Thank you. It is a pleasure to be here tonight particularly
after the way my day started.. That was an interview with an
American journalist .

"Canada", she said, "was dull". Canadian news -- and
news-makers -- were boring.

She compared our capital, Ottawa, with Rochester, a city which
I have never visited, but about which she had few kind words to
say.

Canada, she said, closing her notebook, had better improve its
public relations by being more controversial and more
aggressive, if Canadians want Americans to pay attention.

Her comments bothered me, because they were echoed by other
news media interviews during the day.

I told her I was not here to launch a trade war with our
biggest trading partner. The Canadian contingent was not
planning to bomb the embassies or take hostages. Nor were we
here to lob retaliatory hand grenades over U.S. actions on
softwood lumber, actions we feel to be bitterly unfair.

Much to her disappointment, I did not announce retaliatory
measures to knee-cap Americans for discriminatory oil import
measures or increases in customs user fees which are illegal
under the GATT.

Instead, I was here to discuss a historic initiative between
our two countries, an initiative which would strengthen and
protect the world's largest trading relationship, on which four
million Canadian and American jobs depend and which would open
up a new and exciting opportunities for economic growth in a
world vibrant with change, electric with challenge and
oppressed by the forces of protectionism. Canada and the
United States were joined in a formidable endeavour to take
both our countries into the 21st century through the
U.S.-Canada free trade negotiations now underway.

At that point, the reporter lost interest - her parting words
to me were: "Why do I feel I've been had by another
Canadian".

This brings me to my central point and my central challenge to
you.

The point I wish to make is that the trade negotiations between
our two countries are central to our economic future and in our
mutual benefit.