

As a member of Prime Minister Mulroney's Cabinet, I can tell you we hope history does not repeat itself.

Canada and the U.S. are still at a point where we can realize that historic dream of freer trade. These negotiations are of importance to both countries, despite the fact that public discussion and editorial coverage are much more intense on this issue in Canada than in the U.S.

Unfortunately, this leaves most Americans at a disadvantage, without much information on what is an important economic issue affecting Americans as well as Canadians.

As editorial writers, you play a major role in informing the public. In discussions of this key issue, I would like to see Americans participate more actively. Some recent American editorials are furthering the debate.

It is unfortunate that so few Americans recognize the size, scope and complexity of our bilateral trading relationship. The U.S. and Canadian economies are highly integrated. In fact, this close relationship goes far beyond trade and economics.

We are true North American partners:

- in Norad
- in NATO
- in the GATT
- in the International Monetary Fund
- the G-7
- and many other international organizations.

I would venture to say that the strength of this partnership is vital to the national security of both our countries. A strong, economically viable northern neighbour is vital to America's security and a strong, economically expanding America is essential to Canada's well-being.

We believe that a free-trade agreement will further strengthen that partnership. We must not allow trade irritants to jeopardize that partnership. Yet, that is precisely what has happened with U.S. trade actions against Canadian softwood lumber and potash, and Canadian action against U.S. corn.