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New Minister addresses Paris OECD ministerial meeting

Newly appointed Secretary of State for External Affairs Flora MacDonald joined other representatives of the Organization for European Co-operation and Development (OECD) for a ministerial meeting in Paris recently. Her first speech to an international body, which she delivered June 13, follows:

These are the early days of a new Canadian Government. I am very pleased that so soon after taking on my responsibilities I am able to share in the discussion around this table.

As members of the OECD we learn much from each other; we learn how others are tackling the problems that we must also tackle. We are reminded of the impact that our policies have on other countries. Here in the OECD we have learned both the habit and the discipline of frank discussion. These are the essential ingredients of constructive co-operation among countries.

The need for co-operative approaches to problems extends well beyond the membership of the OECD. Interdependence of our economies with those of the developing world is not a matter of choice. It is a fact of life. No country, no bloc of countries, can solve its economic problems in isolation. The foundations for broad co-operation in the world economy are not easy to build. The difficulties should, however, make us all the more determined to pursue discussion with the developing countries in a constructive and practical manner.

Gaps between nations an obstacle

UNCTAD V ended only ten days ago. That conference — one step in a process of discussion — had its successes and its failures. In part its failures resulted from difficulties in moving into frank discussion of common problems. In part they resulted from the gaps between developed and developing countries in their interpretation of key issues. These differences of view underlay, for example, discussion of the nature of the world's present economic difficulties and the role of governments in trying to solve them.

They affected discussion of the process of structural change and the ways in which governments might respond to it.

It is important to try to narrow these gaps in perspective. Studies by the OECD secretariat have amply demonstrated the increasing number and deepening significance of the economic links between the developed and the developing countries.

That they bring shorter-term problems of adjustment must also be recognized. Our policies and our co-operation with the Third World must be focussed in ways which recognize the problems we have but which look towards the benefits we all can share. It is often difficult to see through immediate problems to longer-term benefits. That is a fact of economic life, and of our lives as politicians. We must be on guard against short-term policy approaches that endanger openness and flexibility in the world economy. The successful conclusion of the multilateral trade negotiations is a major contribution to this objective. However, the persistence of slow economic growth and high levels of unemployment pose a continuing risk of actions that restrict or distort trade. The commitment of OECD member countries to the trade pledge has been an important constraint against such measures. There is a continuing need for the political commitment which the trade declaration represents. I, therefore, welcome its renewal.

Commitment to developing countries

We are not too conscious these days of the impact of energy problems on our economies and on the prospects for the world economy. I will touch today on one aspect only of the complex subject — the job which must be done to assist developing countries in meeting their needs for energy. Canada welcomed the

Twenty years ago yesterday...

The St. Lawrence Seaway was officially opened by Queen Elizabeth and former U.S. president, Dwight D. Eisenhower, at a ceremony in St. Lambert, Quebec.

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