



"TRAGEDY WILL BRING OUR TWO COUNTRIES CLOSER,"

says Canada's Ambassador to the United States

Canada World View:

Ambassador Kergin, when you took up your duties in Washington in October 2000, you certainly did not expect that, less than one year later, you would become a front-line witness to the kind of tragedy that struck the United States on September 11. What was your first reaction?

Michael Kergin: Like millions of other people in North America and around the world, I was absolutely horrified by the images of hijacked commercial jetliners hitting the twin towers of the World Trade

Center in New York. I was all the more shocked when reports came in that the Pentagon had also been hit—we could see the smoke from the Embassy—and that a plane that had crashed near Pittsburgh was originally aimed at the White House in Washington.

Canada World View:

Has September 11 changed the nature of the Canada-U.S. relationship in any way?

Michael Kergin: The Canada-U.S. relationship is as steadfast today as ever and the fundamentals of the relationship will remain the same. These include our enormous trade

(\$1.9 billion daily), the defence relationship, the very close cooperation on security issues, customs, immigration, intelligence sharing, and all those areas where we have a closer relationship with the United States than any other country in the world—although much more discreet in some ways.

However, as a result of the attacks, our relationship is likely to take a slightly different shape and to become even closer. What has changed since September 11 is that

What we need is not so much a perimeter of security as a zone of confidence around North America. —Ambassador Michael F. Kergin

we are now facing a long-term struggle to protect a way of life which many of us had taken too much for granted. Now we must work hard to maintain our open and multicultural societies against the threat of terrorism. This will be quite a test and teamwork will be the name of the game in rising to the challenge.

Canada World View: How will we achieve both openness and security? Are we talking about closer integration between our two countries or just closer cooperation on key issues such as terrorism, cross-border movements of people and goods, and common security?

Michael Kergin: The key to success will be ongoing cooperation and compatibility between regulatory and enforcement agencies on both sides of the border. On the security side, because we occupy the same continent and because we are both under the threat of an invisible, highly organized enemy which can strike out in very unpredictable ways against our populations, it is obvious our cooperation will increase.

Having said this, we don't need closer integration with the United

States to reinforce our common security. For example, we can still have our own legislation and regulations

relating to immigration, and the Americans can have their own legislation and regulations. They're not that different anyway. But the question is, are we sure that the people coming through are consistent with what both countries consider admissible? If there are doubts, by sharing information we can better screen out criminals and people associated with terrorists, which neither country wants.

The key question here is, are we enforcing our legislation and regulations in an efficient way? If we have doubts about each other, then we run the risk of having to put up walls at the border. But if we ensure, through