

framework for this purpose is, for all its shortcomings and deficiencies, the United Nations. The international community has the obligation to assist the UN to meet the challenges of the next fifty years.

Thus far, I have displayed uncharacteristic restraint in foregoing the opportunity to relate our international accomplishments to that other challenge which confronts us: maintaining the unity of Canada. With your indulgence, I would like to make that point now. In January 1947, Louis St. Laurent, then Secretary of State for External Affairs, and later Prime Minister of Canada, called national unity the first basic principle of its foreign policy. "The role of this country in world affairs will prosper only as we maintain this principle," Mr. St. Laurent remarked, "for a disunited Canada will be a powerless one." That statement is at least as true today as it was in 1947.

I have no doubt that the break-up of Canada would be a devastating blow, not only for Canadians but also for the international community. It seems so ironic to me that we can agree on the need for co-operation, for compromise, for understanding and for reform in international affairs, yet fail utterly to heed that same advice now when we confront our domestic problems. It also amazes me that those who would break this country apart, who would bring to an end this noble experiment, who would cast their fellow citizens into a maelstrom of economic, social and political uncertainty beyond all reckoning, that those people can do so with such casual disregard for the disastrous consequences of their actions, for Quebec and for the rest of Canada.

Those who advocate independence for Quebec – however cloaked in obscure language and problematic arrangements – occasionally invoke the image of the international community welcoming a new nation. I am not sure how warmly that nation would be received if it emerged from the ruins of one of the greatest and most successful contributors to the peace and well-being of the world.