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Address by the Right
Honourable Joe Clark,
Secretary of State for
External Affairs, to the
Couchiching Institute on
Public Affairs.

COUCHICHING
August 11, 1985

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are a country of some twenty-five million extremely fortunate people, spared the poverty and disease that ravage most of the developing world. We are also free of the deep psychological scars of having had our own community torn by war, as Uganda has been; and the two Koreas, and the two Germanies, and Russia have been; as the old states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, who were "converted" to Marxist-Leninism by external conquest, have been; and as the United States, after Vietnam, had been.

We are the world's eighth-largest trading nation, with the human and physical resources to grow stronger. Our people have an interest in almost every question in the world. As a nation of immigrants, we come from Sri Lanka and Lebanon, from the Punjab or El Salvador, from Zimbabwe and boats bobbing in the China Sea. As a nation of traders and missionaries, we maintain Jesuit schools in Ethiopia and India and Bhutan, we run leper colonies near Yaouande, our salesmen sell computer software to the Japanese and rapid transit systems to the Mexicans; our investors are constructing bull-dozers in Thailand; and our developers are building oil towns in deserts, and irrigation systems almost anywhere there is dry land.

We can also claim to have created the modern Commonwealth. We practically invented United Nations peacekeeping, and have honed our rare skills as peacekeepers in Indochina, in Cyprus and in the Sinai. We helped establish the multilateral trading system, and are currently one of its most creative defenders. We are, arguably, the developed country most trusted in the Third World, not because we utter moral verities, but because we send Canadian specialists to remote parts of Thailand to teach villagers to inoculate chickens against disease; because our doctors and nurses in that country work the Khao-I-Dang camp hospitals where refugee children come daily with limbs blown off by mines set by one side or the other.

And yet - and yet - some self-consciousness shrugs off these real accomplishments by Canadians, and returns to the ritual of doubt: "Who in the world needs Canada?"

Not to belabour the point, Valentyn Moroz, Georgi Vins, the Vashchenko and Chmykhalov families and more than six hundred other people needed Canada, over the last five years to secure their exit from the Soviet Union and reunification with family in this country. And there have been nearly 95,000 Indochinese who needed Canada, those who have been admitted to Canada as refugees since 1975. On a per capita basis, we have been the most welcoming nation in the world to Indochinese.

600 families in the village of Mutara, Rwanda, depend on Canadian-financed irrigation for their survival. 80,000 people around the village of Nioki in Zaire depend on Canadian-built medical clinics. 12,000 people in Tabakouta, Senegal, support themselves as a result of Canadian development of their banana farms. In 50 rural villages of the Piura and Tuubas regions of northern Peru, 400,000 people have roofs over their heads as a result of Canadian reconstruction efforts after a flood. And 30,000 people in the shanty towns around Lima now have clean water because CIDA made \$500,000 available. They also needed Canada.

In Bridgetown, Barbados, there is to be a new fishing harbour because a Canadian company undertook a feasibility study with CIDA financing. In India, hydro-electric plants and new railways are being built, and staff trained to run them, because Canadians saw the possibilities and prepared the groundwork. People in these countries also needed Canada.

So did the discussions on chemical weapons at Geneva, where Ambassador Don McPhail nearly got agreement. So did the committee of like-minded nations dealing with disarmament at the U.N. in New York, known as the Barton Group, after Ambassador Bill Barton of Winnipeg.

If you need further answers to that ritual of doubt, ask children in Ethiopia; ask the Contadora countries; ask the Western group we chaired at the Nairobi Conference; ask the West Germans, who must live daily beside massive armament, and received a strong signal of common solidarity through an additional twelve hundred Canadian troops newly sent to NATO; ask the people of Holland after the Second World War. Ask the Cypriots who for 20 years have been spared the bloody ravages of civil war thanks to the few hundred Canadian soldiers making up the thin blue line in Nicosia. Ask Jamaica and Zimbabwe and the Philippines and the more than 20 other countries who would all be helped if the world accepts our Prime Minister's Third Window proposal.

I did not accept your invitation to attack your title. Unhappily, it accurately reflects a conventional skepticism about our international role, which I hope we can leave behind as part of the baggage of our national adolescence. I say conventional skepticism, because that was not at all the mood of the Canadians who designed NATO, or established the UNEF, or found local sponsors for boat people, or negotiated the Law of the Sea. We have an envied tradition of using limited resources to accomplish great ends, and the fact is that our resources and our ability, and if we wish it our influence, are growing. The fact that we - and much of the world - are looking to economic growth as the instrument of progress strengthens the position of this nation, with our humanitarian traditions and modern economy. By the way, when I say much of the world, I include Mr. Gorbachev, Mr. Deng, Mr. Kadar, Mr. Quett Masire, and leaders of other countries reforming their economies, whether timidly or boldly. Some have a certain advantage in size, or access to markets, but we are leaders in technology and in trust, currencies that count.

When I tabled the government's Green Paper on Canada's international relations last May, we aimed to start along a path towards addressing this question of using our limited resources to best effect.

In recent years, the world has undergone dramatic changes. The most salient features for Canada are that we can take our prosperity and our security much less for granted. As the Green Paper noted, where once we could rely on our natural resources for wealth and on our geographic location for security, neither can any longer assure us of the peaceful and prosperous future we used to assume would be ours. Instead, we are faced with international economic and political trends which, if left unattended, could seriously diminish our national wealth and perhaps even lead us and the world to the brink of disaster.

We want to be effective internationally, but that requires influence. Our influence derives in large measure

from our position as a wealthy, politically-stable member of the Western Alliance. We draw on other assets as well, but we cannot avoid the hard truth that if we don't pay, we don't play.

For these reasons, the Green Paper suggested that priority attention be accorded to refurbishing our traditional assets, to improving our international economic competitiveness and increasing our influence on international political and security issues. We must be in a position not just to talk about the future but to do something about it.

In general terms, what makes foreign policy today so complex is the formidable number and sheer stubbornness of the interlinkages -- linkages among countries and among issues. More than ever before, countries have been drawn into mutual dependency through trade, investment and technology flows. Problems of joint management of structural change, of resources and of cross-border environmental pollution have created a new agenda for international diplomacy. Economic and political crises intersect, for example in the Mideast, with disastrous consequences.

Economic and political issues are bound together in intimate ways. Consider the global economy. The links in the chain include high budgetary deficits and interest rates in the US and elsewhere, currency misalignments, high unemployment and slumping competitiveness, structural distortions, Third World indebtedness, and -- globally -- looming trade protectionism. There is a very real danger that positive economic adjustments and political accommodations may not be made. Mounting protectionist pressure may yet permanently damage the international trade and payments system. And even if that doesn't happen, competition within the system is obviously going to remain very tough, and the political pressures difficult to bear.

In looking at the problems of managing this tangle, certain realities are clear.

First, international affairs cannot be managed only by the political and economic Superpowers. They don't have the solutions; on the other hand, they do have national self-interests that may or may not accord with the general good. There is no White Knight country, superpower or otherwise, which has the key to unilaterally managing the problems of the international system.

Second, -- this is the corollary -- management has to be multilateral, plurilateral, collective, joint. Management must also be flexible and adaptable. There is nothing, no dominating or restraining force, that can replace the world order system embodied in the major

international institutions and negotiating forums. These must be maintained, and strengthened where necessary.

Third -- this is the conclusion -- the concept of national "role" has to emerge from a critical analysis of what is needed to make this international system work, and a pragmatic examination of national vocations. It doesn't emerge from any abstract or wishful notion of what a nation might like to be seen to do, or what it once did.

What does this mean for Canada? It means that we, like others, have to start with an accurate sense of our own interests, capacities and problems -- but above all our interests -- as we look at the world. I want to suggest to you strongly that there is no contradiction between doing well in the world and doing good in the world. If we're not doing well economically we'll be more likely to retreat into protectionism and insularity, more likely to lose the resources necessary to make a positive contribution to development and to peacekeeping, and to famine and refugees, and more likely to lose the inclination to play a positive international role, as we grow more preoccupied with economic problems at home. There is an obvious connection between sane domestic policies and a sane international system. Policy coherence is as much an international, as a domestic concern for an open country like Canada.

To really appreciate the nature of Canadian interests, in their present configuration, is going to involve a rather painful reappraisal. The Green Paper that initiated the current International Relations Review began this process with a little reality therapy on current facts of Canadian life. I wanted it to emphasize our critical dependence on foreign -- particularly US -- markets for our prosperity; our declining share of world trade and sagging competitiveness, the importance of our getting serious about structural adjustment; the evolving security challenge facing our country. The key message I wanted conveyed through the Green Paper was simply this: we have to do better. The status quo won't work.

Doing better means involving Canadians in the international issues that bear on their competitiveness and security. It means provoking their interest and listening to their concerns. Parliament's Special Joint Committee is doing a good job of that now, in hearings across the country.

And there will be other Parliamentary initiatives. In ten months in this portfolio, I have used Parliamentary statements on motions, allowing debate and questions on five occasions so far. The former government did not once in five years use this mechanism to allow for wider House of Commons discussion. We invited Committee debate on the North Warning System before we proceeded, in contrast to the

earlier government. We insisted on public debate of our obligations under NORAD, before the renewal date next year, and had to fight to get the opposition to agree to the reference. So we are opening up the foreign policy process. What we have to build toward, through this kind of public consultation, is nothing less than a collective national effort to see ourselves clearly. To achieve that, the Review process will have to thrash through some difficult policy options.

But whatever specific policy recommendations ultimately emerge from the Review, the general question of Canada's place and purpose in the world is not, in the meantime, hanging in abeyance. Leaving aside questions of particular policy and strategy emphasis, two things ought to be obvious. First, what we are doing in the world -- I'm talking about action, not about abstractions -- is working very hard to preserve the international economic system, prevent a calamitous war, and deal with human anguish in the developing world. And second, the way we are going about this reflects some remarkable Canadian attributes and areas of experience. I say these things ought to be obvious, but sometimes they're blurred by some old ghosts of inferiority and passivity that history has left with us.

There is one other aspect of Canadian foreign policy that I think needs further emphasis. The test of whether a foreign policy is distinctively Canadian is not whether it is sharply different from the United States of America. The test is whether it serves Canadian interests and the international structures on which we depend.

Obviously our interests will often parallel those of the US. We share a common faith in democratic values, a common knowledge that those values are rejected and opposed by an armed Soviet system, and a common determination to defend our values.

Sometimes our interests will differ from the Americans, as they differ now regarding the embargo of Nicaragua.

As the Canadian policy debate proceeds, I hope people who might have seen Canadian foreign policy as a Canada/US affair will take a wider view of the world. Of course the United States is of pre-eminent importance to us; it could not be otherwise, given our geography, our values, our relative populations and power. But the United States is important to many others also, indeed to everyone else, and for us to be blinded by our relations with that country - to let apoplexy affect our judgement each time the Pentagon says something stupid - is to deny our identity and interests.

In the next decade, our greatest growth in new trade will not be found in the United States, but in Southeast Asia, if we pay attention to Southeast Asia.

Our political influence in the developing world is strong precisely because we have demonstrated that a democratic Western nation can approach practical problems of development in a way different from the United States and, indeed, different from Britain and different from France.

Our influence in international institutions is precisely because the distinctive Canadian characteristic is to bring opposing sides together, and try to make the system work on a collective basis, as we are doing in UNESCO, as we are doing through the Commonwealth on South Africa, as we are doing with our special trade policy missions to developing countries, to seek practical agreement on the scope of a new MTN, indeed as we are doing in Contadora.

And so, finally, who needs Canada? Let's not overlook the most obvious response: Canadians want and need Canada to be active internationally. We need that, not only to have our interests protected and advanced, but also to have our collective sense of ourselves affirmed and projected. We are what we do, not only at home but abroad, and I intend to ensure that foreign policy of Canada reflects the whole of this modern and outward-looking country.

The question of "Who in the World Needs Canada" is simply another anachronism. In a complex world, it isn't a matter of identifying some hapless country in need of a buddy. Our obligations and opportunities are broader. The hard-pressed international system as a whole needs us, and we need it. Skillful collective inspiration is required in order to keep the system working. If we Canadians are not qualified to help accomplish that task, then I don't know who is.