

country and our character. At the same time, those who assumed we were going to create a United States of the North were equally out of touch with our hopes and aspirations.

We chose our own way. For nearly a century and-a-quarter, we have been told we are a country that cannot define itself and, for just as long, we have been proving that is not the case. While it is always hard to encapsulate the essence of a people still proudly shaping themselves, we are the sum of our history, our customs, our culture, our laws and our beliefs about ourselves.

We were a colony. Now we are a proud nation among nations. We were dependent on a Mother country. Now we recognize our interdependence with all the countries of the world, economically, socially and environmentally. Once content to be assigned a role by others, we now understand that we have a specific and even unique role of our own in the family of nations. We chose Responsible Government as our form of democracy, and have fashioned it to our needs.

We learned about the values of the native people, whose understanding of nature we now appreciate and seek to share. A nation of immigrants, we pride ourselves on our pluralistic society.

Canada plays the fullest possible role internationally as a bilingual, multicultural nation. We are members of the Commonwealth of nations, La Francophonie and the Economic Summit, as well as being a charter member of the United Nations and its many agencies and groups.

We are not, and have never been, a colonial or military superpower, although we have fought valiantly when freedom has been threatened. We have shaped a place for Canadian service personnel as the world's peacekeepers, a role honoured by the Nobel Prize for Peace. We have become leaders in those institutions that stress international co-operation on such vital issues as health and the environment.

As events continue to unfold in Eastern Europe at such an astonishing pace, we have a particular opportunity—and solid credentials—to contribute to a revitalized search for lasting peace. Canadians, like people everywhere, are weary and frustrated with the cold wars that have marked the last 50 years. We yearn to use our ingenuity and energy in the fight against our universal enemies: poverty, sickness and environmental degradation.

The ability to change and to move with history has been bred into the Canadian character. We are an Atlantic country, a Pacific Rim country and we are linked almost mystically with the North. Rather than locking ourselves into rigid definitions and ways of acting, we have moulded ourselves into a complex and subtle nation.

Nearly four million of us were born outside our own borders. When we speak of people who have chosen to make their lives with us, we describe them as immigrants, with all its implications of coming to us, rather than dismissing them with the less

welcoming labels of "alien" or "foreigner". I can only be grateful for that, because among the families that came to Canada—and were welcomed by it—were Michael and Anna Hnatyshyn, holding in their arms the infant son who would become my father.

What is the place of the Governor General as representative of the Crown in such a richly textured nation? In Canada's early days, the Crown promised our freedom. It was the guarantor of justice in our courts. It is, as it has always been, a constant in the changing world, a link with our past and a promise of our future.

Today, the Crown is an integral part of the institutions we have established to safeguard our rights and freedoms. The most authoritative description of the modern Crown says, "The Sovereign has three rights: the right to be consulted; the right to encourage; and the right to warn". No sensible sovereign, or sovereign's representative, could wish to do more in a modern democracy.

The Crown I am called on to represent is very much the Canadian Crown. It continues to be an integral part of this country, as it has been in the past. The Governor General belongs to the people of Canada—not to any one linguistic, cultural or economic group—but to all Canadians. The Governor General is the source of a sense of community that is essential to our understanding of ourselves as Canadians and a reminder that there are ties worth cherishing, history worth celebrating—and passing on.

I pay tribute to my predecessors, especially to that distinguished line of Canadian Governors General that began almost 40 years ago with the late Vincent Massey. I have the honour to succeed Jeanne Sauvé, a person whose courage and devotion to Canada has been the source of her remarkable inner strength.

I salute Ed Schreyer who devoted his term as Governor General to making Canadians aware of the benefits we all reap as a bilingual and multicultural society.

I applaud Roland Michener, always a pioneer in the cause of physical fitness and health, who remains a symbol and a champion of the benefits society gains when it treasures people on the basis of ability, rather than age.

Finally, I honour two people who illuminated the role of Governor General—as they did everything their lives touched—with great moral authority, wisdom and uncommon valour.

I am speaking, of course, of the late Georges Vanier and Jules Léger, each of whom exemplified the best that is possible in public service, and in whose footsteps I am so proud to follow.

I was brought up in a family in which public service was a basic principle. It was instilled into me by my mother, who is here to share in this marvellous day. My father was a lawyer and, later, a member of the Senate of Canada. Like him, I