



Statements and Speeches

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CANADA'S OBLIGATIONS AS A NUCLEAR POWER

Remarks by Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau to the Canadian Nuclear Association, Ottawa, June 17, 1975.

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The accomplishments of this country in coming to grips over the years with distance and space and climate are great by any standard. The achievements of Canadian science and technology in the fields of transportation and communication and energy are unquestionably great. In many of these areas every other country in the world looks to us as the setter of standards, as the leader.

In largest measure, these accomplishments are the product of a partnership between government and private enterprise of a type unknown in many other countries. I'm proud of the system and exceedingly proud of some of the results. We have long since frankly acknowledged in Canada that our country is so large, our challenges so many, and our population so small that we have no option but to pool our resources, first for survival in a hostile climate, then for the attainment of difficult goals.

It's not easy -- this co-operative approach. Not easy from the point of view of industry, not easy from the point of view of government. It would be much easier -- and there would be less need for such an approach -- were Canada in possession of a domestic market several times larger, and an industrial base of sufficient size to service that market. It would be much easier, too, if the world were less interdependent, if governments in so many other countries felt less need to involve themselves so prominently in trade, investment, economic and other areas once regarded as the territory of the private sector. It would be much easier if we lived in a world where science had not yet removed so many of the great mysteries that once defined and limited the power of men. It would be easier if, there would be less need if -- but "ifs" are not available to us. History, it has been said, is not written in the subjunctive.

Which is to say that we must live with reality. It is reality that tells us that seldom elsewhere is there such a confluence of events and interests and issues as in the nuclear field. Here, we find ourselves in possession at the same moment of technology of the most revolutionary and serviceable kind, technology that has proved to all the world Canada's competence and leadership. Here, too, we are

engaged in a mineral industry of immense economic benefit, yet of staggering production costs and problems. And here we face dangers of the most awesome sort, exceeding in risk and potential destruction any knowledge ever possessed by human beings.

With stakes so valuable and knowledge so changing, with consequences so sweeping and issues so baffling in their moral and ethical application, there should be little wonder that answers are not always available, or not always acceptable when they are available.

Nuclear activity is one of the many in which man is now engaged that, if not made susceptible to reason and discipline, could become ultra-hazardous, even cataclysmic. All our joint wisdom and all our dedication will be required in order to ensure that mankind enjoys the benefits of this activity without suffering from its perils. Canadian Government nuclear policies have attempted to steer this course. Your understanding and support have been as welcome as they have been crucial, for we are traversing unmapped terrain where a wrong turn could engulf us in holocaust. We have no alternative but caution because our tolerance for error and our ability to reverse miscalculation are minimal.

We have three obligations as a nuclear power. Those obligations form the basis of Canada's nuclear policy. I'd like to talk about them.

The first of these obligations finds its origins in the character of Canadians, and in those circumstances of wilderness and weather that contributed to that character. We are a society that has not forgotten its frontier origins. We are a people who have experienced the torment of need, who understand the benefits of sharing. It is inconsistent with that experience and that understanding that we should now deny to the less-developed countries of the world the opportunity to gain a hand-hold on the technological age. It is inconsistent with the character of Canadians that we should expect those hundreds of millions of persons living in destitute circumstances in so many parts of the world to wait patiently for improvement while their countries proceed painfully through the industrial revolution.

They should not be asked to re-invent the wheel. There is no reason why such great machinery innovations of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as the steam-engine, the spinning-jenny or the Bessemer furnace need be introduced into the experience of a country before its people are permitted the advantages of twentieth-century scientific wonders. Surely, if we are ever to eliminate the immense disparities that now separate the living standards of rich and poor,

it will be necessary to make available to the disadvantaged every technique at our disposal.

It would be unconscionable under any circumstances to deny to the developing countries the most modern of technologies as assistance in their quest for higher living standards. But, in a world increasingly concerned about depleting reserves of fossil fuels, about food shortages, and about the need to reduce illness, it would be irresponsible as well to withhold the advantages of the nuclear age -- of power reactors, agricultural isotopes, cobalt beam-therapy units.

All these devices Canada has. All these devices the world needs. If we are serious in our protestation of interest and our desire to help, if we are honest when we say that we care and intend to share with those less well-off than ourselves, if we are concerned about the instability of a world in which a fraction of the population enjoys the bulk of the wealth -- in any of these events we cannot object to the transfer of advanced technology. Technological transfer is one of the few, and one of the most effective, means available to us of helping others to contribute to their own development. It forms one component of the program for action for a new international economic order adopted by the United Nations and endorsed so enthusiastically by the vast majority of the countries of the world. It remains as a cornerstone of Canada's economic-assistance policy and the programs under that policy that we operate in the UN, in the Commonwealth, in L'Agence francophone, in the Colombo Plan, and elsewhere.

Canadian Governments since the Second World War have been committed, without exception, to assisting the less-advantaged. That commitment cannot be discharged by help of poor quality or low value. Nor would Canadians permit that. Unless the disadvantaged countries are given the opportunity to pass out from the medieval economic state in which many of them find themselves and into the twentieth century of accomplishment and productivity, the gap between rich and poor will never narrow. In that process, we must help them to leapfrog the industrial revolution. Nuclear technology is one of the most certain means of doing so. In instances, therefore, where electric power from nuclear sources is cost-effective, where the advantages of nuclear science are of demonstrable benefit, we should be prepared to share our knowledge and our good fortune. That is why Canada chose, 20 years ago, to assist the world's most populous democracy in overcoming its desperate problems of poverty. We can be proud, as Canadians, of our co-operation with India. The decision taken by Prime Minister St. Laurent to enter a nuclear-assistance program with India was a far-sighted and generous act of statesmanship. It goes without saying, of course, that our nuclear transfers

should be subject to safeguards always; and that is my next point.

The second of the three obligations underlying the Government's nuclear policy arises out of the dangerous nature of the improper uses to which nuclear materials can be put either by accident or design. For that reason the Canadian Government is obligated to Canadians and to all persons everywhere to assure that nuclear devices, materials or technology from Canadian sources not be used for explosive or illegal purposes. This is done through the application of safeguards.

Familiarity with nuclear processes and confidence in their peaceful benefits must never blind us to the destructive capability of a nuclear explosive device or the politically-destabilizing effect that can be caused in certain circumstances by the mere existence of such a device. For these reasons, this second obligation must be regarded as no less important than the first. For, no matter how sincere is our commitment to equality throughout the world, no matter how successful is our progress towards it, our achievements will be Pyrrhic should nations be unable to avoid the inhumanity of nuclear-weapons usages or threats.

It is an enigma that surely no sane observer could untangle -- this nuclear threat to the very continuance of the human race that has become so commonplace as to be boring, that is often regarded in some perverse fashion as a symbol of national accomplishment and wellbeing or as a manifestation of sovereignty.

No nation should be envious of another because it possesses the ability to kill hundreds of thousands of human beings in a single explosion. No nation should treasure its power to trigger a nuclear war. And no nation should misinterpret Canada's opposition to proliferation as envy of foreign accomplishments.

Canada is not envious of any country that is able to achieve new scientific plateaux for the benefit of its people nor, to my knowledge, is any other industrialized state. If a newly-independent nation is able to leap in a single generation from the stage of steam to the age of the atom, Canada applauds. If that leap was accomplished through Canadian assistance, we are proud. But the vault must be genuine, and the new plateau must be firm. Nuclear projects have proved their benefit to man in dozens of ways -- ways well known to most of you -- but no one has yet demonstrated convincingly that there are practical, economic, peaceful benefits of nuclear explosions. Not Americans, not Russians, not Indians. If at some time in the future such benefits be demonstrated, then they should be made available on an internationally-accepted basis, under appro-

appropriate safeguards, and through a UN agency, to all countries declared by international experts able to benefit, Canada is opposed to any peaceful nuclear explosions not conducted in accordance with the provisions of the NPT. In doing so, we are not imputing motives; we are attempting to avoid the subjunctive.

These are the reasons why Canada signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty, why we voiced such criticism of the Indian test, why I seize every opportunity to garner the support of world leaders for a tightening and an extension of safeguards and controls. These are the reasons why we shall continue to do so.

Each one of us shares a common desire -- to turn over to our children a world safer than the one we inhabit, a world not subject to nuclear blackmail or coercion, a world not frightened by insidious terrorist acts and not threatened by imbalances in the equilibrium of nature. Nor is this the only desire we share. There is, I know, still another -- that in years to come we shall be able to face our children and assure them that we did not lack the courage to face these difficult questions, did not lack the stamina to pursue the correct solutions.

In the past several months, I have argued the importance of a strengthened safeguards regime with some 40 heads of government -- around a conference table, as at the Commonwealth meeting in Jamaica, and across a desk, as with each of the nine leaders I have visited in Europe and the several that have come to Ottawa. The Secretary of State for External Affairs addressed the Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference in Geneva last month -- and was the only foreign minister to do so. Senior government officials have travelled tens of thousands of miles in an effort to tighten existing safeguards and to broaden both the scope of their impact and the breadth of their application by supplier countries. We have raised the standard of our safeguards -- with full support for the International Atomic Energy Agency, which administers them -- to the point that they are the toughest in the world (and we are constantly on the alert for ways to make them more practical, more effective). We impose, as well, still another constraint -- we refuse to engage in nuclear co-operation without an explicit exclusion of explosive uses.

I do not pretend that the present international regime for the inspection and detection of nuclear cheating is foolproof. I am painfully aware that the NPT is yet far from universally supported. I am deeply conscious of the responsibilities that devolve on Canada as a world leader in the peaceful application of nuclear energy. But to those who contend that there is an incompatibility between these two obligations I have mentioned - assisting the less-developed countries and preventing nuclear proliferation --, I remind them that

the statute of the International Atomic Energy Agency, the world's nuclear policeman, charges the Agency to spread "throughout the world" peaceful applications of the atom "bearing in mind the special needs of the under-developed areas". Canada is an active member of the IAEA and does its utmost to ensure the successful attainment of those two objectives.

These, then, are the first two of the obligations that form the foundation of Canada's nuclear policy -- an obligation to the have-not countries of the world and an obligation to the people of the world. The third obligation is to our own people. This obligation takes several forms: the provision of safe sources of energy, the preservation of the environment, the fostering of a competitive Canadian industry in all its stages -- of exploration, mining, processing, fabrication, design and sales.

Tonight, I'd like to emphasize for a moment one aspect of that obligation -- to Canadian industry -- and the several ways in which it is discharged. One method is through the repeated declaration of the Canadian Government of its conviction of the fundamental worth and demonstrated superiority of the CANDU reactor over any other design. Another is the decision of the Federal Government to assist financially in constructing first CANDU units within each provinces. Still another is the wide range of research, developmental and marketing programs funded and pursued by Atomic Energy of Canada Limited and supported abroad by all the facilities of the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce and the Department of External Affairs.

The success of the CANDU conception is attracting increasing attention world-wide because of its safety record, its respect for the environment, its reliability, its efficient fuel utilization, and its economy of operation. The remarkable performance of the Pickering installation will lead, I have little doubt, to the adoption of this Canadian-developed technology in a large number of countries abroad.

The Government is no less interested in safe, tamper-proof facilities than it is in assurance that reactors cannot purposely be diverted to non-peaceful ends. We must protect ourselves against accident and criminal elements. A contribution of significant proportion has recently been made by Canadian industry in the design of a spent-fuel shipping-cask incorporating novel shielding and physical properties.

As nuclear-generated power-plants have increased in number world-wide, partly in response to higher fossil-fuel costs, partly out of concern for continuing security of oil and gas supply, the demand for uranium has undergone a startling change. After a depression

in world uranium prices lasting almost 15 years, there has suddenly occurred a dramatic shift from a buyer's to a seller's market. During the 1960s, exploration programs necessary for the location of new mineral formations had slowed down and, in many instances, ceased altogether. Throughout this period, federal funds ensured the preservation in Canada of a nucleus of the uranium-production industry. As demand-pressure grew in the 1970s, however, it became apparent that further help was needed to ensure adequate exploration. Federal response was twofold. Funds were provided a year ago to the Crown corporation Eldorado Nuclear Limited to permit it to re-enter the uranium-exploration field. More recently, the Federal Government initiated a uranium-reconnaissance program to permit a systematic general exploration of Canada in order to point up promising areas for detailed exploratory studies. The Government expects that the change in world price and the federal stimulus to exploration will serve to attract from Canadian sources fresh equity investment in the Canadian uranium industry, a growth industry with special incentives and benefits for Canadian investors.

We have in Canada all the elements required to continue into the twenty-first century this country's prominent position as a world leader in the nuclear industry. In Canada uranium is in relative abundance. In Canada are the technical skills necessary to maintain our lead in the design, construction and supply of efficient nuclear reactors and heavy-water production plants.

Several years ago I asked Canadians to pay less attention to the siren song of buying back investment now held in foreign hands. I argued then, and shall continue to do so, that buying back the past was not the answer -- that we should, instead, ensure that industries of the future were developed by Canadians in the Canadian interest. The nuclear industry was foremost in my mind as a future industry, and as one that will require immense amounts of capital.

I am proud of the accomplishments of Canadians in nuclear activities. The names of Canadian pioneers in this field are known and respected world-wide -- men of the stature of MacKenzie, Steacie, Keys, Thode, Lewis and Gray. I am confident that the imagination and discipline displayed by them are found today in large measure throughout Canada. With men of that stature, with a vital nuclear element in the private sector, with a continued degree of co-operation between government and industry, I have not the slightest doubt that we shall be able to discharge with success that third obligation I have just discussed with you. In doing so, we shall be performing a service not just for Canadians but for all mankind, for we shall be contributing to the safety and reliability of devices that have proved again and again the immense benefits that they confer in such diverse fields

as medicine, agriculture and industry. There will be unquestionably a broader acceptance of nuclear facilities, including power-generation, in a world confident that safeguards and protective routines are of undoubted adequacy.

Canada enjoys immense respect round the world. It is respected for its scientific and industrial achievements in the nuclear and other fields. It is respected for the competence and tenacity of those officials who represent us in our dealings with other governments. But above all it is respected because of the attitude Canadians display towards those less affluent than themselves. We have achieved in this country a high standard of human conduct -- an acceptance without question of the right of individuals to live in dignity, to enjoy freedom of thought and expression and movement, to husband that most priceless of all human attributes, hope for a future of fulfilment and satisfaction for ourselves and our children.

It is that ingredient of hope, and it is that sense of the future, that underlie Canadian nuclear policies and have led the Government to formulate the three obligations I have recited to you tonight:

By caring for others, by sharing what we possess and others need, we are fostering the spirit of hope and easing the quest for social and economic justice now so prevalent in so many countries.

By insisting on the most stringent of safeguards and precautions we are attempting to ensure that the nuclear genie will not escape from the constraints demanded of it and bring suffering to future generations.

By encouraging Canadians to engage in what they do best, by supporting initiative and competence in technologically-advanced fields, we are contributing confidence to a new Canada, one that I have described as being on the threshold of greatness.

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