

I want to begin by thanking the Chamber of Commerce for their wholehearted help in improving the connections between the Department I run and the region I come from. We have two basic purposes. One is to give my officials a better, more direct, understanding of Western Canada. The other is to help Western Canadians understand more about foreign policy.

The merits of teaching the bureaucrats go without saying. It is an article of faith in Alberta that Ottawa does not understand. Indeed, some people have inflated that simple proposition into a full-bore one-note political philosophy. But the proposition is also true. In a sense, in a large country, and a complex age, it will always be true, about every region. But there is a particular alienation in Western Canada, which has a genuine basis in legitimate grievance, which can be exploited by extremists, and which could divert into sour dead ends some of the most creative energies available to the country. That alienation can't be understood at long distance and can be overcome only if people of goodwill meet. Which is why my officials are here, and why I hope to persuade more of my colleagues in Cabinet to make similar efforts. Our success this week in Calgary will influence that process.

The other purpose of this experiment is to help broaden the understanding of foreign policy. That becomes increasingly important as the world changes so profoundly. No nation is an island but we, more than most, are effected by developments around the world. We depend on trade more than any other developed country, so the exchange rates and trade tactics and political stability of other nations effect jobs in Canada directly. We have a vast environment, vulnerable to industrial practices in the United States or Latin America or the Soviet Union, or the over fishing of Spain or Portugal. We are multicultural society, and disorder elsewhere is often echoed here.

Foreign policy isn't foreign anymore. Events in these countries directly effect our jobs, our climat, our social order. So it is important that we understand those events, and seek to influence them constructively.

This is a time of extraordinary change. I will speak in a moment of Eastern Europe, where no one could have predicted the scope and pace of recent change and, more significantly, where no one knows what will happen next.

But historic changes are also emerging elsewhere.

In South Africa, after relentless pressure from the Black majority and its friends outside, including prominently Canada, the Pretoria government maybe considering basic changes in the apartheid system.