



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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DEMOCRACY IN WORLD AFFAIRS

An address by Right Hon. Louis S. St. Laurent,
Secretary of State for External Affairs, to the
Ontario Good Roads Association, Toronto,
February 25, 1948.

I much appreciate the privilege of being your guest this evening and I am particularly happy at being present on this occasion, when you are doing honour to some of your members who through long and devoted service have accomplished much to further the objects of your association.

Of course I will admit that I would be enjoying the occasion even more completely--and perhaps you would too--if I did not have to make a speech. But having to make one, I feel that I could not select a more appropriate audience for one of the things which I propose to discuss i.e., our present attempts to extend democratic processes into the domain of international affairs.

First of all, I think it is a truism which no one can dispute that an organization such as yours is typical of democratic processes at their best. Democracy, after all, is, in action at least, a way of life whereby free men co-operate together to achieve results for their own benefit and for the benefit of their fellows, which either could not be achieved at all, or would be achieved only in a much less complete and practical way by the individual and isolated efforts of each.

I think it is an error to look upon democracy as a system whereby minorities are ruled by majorities. It is true that in democracies, it is the will of the majority which finally determines what action shall be taken and what conduct shall be avoided in order that the welfare of the greatest number may be better promoted. But the governing consideration should be and usually is the welfare of the greatest number.

When all the members of the group have given thoughtful and intelligent consideration to what is apt to be good for the greatest number, have weighed the pros and cons of a line of conduct and given proper consideration to each, the decision of the majority can be accepted by the minority as one that is pretty apt to be fair and productive of beneficial effects for the community as a whole. Democracies work best where all the members seriously attempt to believe in the fair-mindedness of their fellows. In that kind of an atmosphere, even when one finds himself in the minority, he need not necessarily feel like the new recruit having his first march with his company in the army, that everyone is out of step but himself!

I understand that your association has been in existence for something over fifty years and I would be ready to believe that it is entitled to much of the credit for the splendid system of highways which has been developed in your province during that period.

I have learned that Mr. Sibbitt was your president in 1935, and that he has served as reeve of Pittsburg township for 15 consecutive years and has been for many years a member of the Kingston-Frontenac County Suburban Roads Commission; that Mr. Cameron is one of the senior County Engineers of the province, a Director of the association for

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nearly 20 years and was president in 1938; that Mr. Celby has been County Engineer and Road Superintendent of Kent County for over 25 years, president of the association in 1937, and very active in reviving interest in it during the pre-war depression period; that Mr. Moore was County Engineer of Kenfrew for almost a quarter of a century before becoming a member of the Ontario Municipal Board and, then, your president; and that Mr. McLeod has spent several fruitful years in highway research both in Saskatchewan and in this province and was the first Canadian to receive the American Highway Research Board's annual distinction. In doing honour to them to-night, we are all honouring ourselves, because we are expressing faith in and appreciation of public service for ourselves and for our fellow-citizens.

You will notice that I wish to be included, because for the last few years, I feel that I too have been devoting my time and energies to making democratic institutions efficient and fruitful, in this Canada of ours.

This year is the 100th anniversary of the assumption by Canadians of responsibility for the administration of their own affairs.

The first strictly responsible party government in British North America was organized at Halifax on the 2nd of February 1848. On the 25th of January 1848, the House of Assembly of Nova Scotia had voted no confidence in the Executive Council. Acting on Lord Gray's instructions, Sir John Harvey, then governor of that province, sent for J. B. Uniacke and requested him to form a government which could command a majority in the House of Representatives. In February of the same year, the Ministry was defeated in the Legislative Assembly of the United Canadas then sitting in Montreal, and Lord Elgin sent for the Leaders of the Opposition, Louis-Hippolyte Lafontaine and Robert Baldwin, and their Cabinet assumed responsibility for advising His Excellency on the 10th of March 1848.

This was the logical outcome of the fight that had been going on for years and which had led to the outbreak of 1837. As all will recall, after the rebellion, Lord Durham had been sent out as Governor-in-Chief, with authority to restore order and tranquillity, to enquire into the causes of the rebellion and to suggest measures for the future. The report he made has since been looked upon as the greatest constitutional document in British Colonial history.

Joseph Howe, the great Nova-Scotian leader, had written about the "Chateau clique" of Lower Canada, the "Family Compact" of Upper Canada and similar groups in other provinces, and the position of the Governor and of the elected assemblies that the Governor might flutter and struggle in the net, as some well-meaning governors had done, but that he must finally resign himself to being content with the narrow limits assigned him by his keepers and that he had never known a Governor who, even with the best intentions and with the full concurrence of the representative branch, backed with the confidence of his Sovereign, was able to contend on anything like fair terms with the small knot of functionaries who formed the Councils, filled the offices and wielded the powers of government. In his view, that was because while the Governor was amenable to his Sovereign through the Colonial Secretary, and the members of the Assembly were controlled by their constituents, the clique were only responsible to themselves and could always protect and sustain each other, whether assailed by the representatives of the Sovereign or the representatives of the people, and even that was not the whole story. In the Canadas, the situation was further complicated by the clash between the English and the French. In his report, Lord Durham wrote that he had, as he expected to, found a contest between a

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government and a people, but in addition he had also found two nations warring in the bosom of a single state.

He made two major recommendations:

- 1) The reunion of Lower and Upper Canada, and
- 2) The immediate grant of responsible government.

The first recommendation was implemented at once by the Act of Union. But this Act made no mention of responsible government. The Governor continued to be his own first Minister, endeavouring to secure the election of those he favored.

In 1846, however, a change of government in Great Britain brought Earl Gray to the colonial office and he immediately set about to give the Durham proposal a fair trial. Lord Elgin, who was Lord Durham's son-in-law, was appointed Governor of the Province of Canada and instructed to govern in conformity with the advice of Ministers acceptable to the majority in the Assembly and responsible for every act of government to the elected representatives of the people themselves.

Lord Durham had also expressed the view that the country could not survive with two races, two languages and two cultures. He felt that the nationality of the French-Canadians should be obliterated and union was designed for that purpose. But when your ancestors and mine got effective control of the administration of their affairs, they staked their future on a denial of this policy and for a hundred years now, they have been shown to be right.

Of course, they had to get rid of legislative union because that required a degree of co-operation between them which it was beyond human power to achieve at that time but they did, your fathers and mine, the Fathers of Confederation, devise a system which would work and which has worked, that of provincial autonomy in matters which are local and private within a province, and that of a central government charged with the matters which are of general concern to all the provinces.

It worked because they, themselves, were responsible to themselves and their fellow-citizens to make it work, and because they were able to achieve that degree of confidence in themselves and in their fellows which is essential to the smooth operation of any system of government based upon the consent of the governed.

Lord Durham also deplored the fact that strictly local government had not been sufficiently developed in the Canadian provinces. We were being initiated into self-government at exactly the wrong end and those who were not trusted with the management of their own parish or town affairs, were expected to influence by their votes the destinies of a State.

Well, it may be that one hundred years ago our municipal institutions and our other administrative bodies to arrange our local affairs were not as well organized and as efficient as they afterwards became and there can be no doubt that there is much similarity in the manner in which problems of public concern have to be handled regardless of the level at which they arise.

There had been, nevertheless, some incipient progress made in the organization of local units of government. The city of Saint John, in New Brunswick, had been incorporated by Royal Charter in 1785, Montreal was incorporated in 1831, Quebec in 1858, Toronto in 1834, Halifax in 1841 and, after all, it was only in 1835 that the great municipal reform in Britain was inaugurated by the British Municipal Reform Act of that year.

We go back to the Durham report for the assistance it afforded us in achieving responsible government and because of that assistance, I suppose, we must not be too critical about many of the other things we find in that report.

It has been said that our Constitution is made up in part of Statutes and in part of Conventions, created by precedents. We got our present form of government from and through the precedent created in 1848 which recognized in the Canadian people their birth-right of freedom and responsibility. Co-operation of the two races in the honourable task of self-government necessarily followed.

A few years later, the Duke of Newcastle, as Secretary of State for Colonial Affairs, attempted to lecture the Canadian Government and the Canadian Legislature on the wisdom of certain protective duties imposed by a Canadian Statute.

Sir Robert Borden, in his "Canada and the Commonwealth", speaks of the reply made to this dispatch in the following terms:

"Courteously but very firmly, the Canadian Ministry denied responsibility except to the Provincial Parliament alone by whose confidence they administered the affairs of the country".

The report constitutes a landmark in constitutional history. Its most famous sentence affirmed a position that remained unchallenged.

"Self-government would be utterly annihilated if the views of the Imperial Government were to be preferred to those of the people of Canada. It is therefore the duty of the present Government distinctly to affirm the right of the Canadian Legislature to adjust the taxation of the people in the way they deem best, even if it should unfortunately happen to meet the disapproval of the Imperial Ministry."

Self-government in domestic affairs naturally brought about self-government and self-determination with respect to our relations with other states and other powers.

Because of our history, our geography, our climate, the kind of natural resources of our country, our development as a people and the development of our economy, we have had to take our place in the family of nations and two world wars in our own generation have conclusively shown that when the world is at war, we are inevitably involved and have to take a costly and important part in the winning of victory for the nations which, like ourselves, believe in freedom and in democratic institutions.

It is not strange, therefore that when, even before the end of the last war, the call went out for a conference to attempt to set up a democratic union of the freedom-loving people, we chose to be present and became one of the United Nations.

Not only did we look upon the Charter proposed at San Francisco as a solemn treaty renouncing war as an instrument for the settlement of international disputes, but we hoped it would become the corner-stone of the extension of democratic processes in the domain of international affairs.

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We were, of course, disappointed to find that the Five Great Powers responsible for calling the International Conference were not prepared to accept the democratic principle of majority decisions, did not have sufficient confidence in each other and in ourselves to feel that their votes and ours would be given only to further the general interests of all the free nations.

They insisted that the United Nations would act only through a Security Council and that no important decision in the Security Council would be made without the concurrence of each of them, in other words, that each of them would have an absolute veto.

When the rest of us signed that Charter, we had to accept this condition and we did so after it had been stated by representatives of the Big Powers that the veto would be used sparingly and with a due sense of responsibility to the world at large.

This statement was made in the presence of the Russian delegates who did not demur but, nevertheless, they have since used their veto more than twenty times and have consistently frustrated the best attempts to make the Security Council workable as the main instrument of the United Nations to secure and maintain peace.

Nevertheless, peace is so important to all of us that we must still regard the United Nations either in its present form or in such modified form as circumstances may make inevitable, as an indispensable medium, and channel, and forum through which the peoples of the world can work out the institutions and arrangements which peace, security and even survival, appear to require.

I have not the time, of course, to describe in detail Canada's participation in the work of the United Nations. I might illustrate the heavy nature of our responsibilities by pointing out that if any one of you were to journey to New York this week, and to visit the various United Nations bodies meeting in the vicinity, you would find Canadian representatives present at meetings of the Economic and Social Council, the Interim Committee of the General Assembly, the Atomic Energy Commission, and, the most important of all in these troubled times, the Security Council. We have a delegation at the International Trade Conference in Havana which, since November, has been working to create a code of multilateral trading among the nations, another at Geneva working on a Maritime convention, another at Washington discussing a world wheat agreement and many others elsewhere.

During 1948, we shall probably send representatives to a hundred or more international conferences, most of which will be under the auspices of some branch of the United Nations. In New York, Paris, Geneva, Havana, Brussels, London, Washington, Beirut, Montreal and San Francisco, wherever the constituent bodies of the United Nations and its specialized agencies meet, there will be Canadian delegates present to play their part in this great experiment in establishing a world association for peace, justice and progress.

Participation in world affairs and in the activities of an organization like the United Nations naturally involves a considerable increase in the number of trained personnel which the Canadian government must use to represent it in foreign countries and at international conferences. The Department of External Affairs at Ottawa has therefore had to expand rapidly to meet the many new obligations which Canada has incurred. Because we cannot afford to go unrepresented at conferences whose deliberations may have a very definite effect on Canadian interests, we must have men who will do the necessary research on all the difficult problems which our senior government officials, delegates and ambassadors must meet. We must get reliable information from abroad as to what other countries intend to do, what they think of Canada, whether they might buy something from us, whether they will be good neighbours or bad neighbours in the general community of nations, how they tackle particular social problems that Canada also has to face. We must have a well-trained staff stationed at various points around the world and at the home base who can gather information, evaluate it, relay it to the interested Canadian sources and use it in the formation of our overall external policy. The staff abroad must also, of course, maintain contacts with foreign governments and represent Canada in many different ways. In the delicate matter of relationships between national governments, it is essential to have these contacts handled by individuals on the spot who know the whole background to the matter at issue, the personalities involved and the proper method of approach. International relations can have so important an effect on the welfare of our nation, that we cannot risk having anything but the most skilled handling of our foreign contacts.

I do not want to give you the impression, however, that Canadian contacts abroad are all handled through one Department of government. Our commercial work abroad is the responsibility mainly of the Department of Trade and Commerce and a number of other departments provide the Canadian representatives for international conferences in specialized fields. Some provincial governments maintain contacts abroad and a great many private associations and individuals have commercial and cultural relationships with the rest of the world. What I do want to stress is that in the Department of External Affairs, more than in any other section of government, consideration is given to the

general picture of Canadian relations with other countries and to the problem of world security, so that the Government and the Canadian Parliament may have the necessary information on which to base their decisions as to Canadian foreign policy.

I have mentioned the multiplicity of United Nations activities and the necessary increase in personnel on our part to meet our new obligations in international affairs to give you some idea of the extent to which Canada has had to look abroad and to develop in a great hurry the techniques for maintaining her position in world affairs. We are engaged at one and the same time as a member of the Economic and Social Council in consideration of a great many long-range plans, often technical in nature, for the greater prosperity of the world, and, as a member of the Security Council, in consideration of the most immediate and distressing political conflicts. Our representatives often have to concern themselves with the accuracy of a detail in a proposal and the next minute with the most fundamental questions of national policy. This being the case, it is clear that general public interest in and understanding of Canada's external affairs is essential if Canada is to have a clear and resolute voice in international affairs. Called on to make judgments in almost every field of human endeavour and every level of importance, there are a certain number of decisions which can be left to experts both in the government and in private bodies who understand the technical problems involved, but the basic problems of peace and war must be finally dealt with by the general electorate. Membership in the United Nations does not mean only a way of handling a wide range of the relations between states. It involves loyalty to a concept of collective security. That loyalty entails serious obligations, among them the final one of having to be ready to join in war to prevent an aggressor from flouting the will of the organization, in whatever part of the world the aggression may take place. That is so grave a responsibility that those of us particularly concerned in the conduct of Canada's foreign policy must continually bring before the people whom they serve the nature of these responsibilities and the policies which are being followed by the Canadian Government as a result of them.

At the present time, there is general support in Parliament for Canada's following a United Nations policy. We agree to pursue our external policies where necessary within the framework of and always according to the spirit of that organization. We shall have to base our actions in the economic field on the code of international trade now being put in final shape. We must submit legal disputes in which we may be concerned to the International Court of Justice. We are dealing with international questions such as civil aviation, health, food supplies, labour, financial policy, telecommunication, postal services, refugees and shipping through the appropriate United Nations specialized agency. We have agreed to accept the decisions of the Security Council and the recommendations of the General Assembly. We contribute to the general budget of the United Nations. We accept the full responsibilities of membership in each one of the many branches of the organization to which we belong. We do all of these things because we believe that enlightened self-interest demands them. We benefit directly from world peace and prosperity. We could not avoid suffering directly and heavily from world wars. While we fully realize the many difficulties facing this new Organization, we nevertheless feel that it offers the soundest base for our foreign policy.

We have sufficient faith in the United Nations and a sufficiently strong desire to do something about world peace that we have recently accepted the responsibilities of membership in the Security Council and are now concerned directly with the solution of such complex and tragic problems as the dispute between India and Pakistan over Kashmir, the implementation of the partition plan in Palestine,

the guerrilla warfare in Northern Greece, the stalemate in Korea and the conflict in Indonesia. That being the case there is one question which must be continually be before us: Will the United Nations provide the collective security necessary to prevent wars among the nations or to terminate any dispute speedily and on a just basis? We must always have this question in mind, because we all have to take some risks in these world affairs which we have to deal with so directly and in so many ways. No great benefit is ever achieved, however, without risk. We know that well from the history of our own country. The advocates of confederation, the builders of the Canadian Pacific Railway, the men who held for Canada the great expense of the West, all took great risks. They were, to use a phrase now current in the discussion of international affairs, calculated risks. A man would be a fool if he did not calculate very carefully the risk he was undertaking in the pursuance of any scheme. In the questions of Canadian support of the United Nations, the Canadian people have continually to balance the advantages and disadvantages of membership. Most of us believe, I think, that the prize to be gained, a world free of war in which the contacts between nations are friendly and mutually beneficial, is so great that it is worth our whole-hearted effort.

It might be objected that while it is all right to co-operate in international affairs on the economic level we should, as a small nation, avoid the risks of general commitments on the political level. But in the world as it is at present, the key to world economic prosperity is to be found in the achievement of trust among nations, collective security, and the rule of law. I appeal again to our own experience in the building of Canada. The settlers who moved into the bleak forests along the St. Lawrence and around Lake Ontario had to ensure their security against attack first and establish law among themselves, however rude it might be, before they could devote their attention to the many problems of building a prosperous community. The basis of prosperity in Canada at present is freedom from the fear of domestic strife, general conditions of order and security in every town and village and profound respect for law and for human rights.

We cannot hope to avoid these primary responsibilities for the world by saying that Canada is a small nation. We are comparatively small, but geography, history and the current fortunes of peace and war have faced us with the challenge to play an important role in international affairs. We must remember how many nations have been ravaged by war, how many are subject to recurrent famines and diseases, how many have been unnerved and how many lack even our experience in international relations. Whether we like it or not, we occupy a significant position among the free democracies of the world. If the free democracies lose the initiative in world affairs and in the United Nations in particular, we cannot expect the ideals embodied in the United Nations to receive any lasting support from the totalitarian nations or from those lands still immersed in the primary problems of creating a national structure.

Our support for the United Nations is a long-term policy and it involves us in a wide range of activities that can come to fruition only in the future. It is natural that that should be so. We - and by "we" I now mean the whole western hemisphere - would be foolish to concentrate all our attention on the problem of avoiding war and give no thought to the long-term economic and social reconstruction which would support world peace. A world-wide institution cannot be built in a few short years. We have to spend a good deal of time in organizational matters. The United Nations can best command the support of our peoples if it is efficient and economical. But to make it so requires many hours of planning, the formation of many sub-committees and long debates over

procedure. The United Nations is only now beginning to make use of the machinery it has been creating.

The reply both to the cynic and to the over-optimistic must be that it is still too early to judge the ability of the United Nations to achieve the goal its founders set out to reach.

We are well aware that nationalism is still a very great threat to the existence of the United Nations. We know only too well the entangled relationships between colonies and between former colonies and metropolitan powers. We have come up against the terrible split between Eastern Europe and the Western nations time and time again in United Nations work. The failures of the Council of Foreign Ministers have left open wounds in several important areas of the world and have been terrible disappointments to those of us who hoped for much from the wartime cooperation of the allies.

As members of the Atomic Energy Commission we know how little has been accomplished on that basic question of international security. We have tried along with other nations to reach an agreement that would be the cornerstone in a security system which involved limitation of armaments and the provision of forces for the use of the Security Council. Little of that has yet been accomplished. But the United Nations has not been able to await agreement in these fields before taking any action in the many disputes and complicated situations brought to its attention. The Security Council and the General Assembly have had to act in the belief that members would in an emergency support the final decisions of the United Nations. It would be fatal to allow the tragic paralysis of will and confusion of judgment that overcame the League of Nations to destroy the United Nations even before all its organs have been fully set up.

The title, United Nations, is misleading in one respect. It indicates the hoped-for result, not the accomplished fact. It is impossible for an organization which attempts anything as comprehensive as general world security to start with anything more than a small measure of unity. We must build on the common fear of war and not allow the dissident policies of some nations to wreck our attempts. We must hope that the nations who because of power, influence, political experience and close bilateral understandings can take the lead will continue to do so. To drift along for several years hoping for a mystical unity among the nations based on economic rehabilitation or education is apt to be a most dangerous course. It is becoming more and more clear which nations really desire to see the United Nations work for all and which nations want it to work in their interest only. There should be no doubt as to where Canadian sympathies lie. These are not the happiest circumstances in which to set about the building of international order, but he who awaits an improvement of circumstances before acting may find in the end that he has lost his ability to act at all. If the United Nations is not to have universal support then let us make it quite clear that it is no failure of nations such as Canada to follow a constructive policy which is responsible. If we cannot achieve a complete world league at present then let us strive for the strongest possible association of freedom-loving and law-abiding nations that is possible. Let us maintain the ideals of the Charter of the United Nations as the banner of that association and not allow them to be wrested from their true position by the distortions of propaganda and the unbending chauvinism of the totalitarian ideologies.

Our Prime Minister, Mr. King, has recently made Canada's stand in this respect quite clear. You will probably recall the quotation that I would like to bring again to your attention:

"Communism is no less a tyranny than nazism. It aims at world conquest. It hopes to effect its purpose by force."

Mr. King pointed out that if the free nations did not think in realistic terms and act forcibly, the values they held would lose ground all over the world.

"Force", he said, "has not of itself the power to create better conditions, but a measure of security is a first essential."

It is not pleasant to start thinking in terms of the armed force which can be mastered for the support of the United Nations or to maintain the position of the free nations, but these past decades have taught us hard lessons. If freedom loving states waver in their support of the United Nations and its ideal they will help to precipitate collective insecurity and irresponsibility among the nations. The same type of panic that mined banks and commercial enterprises a few years ago will seize the nations. Some might be able to salvage partial security for themselves in that event, but none would have a free and orderly world for their traders, their statesmen and missionaries to move in. Our own potential prosperity would definitely be restricted and we would be put on the defensive in many parts of the world.

There are dangers in the world situation and those dangers should have some sobering effect on us here at home. When we look at the tragic gulfs of misunderstanding and the deep-rooted conflicts abroad, such internal conflicts as we have here seem relatively mild. When we realize the terrible economic plight of a great segment of the world's population we can judge our own economic difficulties from a better perspective. We begin to realize that in contrast with large sections of the world which are committed to totalitarianism, we in Canada have a remarkable measure of agreement on many things. We begin to be very much conscious of what we as Canadians have shared together in war and in peace. We are now able to point to many things in our past history which begin to assume a very real significance as the main threads in our development.

It is a fascinating thing to reflect that a little over one hundred years ago, in January, 1848, an article in German was sent to London for translation and publication. It was the Communist Manifesto. Exactly one hundred years ago, February 24, 1848, one of the great class struggles in European history broke out in Paris. At that time Canadians and Americans in far-off North America were too busy with their own internal development to feel the shock of European wars or to experience to any great extent the increasing bitterness of the class warfare beginning in Europe. As I have already said, it was early in 1848 that Elgin called on Lafontaine and Baldwin to form the first cabinet responsible to Parliament in Canadian history. The great development toward our present independence and democratic government was just beginning. To the south of us the Americans had by the peace treaty with Mexico consolidated their position on the Pacific coast. In January of 1848 a labourer in California discovered gold in one of its streams and the great gold rush of that period was on.

Those days are now remote and we must recognize that fact. We Canadians cannot afford to focus all our attention on our domestic development and the Americans cannot abandon themselves to the heedless joys of goldrushes or their modern equivalents. In one hundred years the European world with its troubles and its dynamic ideologies has

spread, and we are all now active responsible agents in a world association of nations which adds new members to its roll every year. The first great formation period in Canadian and in American history is over. We must face up to new situations.

I have mentioned the unifying effect that foreign dangers have always had on Canadian society. I would like to conclude by pointing out again that in the face of the present world situation there should be no division among Canadians on foreign policy. If Sir John A. Macdonald were alive today, I am sure that he would feel that the traditions of parliamentary government and ordered freedom which he prized so much in the British system are in danger, and that Canadians should not hesitate in supporting them through the United Nations. And he would be joined in this wish by Sir Wilfrid Laurier. I would like to quote from a speech made by Laurier.

"Thank Providence" he said, "that we live in a country of absolute freedom and liberty. Let us always bear in mind our duties, for duty is always inherent in right. Our fathers had to labour to secure rights. Now let us fulfil our part." He went on to say that he had no desire to suppress any element in the population but to give every racial group its freedom. "I want", he concluded, "to take all these elements and build a nation that will be foremost amongst the great powers of the world".

I will finish on this note. We are called on as Canadians in a united country to play a great role in world relations. This new responsibility and new opportunity can be described in a manner that all Canadians will understand; for us foreign policy is the new frontier of our democracy.