

This is, for example, the 75th anniversary of the establishment of the International Joint Commission, which adjudicates water and boundary disputes -- extremely sensitive questions -- and which does so with dispassion, effectiveness and, sometimes, with near-genius. Our two countries, with other allies, created the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, NATO, which has helped keep the European continent, a continent wracked by two wars in the three decades before 1945, free from war in the four decades since. An agreement signed by Franklin Roosevelt and Mackenzie King in the depths of the depression - a bilateral trade agreement - became the basis of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade --the GATT -- which is in turn the basis of most of the prosperity the world has known since it took effect.

That example is particularly germane today. A year ago, at Punta del Este, Uruguay, Canada and the United States were among the nations arguing for a broad new round of multilateral trade negotiations, which would include new issues like services. That round was launched, and it is our best hope of maintaining and extending world prosperity.

If Canada and the United States had failed to agree on a bilateral treaty, within the GATT, that would have sent an ominous signal to the rest of the trading world. If we couldn't agree, who in the world could?

But we did agree -- and we both believe the agreement will benefit both countries. That sends a signal too -- a signal of seriousness and hope to other nations who need to trade to grow.

So the issues are joined -- in the United States, the issue is protectionism or competition; in Canada, the issue of confidence or fear; and, in the wider world, the opportunity still to make the international system work.