

In February, I visited Bangladesh, one of the poorest of the world's nations. I went to fields where the simple installation of a water pump lets farmers harvest three crops a year, not just one. That is the first step out of dependence and poverty.

The economic lesson of the last ten years is how quickly Asia moves once it starts. Bangladesh is a long way from competing with our modern industries - but, to state the obvious, Japan isn't. Korea isn't. Nor are India, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore or the other nations of ASEAN.

The economic changes in Asia are dramatic and continuing. Their characteristic is a reaching outward - a realness to embrace change: to try pumps in Bangladesh; to encourage joint ventures in ASEAN; to introduce tax reform in Tokyo; even to experiment with market economics in China.

The question for North America is whether we are as willing to embrace change - whether we are as able to reach outward and adjust to a changing international economy. That may be harder for developed economies, because we are accustomed to prevailing; it is our system, and we are practiced in protecting ourselves with tariffs/and subsidies, and threats. Of course, these practices are not unknown in Asia, and, evidently, groups with interests to protect are as powerful in Japan or India as they are here. But most of Asia acknowledges the need to change its practices, and the question is whether enough North Americans will.

Canada was not formed by revolution; but we were formed by people seeking change, people who left homelands which held them back, people prepared to try something new. The fur-trading company which opened our country was called, formally, the "Company of Adventurers Trading into Hudson Bay". The company of adventurers - we have always thought that name captured the spirit of Canada. They reached out to opportunity and change. They did not draw back on themselves. That is the spirit in which Canada reached the Pacific. Our challenge is to ignite that spirit now to meet the competition, the opportunity for adventure and growth, that is at the heart of the Pacific region.