

Canada has just gone through an extraordinary summer, characterized by such exceptional events as the failure of the Meech Lake Accord and the Oka crisis. And the fall has already given us the childish antics of the Senate. All this has helped to aggravate the cynicism of Canadians toward their political institutions.

But if you think our summer was of the unstable variety, think for a moment about what has happened in the Soviet Union, India, South Africa and even Japan, that modern symbol of stability, which is seeing its economy affected increasingly by the demands of its own consumers, which is considering changing its legislation to allow more active participation in peacekeeping operations, and which is compelling what has been an inward-looking society to come out of its shell and open up to the rest of the world.

Thus we are living in a period of profound change worldwide. More than any other, we are truly a country of the world, attached as we are by family and trading ties, and by a profound interest in having a world order that works well.

We are not immune to the need for self-examination or to change. Nor should we be afraid of these things.

My observations today are personal, as one Canadian to others. And I have three points to make.

The first is that Canadians are the most fortunate people on this earth. Other nations envy what we take for granted, and they are frankly puzzled that we do not appear to place more value on our extraordinary country. Paul Desmarais said it well when he expressed the wish that Canadians would show the same respect for Canada that foreigners do.

My second point is that there is nothing guaranteed about Canada's good fortune. The wealth we inherited can be wasted. The traditions of tolerance and compromise, which are at the heart of this country, can be crowded out, or shouted down. We have to work to keep our good fortune, or we will lose it.

And third -- and most important -- we cannot afford illusions. We have to see Canada as it is today, and consider, openly and honestly, what we want Canada to be tomorrow.

All of us have to be prepared to examine our assumptions, and to change both our practices and, when necessary, our institutions.

Mr. Gorbachev makes a useful distinction between "new thinking" and "old thinking" and his experience provides a striking example of how difficult a change that is. So will it be difficult in Canada. But there is no refuge in old formulas. If super-annuated celebrities want to revive Cité Libre, let them indulge their nostalgia.