



Statements and Speeches

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PIONEERING A NEW KIND OF INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION

A Statement by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Allan J. MacEachen, on the Occasion of the Signing of the Framework Agreement for Commercial and Economic Co-operation between Canada and the European Communities, Ottawa, July 6, 1976.

Foreign policy, like all human affairs, is dictated partly by the logic and the pressure of events and partly by design. This much we must accept. The better the design, however, the more likely we are to be able to shape events, and to reach the goals that nations, no less than individuals, set for themselves.

Some years ago, Canada reviewed its goals in the light of the changing realities as we were about to enter the last quarter of the twentieth century. It was clear to us from this review that we could not simply allow nature to take its course, not even in the case of relations with the Western European nations, to which Canada is linked by many ties of tradition, culture and language.

The European Community had embarked upon a new course that promised to create a new and significant dimension of the international reality. While we did not discount, as the Europeans themselves did not discount, the nature of the obstacles that lay between promise and achievement, we had always had confidence that Western Europe would continue to move forward towards greater unity. This unique development in world affairs, with the perceptible and rapid changes in the Canadian situation, called for a new response on our part.

Clearly, a new design was needed in our foreign policy to take account of the changing circumstances and to steer events in the desired direction. As most of our European friends are aware, a basic tenet of Canadian foreign policy is to develop in harmony with the United States, but distinct from it, in the affirmation of an individual national personality and in keeping with our own national interests. Thus it was logical for Canada to seek to give a stronger and larger economic dimension to its relations with the European Community, which is the world's largest trading entity, with a highly-advanced industrial base and increasing import requirements.

The impulse of the new policy orientation would undoubtedly have led to an increased level of interchanges between Canada and Europe, but it was the view of the Canadian Government, and I believe it was

a view shared by our European partners, that we could give this impulse additional momentum and that we could help shape events to our mutual advantage.

Added emphasis on our economic and commercial relations with the European Communities thus became one of the major patterns in our foreign-policy design, and it was given tangible expression by the dialogue that was begun in 1972 and has led to the conclusion of the Framework Agreement for Commercial and Economic Co-operation between Canada and the European Communities. It is relevant to underline that this agreement is unique among industrialized countries and that we are pioneering a new form of international economic co-operation.

Today is, therefore, an important milestone for us, and I feel privileged to have the honour to extend an official and warm welcome to the Foreign Minister of the Netherlands, His Excellency Max Van der Stoel, in his capacity as President of the Council of the European Communities, and Sir Christopher Soames, Vice-President of the Commission of the European Communities.

I know, Mr. Van der Stoel, that your assumption on July 1 of the post of the President of the Council, added to your domestic responsibilities, has made July an extremely busy month for you, and I am grateful indeed that you have made time in your heavy schedule to come to Ottawa for this occasion.

I should also like to take this opportunity to pay particular tribute to Sir Christopher Soames, who has made a major contribution to the efforts which have brought about this agreement. His support for the enterprise we had undertaken has been greatly appreciated by the Canadian Government. I should also like to pay tribute to the work of the respective chief negotiators of the agreement: Mr. Leslie Fielding for the Communities, and Mr. Michel Dupuy for Canada, whose negotiating skills are evident from a reading of the agreement. To my regret, Mr. Dupuy could not be here today. His presence was required in Paris for a meeting of the Conference on International Economic Co-operation. I am very pleased, however, that Mr. Fielding was able to join us.

Having successfully met the first challenge by reaching agreement on the framework, we must now infuse it with life. This will be an important function of the Joint Co-operation Committee, which has been created under the terms of the agreement.

We do not expect things to change overnight, but we do hope that the agreement will act as a catalyst to stimulate economic co-oper-

ation that will on our part involve not only the private sector but also the provinces. It is fitting, therefore, that today the representatives of the member states and of the European Communities share the table with representatives of Canada's provincial governments and private business, who will all have to play their part if the agreement is to achieve its potential.

Thus today's ceremony, far from being the end of a process, marks the beginning of a new venture. We now have a design and framework; it is now up to both sides to translate promise into performance.

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