

STATEMENT DISCOURS

SECRETARY
OF STATE
FOR EXTERNAL
AFFAIRS.

SECRÉTAIRE
D'ÉTAT AUX
AFFAIRES
EXTÉRIEURES.



"CANADIAN IDENTITY AND FREE TRADE"

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Statement by the
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Secretary of State for
External Affairs

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There is one other element I want to touch on tonight. That is the question of what this agreement does for Canada as a distinctive country.

There have been some pretty extreme things said about the consequences for our sovereignty and for our independence, in this free trade arrangement. I quote the most extreme single statement and it is that made by Mr. Broadbent who actually suggested that this agreement could mean the end of Canada for the next twenty-five years.

Well, calmer people know that it isn't true. But calmer people nonetheless fear that this agreement may somehow limit our independence.

Ladies and Gentlemen the exact opposite will be the case. In my considered view, the view of someone who is responsible not simply for protecting but for exercising the independence of Canada in our foreign policy, this agreement when it comes into effect will increase the practical independence of Canada. It will extend our ability to pursue our own goals in the world. That will happen for two major reasons.

One of them is affordability; a fact that I referred to earlier. You will remember the incident of the Polar Sea. What was our problem with the Polar Sea. It wasn't a problem of water; it wasn't a problem of notice. It was a problem that we didn't have an icebreaker that could keep up with their icebreaker. Icebreakers cost hundreds of millions of dollars. Countries that can't afford icebreakers and want to claim sovereignty in their North have no means to assert that sovereignty. Yet, sovereignty is not inexpensive. Independence is not inexpensive. Being an independent nation as being an independent family or individual means being able to stand on your own. It means being able to have a sound economic base.

Take another example. One of the things we are proud of in our foreign policy is that in a world that is too often marked by wars, we are the peacekeepers. We are the people who have been imaginative enough to say that our army, our military personnel, will not only be reserved for use in cases of conflict, we will use them to try to stop conflicts or to try to keep peace where it has been established. As we are in the Sinai, as we are in Cyprus; as we are elsewhere in the world. Now, peacekeeping doesn't cost a lot of money, but it costs money, as everything does. If we are going to be able to pursue that little aspect of our independence as a country we have to be able to afford to do it.

Sovereignty isn't something you talk about, sovereignty is something you exercise. In order to exercise it you have to have the capacity.

That's the case, of course, in other fields. There might be people in the room here tonight who are interested in the CBC. You can't have the CBC unless you can pay for it.

There are certainly people in this room who are interested in the structure of social programs in Canada. You can't have a child care program unless you can pay for it.

There are certainly people in this room who are interested in maintaining the distinctive identity of this country. You can't maintain the distinctive identity of the country; you can't be sovereign; you can't be independent unless you have a strong economic base.

So that is one reason why this trade agreement will help us act more independently and more assertively in the world.

The other major reason is that nations assert their identity by reaching out in the world. By reaching out; and not by hiding out. Nobody ever became known by who they have hidden from. This country won't become known as an independent and strong nation because of the height of our wall, but we will be known by the distinctive nature of the contribution we have made internationally.

I am the Minister who has the responsibility in the final analysis, with the Prime Minister, of the foreign policy of this country. Let me just say that questions of the fears about our independence more often are raised in the context of foreign policy. Let me just draw your attention to some of the distinctive characteristics of this country, as expressed by this Government, in the field of foreign policy. In a field that is suppose to be threatened by our relations with the United States.

Look at what we are doing. See how distinctive, see how independent it is.

This September, in Quebec City, Canada hosted the summit of the Francophonie. That is a unique family of all the nations in the world that have in common the use of French. It's a family in which we as a country used to be less active. Why were we less active? We were less active because we had not resolved at home the place of the French language and the french fact in our country. We had not matured to the point where we could come to terms with the distinct society that Quebec provides. We hadn't matured to that point. Now we have. Because we have grown more mature at home we can act within a maturing world. That means that we can become a full member of the international Francophone community. With all of the contacts that gives us - contacts in trade, contacts into Egypt, into Africa, into other countries of the world; contacts in diplomacy - for those who forecast that Canada will become a pale imitation of the United States, let me make the evident point that the the United States is not a member of La Francophonie.

In October, the Prime Minister presided over a quite remarkable conference of another family of which Canada is the proud and leading partner. It is the family of the Commonwealth. Now, the United States was a potential member of the Commonwealth until 1776 when it decided to depart. The important point is that we stayed.

One of the realities of that is, not to give you a history lesson, among the distinctions between the society in the United States and the society in Canada, is that the United States in 1776 took a revolutionary decision to leave Europe behind; to cut off, to establish that kind of independence to be a light upon a hill; a beacon to other nations. Cutting itself off from other traditions. We have never done that.

What we have done is said that we respect those traditions and we want to plant them in a new continent. There is a difference of continuity between this country and our society and the United States and their society.

One of the examples is the family of the Commonwealth from which the Americans departed and in which we are playing, under Brian Mulroney, an increasingly active and leading role.

Who else is in that family of the Commonwealth? Canada is in it; Britain is in it; India is in it; Nigeria is in it; a number of other countries of increasing importance as the world matures and changes. That struck me as I watched the meetings of the Commonwealth Conference that there we had, in effect, the world at one table in the family of the Commonwealth. And, on a range of issues - on issues like international debt, apartheid, distance education - this country Canada, under Brian Mulroney, is playing a role of distinct leadership within that family which is not a reflection of the United States.

Let's take a look at other areas of the world. Let's take the argument that somehow our independence will be lost. Compare our position with the United States. Briefly look at Central America; look at Nicaragua. The United States has imposed a trade embargo on Nicaragua. We haven't. The United States assumes that the problems there are military and ideological. We assume that the problems there are social and economic. They are regarded as a source of a problem. We are regarded as potential peacekeepers. A fundamental difference. A difference that will be very clear when I go to Central America in two weeks' time representing Canada. A clear marked difference between this country and the United States. A difference that has not been difficult to pursue simultaneously with our pursuing a trade agreement with the Americans.

Look at southern Africa. For years, the Government of the United States followed a policy of so-called constructive engagement; trying to work with the Government of South Africa to encourage them to end apartheid. We have taken a different course. We have decided that the only way that system can be brought to an end is to follow a program of concerted pressure. That's an initiative John Diefenbaker began over a quarter a century ago. It then became becalmed. It has now been renewed again.

Today, in the newspapers we see that the first of the political prisoners in South Africa has been released. Do you think that was because of constructive engagement. It was because, in part, of a concerted pressure countries like Canada were able to exert. We have been following that different policy simultaneously with our pursuing a trade agreement with the United States.

Look elsewhere in Africa. Look to the question of famine relief. One of the proud times in the life of this nation was when so many Canadians came together to respond to the problems of famine in Ethiopia and in the Sahel.

What was one of the distinctions between our policy and the policy south of the 49th parallel? Their policy was based, in part, upon the ideological character of the countries where the famine occurred. In other words, if a crisis happens to occur in a country where there is a government they don't approve of their aid doesn't go there. Our aid goes where there is trouble.

That is a distinctive Canadian characteristic and a characteristic that we have been able to pursue simultaneously with our pursuit of a trade agreement with the United States.

Look at the United Nations system, a system which is essential to the effective functioning of this world. Take one agency, UNESCO (The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization). First of all, everyone agrees that UNESCO was run badly. Two or three years ago, because it was run badly, the United States withdrew; Great Britain withdrew; Canada was under pressure to withdraw. Canada didn't withdraw. We said rather than walking away from a system that is not working as well as it should be, we are going to stay in it. We are going to reform from within.

Again, in one of today's headlines there was an indication that Mr. M'Bow, the former Secretary-General, a man we think was associated with part of the problem, has decided that he is not going to pursue the election for third term. That means reform is possible. We didn't do it alone. But that reform was advanced because Canada stayed and pursued the path of reform from within.

Again, an area of real difference from our friends south of the 49th parallel - an area of distinctive Canadian policy pursued simultaneously with our pursuit of a freer trade arrangement.

Now my point here is not to demonstrate that we differ from the United States. For far too long Canadians pretended we could assert our identity by saying who we weren't. That age is over. What we want to do is assert our identity by saying who we are. We have no need any more of negative nationalism. What we need now is positive, calm, assertive Canadian nationalism that says we are a distinctive nation here in the northern half of North America. We have a different history and a different nature and we have different priorities. Those differences, far from withering with the benefits that come from free trade, are going to grow stronger because the nation will grow stronger.

I am exercising, as the Foreign Minister of this country, that difference. I am exercising that independent Canadian policy every day. We are doing it in fields like trade.

Those of you interested in agriculture and all of its aspects will know that one of the major problems we face now are protectionist policies mounted by the United States and by the European Community. One of the most effective responses that has ever been mounted to those policies has been the formation of the so-called Cairns Group of fair traders in agriculture. Canada was in the lead with Australia to ensure that we are able to organize our efforts to try to change the subsidy practices that cause such problems and cast such shadows on our grape industry, our wheat industry, and on other industries in this country.

That is an independent Canadian foreign policy. That is Canada - asserting our distinctive nature in the world.

Mr. Broadbent (if he can stand back from predicting the end of the country) wants to consider the differences between Canada and the United States. I wouldn't suggest that he ask Bob White, but I could suggest people whom he could ask.

He could ask Rajiv Gandhi whether there is a difference between Canada and the United States. Rajiv Gandhi would tell him about the difference.

He could ask Robert Mugabe, the Prime Minister of Zimbabwe, about the differences between Canada and the United States. Prime Minister Mugabe would tell him the difference.

He could ask Margaret Thatcher if there is a difference between Canada and the United States and Margaret Thatcher would tell him the difference.

He could ask Francois Mitterrand about the differences between Canada and the United States and Francois Mitterrand would tell him the difference.

We are a country whose distinctive nature is far better known beyond our borders than it is at home. I think it is time for people who hold public office and public leadership in this country to stop pretending that we are not a nation in our own right. They should start to recognize that there is a distinctive characteristic to this country that is known and respected around the world and it will be far healthier if it is known and respected here at home.

One of the things that will allow us to do this is to proceed with far more confidence into the kind of trading arrangements we simply have to enter into with the United States and with the world.

One of the things that strikes me as a result of all of the discussions I have had about the trading arrangement with the United States is that Canadians who are actually out competing - businessmen who are looking for markets; entrepreneurs who are looking for opportunities - they are not afraid of the United States. The people who are afraid are the people who have never tried. That is true of a lot in life.

The fact is that, in almost any field, this country has nothing to be afraid of. This is not a second-class country. We had a little trouble in hockey for a while but we are beating the Soviets again.

What we can do in sport we have done in science; we are doing in the arts; we can do in business; we can do in field after field. We should stop selling this country short. We should recognize that this is a first-class, world-class country that can take on the competition and it can prevail.

One last point - I want to make the point about the nature of risk in the creation of this country Canada. I indicated earlier that we did not start with revolution. But we did start with a series of individual decisions by individual people who could have stayed in the land and cultures they came from where it might have been more comfortable, although there would have been much less opportunities.

Instead, they left the comfort of what they knew and were prepared to embark upon great adventures.

One of the historic Canadian companies - now known as the Hudson Bay Company - didn't start with that name. The name it started with, the name in its charter, is the Company of Adventurers Trading in the Hudson Bay. That really catches the idea of what this country has been about.

There would never have been a Canada if people were so timid that instead of looking for opportunities to exploit, they looked for walls to hide behind. There would never have been a Canada if we had that kind of timidity at the core of our national character. But we didn't have. We had an opposite instinct at the core of our character. Indeed, we had it to a greater degree than they did.

We settled the tough half of North America. It was far easier to build Virginia than it was to build Ontario. It was far easier to build California than it was to build British Columbia. We have settled the winter half of North America. We took a piece of geography that was full of resources, but full of daunting obstacles and we weren't daunted by the obstacles.

The history of this country has been to reach over those obstacles and to recognize that we can prevail if we seek to prevail.

That's really what is at issue now as we look at the trade question. It is very important that the details of the agreement be read. That's why we put it before a Committee. That's why we brought the provinces in. That's why we have embarked on the most extensive public information campaign that has ever been seen in the development of an international agreement. That's why we have done all of those things.

Those details are very important because those are the details that your lawyers, your accountants and your salesmen are going to have to live with.

But the other thing that is important is the spirit that inspires what we do. Are we going to be a country that looks for walls to hide behind or are we going to be a country who looks for opportunities to reach out to?

I think we are going to be a country in keeping with the Canadian tradition that reaches out for opportunities.

Thank you.