

The American Bicentennial reminds us how different have been our avenues of development. From its beginnings Canada has had to adapt to or contend with the profound influence of the United States. Nevertheless, in ways both apparent and subtle, Canada remains in many respects a nation quite different from the United States, and will continue to evolve nationally along distinct lines. For Canadians, their distinct national identity remains a fundamental concern.

I have stated many times that a basic objective of Canadian foreign policy is to reduce our existing vulnerability while at the same time continuing to develop a dynamic, creative and mutually beneficial relationship with our southern neighbour. Tonight I will be focussing on this latter aspect of our policy.

A starting point is to note that the relationship is not one of equals, and the fact that a lesser power and the world's strongest power can successfully share a continent is high tribute to the conception and the conduct of our bilateral relations.

Our relations can never survive inattention, however, and the generally sound state of Canada/United States relations is not the result of accident or of a preconditioned conformity of views. On the contrary, the successful interaction of two democratic and federal states, each with its own national interests and domestic constraints, is highly complex because of the open system that each country has for reconciling various domestic interests. The question of balancing the national versus the particular interest is always a challenge for federal governments. When I think of the enormous variety and multiplicity of what has been called the warp and woof of Canada/United States relations, I think also of the need for our two democratic governments to deal with the many domestic demands upon them and the effect this may have on the conduct of our bilateral relations. The overall importance of our bilateral relations warrants the constructive and intense effort that is required to strike a reasonable balance between external and internal policy considerations.

The relative affluence of our two nations also carries with it certain responsibilities. In a world community where the contradiction between disparities of wealth and the growing interdependence among national economies persists, our respective policy initiatives and responses must take into account our international obligations in the global sense. Of course, both Canada and the United States have a natural desire to chart and control their own course. But we both must strike a balance between national consciousness and international responsibility, between self-reliance and the necessity of interdependence. In so doing -- both as neighbours and as members of the international community -- we will have confronted fundamental issues affecting world security and prosperity. Our expanding involvement in the multilateral sphere has become an increasingly significant element of the overall relationship.