

## Hon. Flora MacDonald (Minister of Communications)

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**“What we are talking about is a commercial arrangement, not political union or cultural assimilation.”**

How does all this affect our culture? What does greater prosperity for Canadians mean for the cultural industries? It will mean a healthy cultural sector, healthier than ever before. It will mean greater purchases of cultural products by more Canadian than ever before. It will mean finding more jobs for Canadian creators and more opportunities to create than ever before. This is an opportunity that should not be lost.

Some voices have been heard decrying the effect such an agreement would have on our culture. Some critics have suggested that the Government would sell Canada short in order to strike a deal. I want to say that when such comments are made, it is a case of hoping that the sheer repetition of a falsehood will somehow convince Canadians of its validity. I want to underline the Government's repeated and steadfast commitment to the protection of Canadian culture.

We have stated from the outset of these talks that culture and communications are vital to the defence, the security and the economic health of Canada. Yet they are much more than that. We may try to quantify culture by using words such as “industries” and “products” as a kind of shorthand, but in fact we all recognize that the best of our

culture is intangible. It is our ideas and our emotions that make us Canadians. It is the spirit that underlies all our acts, that causes us to declare allegiance to our native land in countless and even routine ways time after time, day after day. It is our hopes and our aspirations, our way of doing things. It is our way of life. No Government would dare to ignore, could ignore, these realities. Certainly not this Government. This Government would not do that.

We need no prompting from opposition Parties or indeed from interest groups to make our position clear to the Americans. We have done that from the beginning. They know where we stand. Certainly they have heard from us often enough on this topic. As early as September 1985, the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) declared the following:

“Our political sovereignty, our system of social programs, our commitment to fight regional disparity, our unique cultural identity, our special linguistic character—these are the essence of Canada. They are not at issue in these negotiations.”

In December of the same year, the Prime Minister went on to say in Chicago the following:

“In the United States, you cast the net of national security over more areas than we, in Canada, we cast the net of cultural sovereignty more widely than you.”