

I am thoroughly delighted to be here in Bangkok in the distinguished company of so many Thai friends of Canada -- and, of course, Canadian friends of Thailand. I have been given the kind of welcome that only this noble land of smiles can extend, and I thank you for your warm hospitality.

I know it is a Thai teaching that respect should be given to those who deserve respect, and I would like to follow that precept today. In the short time I have been in Bangkok, I have seen a city of wonders, a city electric with energy, a city graced with the openness of spontaneous human warmth. These are qualities that command the respect and admiration of every visitor, and they have certainly captured mine.

An indication of the importance Canada attaches to its relations with Thailand is the fact that although our Government has been in office for only 18 months, I am the fourth member of the Cabinet to visit you. Industry Minister Sinclair Stevens was here last March, Revenue Minister Perrin Beatty in May, and Secretary of State for External Affairs Joe Clark in July. If this keeps up, you can expect one of us to show up every four months or so.

But I think that's appropriate. It was, after all, the Conservative Government of John Diefenbaker that accredited our first ambassador to Thailand, 25 years ago.

In the intervening years, Canada's political and humanitarian interest in Southeast Asia rapidly led to our awareness of Thailand's great economic potential, and we have sought ways by which we could help your country achieve your social and economic

objectives through development assistance. Today I want to share with you my thoughts on what is potentially the most critical economic, indeed political, problem of our time. It is a problem faced by Thailand and the ASEAN countries, and by the rest of the world, as well.

As many of you are aware, the world's trading environment has been growing increasingly protectionist. The late John Kennedy once said that "a rising tide lifts all ships." Indeed, over the past 40 years, under seven rounds of multilateral tariff reductions under the auspices of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, the tide of freer trade has lifted the economic growth of all nations. But protectionism now threatens to turn the tide from flow to ebb, and an ebbing tide will lower all our ships.

To make a slight change in the metaphor, 1986 will be a watershed year for the world's trading nations. The next round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations is scheduled to begin this year, and its objectives will be to turn back the protectionist tide, lower more trade barriers and tighten some of the loopholes in the GATT system. In my meetings here in Bangkok, I have had the opportunity to discuss our mutual interest in some of the issues that will be up for negotiation. I also confirmed Canada's willingness -- indeed, desire -- to act as host for the Ministerial Conference which will begin the negotiating process. We have suggested the ceremonies be held in Montreal in September.

Canada is deeply committed to the rejuvenation and expansion of the multilateral trading system. We see the next round of trade negotiations