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Notes for a speech by
the Right Honourable
Joe Clark, Secretary of
State for External Affairs,
at the Center for International
Studies, University of
Toronto

TORONTO

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I am very pleased to be with you this evening at the Center for International Studies.

I cannot think of a more appropriate setting to discuss international institutions and their meaning for Canada. Some of the best thinking in Canada on the subject of multilateralism has been generated within this Center. Over the years this University has sent many able men and women to Ottawa to help formulate and execute Canada's foreign policy. You have also lent your expertise and personnel to those very international institutions we are here to discuss. I hope for many more years of fruitful collaboration between the Center and the Canadian government.

In the last decade or so we have come through a double recession, economic and political. The current economic recovery can easily short-circuit our memory of how tough recent times have been. The major economic strains of the 1970's -- the oil shocks, the surging inflation -- were succeeded by the worst recession since the 1930's. The world had to grapple with very high unemployment, serious structural adjustment challenges, massive deficits, and protectionism. These were of such virulence that the whole global trade and payments system seemed for a time at risk. The Third World faced a major debt crisis, and the North-South Dialogue ran into formidable obstacles.

We have come through the worst of this. But in the process we have become more alert to the phenomenon of rapid change, more aware of the complexity of major economic issues, more aware of the imperatives of cooperation.

We have also survived what I think of as a major political recession. Detente broke down, a period of very considerable tension took its place, and momentum seemed to be gathering for a major escalation in the arms race. Regional conflicts smouldered or raged openly.

But good sense prevailed and the superpowers pulled back from the brink. With strong Allied encouragement, the U.S. offered dialogue, and in due course under a reinvigorated leadership the Soviet side responded. That dialogue must be maintained.

This turbulent decade had marked effects on how we view international institutions, and on how we make use of them. Old institutions creaked with an overload of demands and rhetoric. New groupings burst into life. Some Canadians wondered whether this country or the institutions we helped build after the war still counted for very much in a new world.

That period of doubt is over. In my view our interests and our influence are global, and our diplomacy is among the most modern and innovative in the world. We have learned that the real art in managing our current international relations resides in skillful deployment of our resources among all the available channels -- broad multilateral, plurilateral, bilateral. We have a tremendous stake in performing this balancing act well.

In the current world, we have to be adept -- as a considerable power -- in forming fluid, issue-specific working relations with other countries. We have to draw upon our wealth of affiliations, forming coalitions of common cause as the need arises. This means targeting the most appropriate organizations and being very clear about our agenda. Perhaps the newness of the "New Internationalism" resides partly in this -- the unprecedented imperative for multiple but highly selective initiatives, the weaving of coalitions in an increasingly complex web of institutions.

We have been placing special emphasis on the smaller or restricted forums in which we enjoy membership. This is where some of the most creative institution-building and refurbishing of recent years has occurred. We have made maximum use of our remarkable range of connections that history has given us to participate in this process. There is simply no other country in the world that belongs to this particular combination of restricted forums: Summit, OECD, G-7, Quadrilateral, NATO, Commonwealth, La Francophonie. No other major power has our institutional reach.

Let me speak of two of those institutions tonight: Commonwealth and the Economic Summit. My own real exposure to the Commonwealth began in Lusaka in 1979. That was a summer of three international meetings - the first Tokyo Summit, the Lusaka Commonwealth Conference, and the meeting in Havana of the Neutral Non-Aligned. Many countries went to two of those meetings. No one was at all three. Tokyo and the Havana meetings were, in effect, at different ends of the

debate about development. What struck me at Lusaka was that countries which disagreed at long distance worked together in the Commonwealth - and worked, quite literally, to change the world. That was when agreement was found on Zimbabwe - and where a network of smaller agreements drew different societies together. I could mention for example, the Management for Change Programme and the Industrial Development Unit.

In the nature of things, Progressive Conservative Governments do not have a wealth of international experience. Perhaps that lets us take more seriously the things we have learned. We came to office, in 1984, believing that the Commonwealth was more than a curiosity shop of odd traditions and former colonies. We regard it as a modern coalition, with deep political real roots, a coalition that should be put to work.

The desperate raids by South Africa, on its Commonwealth neighbours, cast a long shadow over the work of the Eminent Persons Group. But they should not obscure the fact that this unlikely aggregation - a Yoruba Chief, an Anglican archbishop, a former Tory Chancellor, had become recognized the world around as the most likely instrument to bring profound change to South Africa. It is often noted that the Eminent Persons Group was born in compromise. So are most things that work. What is less noted is that it emerged in goodwill, after genuine discussion among countries which deeply disagreed about the best response to apartheid.

Strong views on apartheid are a dime a dozen. You find them in Pretoria; you find them in Ottawa. What is much more rare is an instrument which offers some tangible prospect of leading to change. In the case of Zimbabwe, the Commonwealth proved itself unique in that capacity. It was achieving some success in South Africa - too much success for Pretoria's comfort. Whatever the next steps against apartheid, the Commonwealth is clearly established as an institution that works - one in which Canada has unusual influence, if we choose to use it.

The Economic Summit has come into its own over the past decade. I can't emphasize strongly enough the significance of this institution, the key symbol of the unity of the industrial democracies and a vital stimulus to policy consultation and concertation by those nations. The Summit has played an important role in macroeconomic coordination, in energy policy, and in holding the line against protectionism during the dark days of the recession. The significance of the Summit has extended well beyond economics to a wide range of political issues, where common approaches have been achieved with impressive frequency.

It is highly significant that the Summit process involves Japan, in virtually the only forum where the Japanese leader and his major Western counterparts can meet as a small group.

There were real achievements once again at the Tokyo Summit -- the Declaration on Terrorism reflects a categorical resolve by the Summit Seven to fight what has become an international scourge, through stepped-up international cooperation.

I was most encouraged by the collective positive economic assessments that came out of the Summit -- on the margin that exists for a further reduction of interest rates, on the prospects for further growth. At Tokyo we secured agreement on the formation of the new Finance Ministers' Group of Seven that will include Canada. This body will give us the opportunity to participate more assertively in decisions that shape the international economic system and affect our interests. There will be no more "Plaza Hotel" meetings that exclude Canada.

For the first time, at Tokyo, the Summit focussed on the paradox of promoting freer trade while heavily subsidizing agriculture. Prime Minister and six of his Ministers met with Farm Leaders three days before the Tokyo Summit. At Tokyo, we made it very clear that an agricultural trade war would imperil our vital interests.

The Tokyo Summit gave further impetus toward the launching of a New Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations. Canada wants the New Round to start in September. I want to stress the importance of this major multilateral opportunity -- an opportunity not just to stand firm on protectionism but to push it back. We must take advantage of the current recovery to strengthen the trading system, to ensure that it promotes prosperity for the many instead of protection for the few.

Thus the Summit leads and prods, but it supports more broadly-based institutions - ranging from the OECD to GATT to the IMF.

There have been other notable recent examples of plurilateral initiatives. Canada played a major role in the first Francophone Summit this year, a milestone in the development of an organization that is only beginning to realize its great potential. La Francophonie is becoming genuinely plurilateral, revitalized by the respective strengths and diplomatic skills of its member states.

We have also seen the burgeoning of regional groups and initiatives in recent years: Pacific Economic Cooperation and Pacific Basin Economic Council in which we participate; ASEAN and Contadora, which we strongly support; South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation which we are doing our best to encourage.

There are two striking things about these organizations or initiatives. First, they represent attempts by limited members of nations to grapple with common concerns. Membership is quite naturally not universal but defined by a common task orientation, or region, or development level. Second, these newer plurilateral organizations involve Canada to a remarkable degree, whether as active participant or as supporter.

That is, of course, entirely consistent with Canada's commitment to the universalist principle embodied in the U.N.. The Government made it clear in our first Throne Speech that broad multilateralism remains the cornerstone of our foreign relations.

Harsh criticism of the United Nations -- both in the General Assembly and in the specialized agencies -- produced what the Secretary-General described as a crisis of multilateralism. Fortunately most member nations believe that the UN remains essential, if sorely in need of self-examination and renewal. Members faced three options on UNESCO: pulling out, accepting the status quo, or demanding reform. Almost all chose the third. Certainly that was Canada's deliberate choice - a signal that we intend to be in the forefront of nations that support and reform the United Nations.

NATO is an example of an older institution that has survived the past decade remarkably well. Serious problems confronted the Alliance during this period. There were differences over allied approaches to Afghanistan and Poland, there were differing views over how to respond to Soviet ploys in arms control and how to deal with terrorism. The Alliance held together and was strengthened by these challenges. There was a growing recognition that differing views must be discussed candidly. The alternative to frank discussion clearly was the avoidance of key issues, and that the Alliance simply could not do. The Halifax ministerial is going to be a meeting driven by the real need to consult rather than by the imperative of generating a communiqué.

The conclusion I draw from all of this is that our well-established international institutions have done more than survive the turbulent events of the past decade -- they have contributed essentially to the managing of major issues.

This is important to the world stability and to international understanding. It also illuminates a major instrument of Canadian policy. As a large rich country, becoming more mature and secure about ourselves, we, naturally, could have some modest influence all by ourselves. But, the point is that we are not all by ourselves and that is a central truth about Canada. In our domestic arrangements, we are succeeding finally in establishing a sense of national community that thrives on the differences of our parts. That same respect for others - that sense of a world community - is at the root of the best of our foreign policy traditions. It is at the root also of that distinctive Canadian identity whose pursuit so preoccupies all our analysts.

To reveal a State secret, we live beside an energetic superpower. Most of its people speak a variant of one of our languages. Most of its citizens, in their enthusiasm about themselves, think very little about us. As it happens, on many basic questions, Americans and Canadians agree. But on some of the questions most important to us, we have been successful in asserting and maintaining our differences.

That is evident in our different approaches to international development, to progress in Central America, to the Government of Ethiopia, indeed to South Africa. But it is evident, most importantly, precisely in the attitude we take to international organizations and co-operation. It may be that powers our size have no choice but to work within international organizations, and to exercise our influence that way. Or that instinct for consensus may be a more fundamental part of the Canadian character. Whatever its causes, making the world work together has become the Canadian vocation. This is a challenging time to be following it.

There is all kinds of latitude for reappraisal and creative thinking in the way we set priorities, in how we approach key institutions, relationships, and problems. In coming days the Special Joint Committee on Canada's International Relations will complete its full year of work and table its report. I look forward with the greatest anticipation to the Committee's presentation of public concerns, to its analysis, to its recommendations. We are about to learn, through this unique consultative process, what internationalism really means to Canadians.

In closing, let me congratulate the Centre for its choice of the New Internationalism as the theme of this Conference. Your deliberations will be of the greatest interest to us as we prepare to host in Canada during 1987-88 three of the most important Summits: the Francophone, the Commonwealth and the Economic.