

In Canada sovereignty is too often talked about in terms of insecurity vis-à-vis the United States. We are different and we act differently because our roots and our history differ. Our identity stems as much from the development of our British and French heritage as from the different perspectives that we have.

On the other hand, when we engage in free trade negotiations with the United States, we exercise our full sovereignty and acquire means of strengthening our economy. In short, we help to restore our power as a nation.

As the green paper that has been published indicates, we must realize that our traditionally strong economic sectors - raw materials, base products and energy - can no longer, owing to the declining prices and demand, serve as locomotives and ensure us in the future of the standard of living that we have become used to. We require boldness and large-scale initiatives to restore the competitiveness of Canadian business and the vitality of our industrial base. The government would be neglecting its basic responsibilities if it failed to examine in depth one of the most obvious possibilities that lie open to us, namely free trade with the United States.

Like the other provinces of Canada, Quebec has much to fear from American protectionism. I don't think anyone would argue with this. But this is not the main reason for our decision to begin negotiations. The immunity against American protectionism that would come from a free trade agreement is one of the benefits. But it cannot be the primary motive.

The trade negotiations with the United States are part of a global trade strategy that fits in with our plans for national development. It is not a matter of obtaining national or regional benefits from free trade with the United States only, but with the rest of the world. This is more than a series of continental negotiations. It is a worldwide affair that goes by the names of GATT and multilateral trade negotiations, of which the Canada-US negotiations are part.

It must be clearly understood that Canada is not looking for an agreement with the United States made by riding on the coattails of the multilateral system. Canada's competitiveness has been focussed on our compliance with international trade obligations. We have committed ourselves to contributing toward any multilateral solution to the problem of Third World