned with internal problems and priorities to give a little more thought to each other.

The second great change in the trading world to which we belong was the economic miracle of Japan. I need not remind this audience that Japan is Canada's third largest trading partner after the United States and Britain, and that our trade with Japan is increasing rapidly. Japan is probably British Columbia's leading foreign trading partner. What we think about less often is that Japan is already a regional economic power of the first magnitude, dominating the economy of South and South East Asia, and already a major factor in world trade, likely to grow rather than diminish in importance.

In our trading world, the United States no longer enjoys an unchallenged position of leadership. It remains the most powerful economic unit in the world but it is challenged, to the East by the Common Market, to the West by Japan. Every Canadian should pray every morning and evening that the United States economy will continue to prosper. So closely are we tied together that we will thrive together or suffer together. There was a time last year when we thought that the Americans were trying to disengage from us. Fortunately, that threat seems to have receded.

It has been the consistent policy of this Government to seek a maximum diversification in our export trade, thereby reducing to the extent possible our vulnerability to the vicissitudes of the American market and to changes in American economic policy. I want to be very clear about this matter. At the present time the United States takes about 55% of our total exports. We are very glad that they do but we must ask