

"NEW DIRECTIONS"

Canada seeks "new directions" in relations with the United States, according to a senior member of the new Liberal government.

In his keynote address to the biennial convention of the Association for Canadian Studies in the United States (ACSUS) in New Orleans on November 20, Intergovernmental Affairs Minister Marcel Massé quoted from the Liberal Party election platform: "Our objective is... a mutually respectful relationship with the United States that balances our ongoing interest in having the Americans remain our closest friends, and our largest trading partners, with a desire to seek out new avenues of cooperation and dialogue made possible by the end of the Cold War and other new realities."

One of those new realities, the potential for increased Pacific trade, was addressed the same day by Prime Minister Chrétien at the Asia Pacific Summit in Seattle.

"The future is a lot more on the Pacific than on the Atlantic these days," Chrétien said in a CBC interview. "The economic growth is very high in all those countries. The potential is fantastic."

But Massé also emphasized the close economic and political ties between Canada and the United States.

Noting that the two countries conducted \$287 billion of trade in 1992, Massé observed that "no other bilateral trading relationship in the world matches that for intensity."

The U.S. receives more than 75 per cent of Canadian exports, while sending more than 20 per cent of its exports to Canada. As Massé noted, "More than 2 million jobs in each country depend directly on trade with the other."

Massé also looked ahead to the

NAFTA and the evident "potential of this new North American market... 360 million people and one-third of the world's output." He pointed out that "NAFTA marks the first trade agreement ever negotiated between two developed countries and a developing one."

He added, "Between States, liberalised trade is one of the best – or perhaps the best – strategy for sustained movement away from underdevelopment towards development."

Massé has been given responsibility for public service renewal, a mandate similar to Vice President Gore's task of reinventing government. "The public expects us to spend smart," Massé said. "They want government to be efficient and effective."

With respect to the rise of the regional parties in the October 25 elections, and the resulting shape of the next Parliament, Massé said: "We do not dismiss the rise of the Reform Party in the West, and the Bloc Québécois in Quebec, as mere accidents... We in the federal government will be challenged not only in Quebec, but elsewhere in Canada, to demonstrate that a united Canada is the best solution for all Canadians."

Looking ahead to a Parliament where the governing Liberals will be faced with the Bloc as the Official Opposition, Massé acknowledged the possibility that "regional tensions which gave rise to the Reform Party may only be accentuated." However, he went on to say, "I put my faith in the common sense of Canadians, as well as their love of country, to help counter that risk. I would also count on our Prime Minister. Mr. Chrétien is the most experienced Prime Minister to take office in Canada since Lester Pearson in 1963."

Massé stressed that the government's immediate priorities were economic and ruled out any constitutional debate in the near future.



"Canadians clearly are in no mood for further constitutional debate," he said. "They want economic renewal first, in Quebec, as elsewhere in Canada."

But the fact that the constitutional books remain closed, he stressed, does not "signal the end of the Canadian compromise."

He added: "Our government will begin the search for a new consensus, built on practical arrangements that will enable governments to work together more efficiently, and Canadians to live together more comfortably."

Massé lauded the work of ACSUS, which has grown from modest beginnings in the early 1970s, to an organization with real critical mass, as attested by its four-day New Orleans meeting, attended by 500 Canada watchers, who heard 300 presentations in 100 workshops.

"The statistics tell the story," Massé said. "Over 500 American universities and colleges offering courses related to Canada, 55 universities with centres or programs of Canadian studies, 25,000 students enrolled yearly in Canadian studies courses, over 1,000 professors teaching, researching and publishing about Canada."

The New Orleans meeting attracted prominent visitors from Canada, including former Prime Minister Joe Clark, former Manitoba Premier Howard Pawley, *Globe and Mail* columnist Jeffrey Simpson and Bell Canada Vice President Richard French. The next ACSUS convention is scheduled for the fall of 1995 in Seattle.

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