

We recognize that we share the North American continent, and that our relationship with the United States is unique between two countries. But, like partners in anything, there will occasionally be disagreements.

We've been having them for years.

In recent years we've had them about softwood lumber, shakes and shingles and pork just to name a few, and there have been quite a few more than that.

Whenever an American interest group could mount a strong enough lobby in Washington, up went a tariff wall against Canadian producers who were offering the American marketplace a more competitive product.

We never really had an arbiter for these disputes -- short of appealing to the Americans themselves -- or the GATT ... which doesn't move very quickly.

Now we will.

We have set up in this agreement a binational body that will deliver an impartial and binding decision when one side feels it is being unfairly treated.

One of the things that the critics of this trade agreement imply is that somehow we've become a little less Canadian ... that we've somehow given up some of our own identify in making this agreement.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

Our culture was never on the table. The things that make us different from our neighbors and which are reflected in our publishing, our films and video and audio, our music and broadcasting are all exempt from the agreement.

That applies to production, distribution, sales and all activities in those industries.

None of our social programs or regional development programs are affected by this agreement.

There were probably people saying some of the same things when the European common market was formed.

There's no disputing what an economic success that has been; or that the residents of those countries have benefitted from the common market arrangement.