

These will be commercial negotiations between two distinct and sovereign countries, whose intelligent co-operation can create more jobs, more growth and more economic security on both sides of the 49th parallel. The economic advantages of freer trade are undeniable. But we all know that modern nations are more than economic. The challenge will be to strengthen our economy and our sovereignty.

As the Prime Minister said when announcing in the House of Commons the Government's intention to pursue a trade agreement with the United States, "our political sovereignty, our system of social programs, our commitment to fight regional disparities, our unique cultural identity, our special linguistic character - these are the essence of Canada. They are not at issue in these negotiations."

So, we will not be discussing Canadian medicare, or unemployment insurance, or bilingualism, or the Canada Council, or the CBC or other instruments which define the distinctive nature of Canada. And, for their part, the Americans will not be discussing their foreign policy, right-to-work laws, or the Stars and Stripes. We won't be trading Mike Duffy for Dan Rather, or the Blue Jays for the Royals.