

A second set of Canada-United States' communications issues only now beginning to take shape concerns transborder data flow. This field is extremely complex and involves a number of related considerations, including national sovereignty, the free flow of information, commercial exchanges and privacy matters. In this, as in other areas, Canada's position of sharing a border with a country ten times its size in terms of population and economy means that we cannot afford the luxury of "letting problems take care of themselves". I can assure you, however, that Canadians will remain wedded to the notion that ideas know no national boundaries, and that information is, in the most real sense "the common heritage of mankind".

Perhaps in no field are the costs and benefits of having the United States for a neighbour more manifest than with regard to energy. Over the years our two countries have found energy co-operation fruitful. Net exports of Canadian light crude oil to the United States are now minimal, but "swaps" of considerable proportions still occur. Our exports to you of natural gas and electricity are increasing. Most striking of all, the massive northern gas pipeline project is moving forward despite organizational, financial and regulatory obstacles.

Pollution problems

This region, however, presents an instructive example of the costs to Canada of living nearby. While the region provides coal to Ontario's industries, it also produces emissions which are contributing substantially to the serious air pollution problem now affecting both countries. In a Memorandum of Intent signed recently in Washington, the Canadian and United States' governments committed themselves to taking action to reduce transborder air pollution. Some tough decisions will have to be made on both sides of the border to ensure that our energy and industrial requirements are not met at the expense of the environment — particularly in the light of the damage already inflicted on a large proportion of Canada's lakes by "acid rain".

From what I have said so far, it will be apparent that we consider that the Canadian-United States' relationship offers unique challenges and opportunities. Accordingly, it should not come as a surprise that we are unreceptive to schemes for continental economic integration which some would superimpose on the established pattern of bilateral links. As Prime Minister Trudeau stated in May during the visit to Canada of Mexican President José Lopez Portillo, Canada's interests would best be advanced by the continued strengthening of bilateral relations with our North American neighbours. Our relationship with the United States is too complex and rich to fit easily into an artificial "conceptual framework" more suited to the classroom than to the real world.

Constitutional revision

Before concluding, Mr. Chairman, I want to say a few words about a process now going on in Canada, with which some of you will be familiar. For a number of years we have been engaged in the difficult task of constitutional revision — a process that inevitably gives rise to a certain amount of disagreement about how we should go about it, how powers should be divided between the federal and provincial governments, how fundamental rights can best be protected, how the ownership of resources is to be determined and how we can best enhance the rights of minorities while, at the same time, strengthening national unity. As your own history has shown you, and indeed that of all federal states, the matter of where to strike the balance between the