

These are troubled times for the world. Economically, the Eighties and Nineties will not have much in common with the Fifties and Sixties, when we became convinced that rapid growth was as certain as the sunrise. Now, after having been psychologically conditioned to expect constant expansion, countries have to learn to manage the experience of economic compression.

Ottawa summit
meeting

That is another example of the instability which we must learn to manage. It will surely be one of the major preoccupations of the summit meeting here in Canada next month. In that perspective, the Ottawa summit could be more crucially important than any of its predecessors.

The impact of a summit on world problems is not immediate, largely because it is not meant to be a policy-making occasion. Its great value is that it permits the leaders of the principal industrialized democracies to share their analyses of problems, to strengthen their sense of common purpose, to assess where they can come closer together or move forward together.

Originally, the subject matter, as we know, was limited to economic issues. More recent summits have turned also to international political issues. The Ottawa summit will undoubtedly continue this trend, if only because of the preoccupations of the leaders themselves. Our meeting will derive added importance from the fact that most of the participants will be gathering together for the first time.

The international press will probably place a lot of emphasis on the ideological differences of leaders who stand on the right, or the left, or in the centre. It is true that the electorates of various countries have been sending very different signals to their respective governments. But I do not expect that we will be overly preoccupied at the summit by our differences; I think that we will be trying to chart a common course, whether on North/South questions, on approaches to East/West relations, or on international trade, for example. We shall be trying to identify the broad areas where our countries can proceed together towards shared goals, transcending the differences among our national policies.

All of the summit participants know that the world looks to them for leadership. From the Third World, the look will be skeptical. But I believe leadership is emerging, and that it will be sensitive to the priorities of our times. The test of the summit, therefore, should not be whether we come out of the meeting with specific decisions. The true test will be whether all summit participants believe that we are defining together the best approaches to the great issues of the day, based on the objectives and values which we share in common.

This summit will not only be one of the most difficult ever held, but will also be intentionally different. It is designed to be relatively unstructured, so as to give leaders the maximum opportunity to discuss the broad themes of crisis and opportunity, and how both can be effectively managed.

At Venice last year we agreed that we had to get back to these basic issues of international life, so as to strengthen our sense of common purpose. We are
