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I am very pleased on the occasion of this visit to New York to address the Centre for Inter-American Relations, an organization that has contributed much to better understanding between the several countries that share the vast territory of the Americas. Some Canadians may still think spontaneously of the relationship between the United States and the South American republics, when they hear of "inter-American relations"; but I am well aware that we have substantial interests in common, since you have increasingly concerned yourself in recent years with relations between Canada and the United States. At a time when they are looking more and more outwards -- towards Europe, towards Japan, towards the Third World -- Canadians are paradoxically becoming more aware, in my view, of their North American identity.

I would like to talk to you about one of the great success stories of American diplomacy, a story that stretches well over a century, a story which is not much touted in books on world crises and long-drawn out conflicts for the simple reason that it belongs to quite a different category of history books; I refer of course to Canada-American relations. At a time when many of you, like other Americans, may be in a questioning mood and even a mood of disillusionment about some of your country's involvements abroad, I take great pleasure as Canada's Secretary of State for External Affairs to remind you of this success story. Many Canadians get annoyed when their government expresses such views, because there have been so many occasions to formulate them that they have become clichés; so I will not refer to the "longest undefended border in the world" and the rest of the folklore on Canadian-American relations.

Yet the fact remains that the United States has been for a very long time the very best of neighbours for Canada; and I believe that Canadians have reciprocated. What matters is that, as the relationship between our two countries appears to be going through a more difficult phase, both Americans and Canadians can derive hope and comfort from a quite remarkable record of friendly resolution of their grievances.