

Here in the Great Lakes area, you ship your exports abroad down the Saint Lawrence Seaway. Back where I come from, which is Sault Ste. Marie, those of us with any sense export ourselves to Florida for at least part of the winter.

Oh yes, the winter. We send you our Arctic cold fronts, slightly moderated on the trip south. You repay us in used rainstorms from the Gulf of Mexico.

Our continental commonality is everywhere around us. Your hockey is ours, our baseball is yours, and football belongs to both of us: the first college football game on record was between Harvard and McGill. And who does Peter Jennings belong to? Or Doonesbury? Or Donald Sutherland, or William Shatner, or Lorne Greene, or America's sweetheart, Mary Pickford? And where would the Lone Ranger be without his faithful companion, Toronto?

And so on and so on, into the purple sage. The point is that our peoples have so much in common -- in culture, in business, in family ties -- that it's hard for us to think of each other as foreigners. We do have our differences, but I think it's significant that the line on the map that divides us is now sometimes referred to as The World's Longest Undefended Platitude.

And yet, as you know, there have been ups and downs between us. Most of our differences are minor and temporary, the inevitable abrasions that come from our proximity and the sheer volume of business that goes on every day between us. But there have been real "downs", and they have usually been caused by the politicians.

You had "54-40 or fight", for example, and we had "no truck nor trade with the Yankees." More recently, you had the Nixon Doctrine and we had the "Third Option" -- an attempt by the previous government to move Canada away from the United States.

The attempt didn't work, of course. Business kept growing despite the Third Option, to the point where you now take three-quarters of our merchandise exports. But the Third Option ushered in a period of some suspicion across the border, and it was followed by such nationalist creations as the Foreign Investment Review Agency (better known as FIRA) and the National Energy Program.

I'm here to tell you that we have put that period behind us.