

I am here in Winnipeg to chair a meeting of Federal and Provincial Trade Ministers. We started last night and went on all of today, right through that great Canadian institution, lunch.

These meetings tend to get covered in the media only when they produce sparks, and then only the sparks are reported. But they have some importance for Canada.

We spent part of today, for example, discussing Canada's trade strategy, a plan that was approved by First Ministers in Regina in February of last year. Boring? Not at all, because before we introduced it Canada had no national trade strategy at all. The Federal Government and the Provinces went their own separate ways, with no coordination, some confusion and a great deal of duplication of effort.

Now we have agreed objectives, and we're making progress on them.



The main objectives of Canada's trade strategy are improving our trade competitiveness, strengthening our access to foreign markets and developing more effective international marketing. All of this involves many specific initiatives, including better and more efficient export financing, trade promotion campaigns -- including one month a year when we send our trade commissioners through Canada talking to independent business people about exporting -- and better information about trade opportunities throughout the world. We are creating, for example, a computerized information exchange on trade fairs and missions. We are also accommodating provincial trade officials at our embassies and consulates abroad.

Access to foreign markets is obviously a major and ongoing concern. One of the things we have been talking about last night and today is the two major rounds of trade negotiations Canada is undertaking this year, and I

thought you might be interested in a report on them, too.

You'll notice that I said two rounds. One of them usually gets upstaged. It's the one that John Turner and Ed Broadbent usually forget about. But for a country that depends as much on trade for its livelihood as Canada does, and in a world that is at once both increasingly interdependent and increasingly protectionist, the next round of multilateral trade negotiations under the auspices of the GATT is very important indeed.

I think most Canadians now know that the GATT is not something you're supposed to check at the door in a gangster movie. It's the acronym for the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, the organization that sets and enforces the rules for the international trading system. Something like 90 nations are either signatories to the GATT or conduct their trade in accordance with its rules, and the rules are updated every few years in multilateral trade negotiating rounds.



Since the GATT was created -- shortly after the end of World War II -- there have been seven such rounds, the last being the Tokyo Round concluded in 1979. The eighth round will start in September, at a meeting of cabinet ministers from all interested countries which will be held at Punta del Este, a seaside resort in Uruguay -- the same resort, by the way, in which the Alliance for Progress was launched 25 years ago.

With the Punta del Este Conference now less than three months away, a great deal of activity is going on around the world to prepare for it. At the moment, we're in the crucial stage of setting the agenda -- the priority items for negotiation. Last month, as you may have heard, trade ministers from many of the GATT countries -- big and small, industrialized and otherwise -- met in Seoul to consider the possibilities. What emerged from that meeting was, on the