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NOTES FOR AN ADDRESS BY

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE JOE CLARK,

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS,

TO THE VANCOUVER ROTARY CLUB

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Secretary of State for External Affairs | Secrétaire d'État aux Affaires extérieures

Canada

For nearly four years now, I have had the great honour to represent our country as Secretary of State for External Affairs. I have talked to thousands of people - real people, not just officials and Ministers - in Africa and Asia, Europe and Latin America, the United States and the Soviet Union; and I have sought out the views of hundreds of individual Canadians - exporters, missionaries, investors, aid workers, MPs, diplomats, students, professors and artists who make Canada work in the world.

One lesson I have learned is that international policy, far from being foreign, lies at the heart of every day interests of Canadians. In this world of instant communication and nuclear weapons, in this modern trading country, foreign policy is domestic policy. Isolation is not an option for Canada. We could not draw back from the world, even if we wanted to. And Canadians don't want to, and never have.

In two world wars, Canadian soldiers left for European fields, some never to return. To and from this port, every day, commodities come and commodities go out, dramatizing the reality that this country depends more on foreign trade than Britain does, or France, or the United States, or Japan. The universities here are involved intimately in the solution of problems around the world. So is the Asia Pacific Foundation and the business community. So are the thousands of British Columbians and other Canadians who contribute to UNICEF or to Save the Children, or our churches or our service clubs or our peace movements or our export seminars, or who sign the register against apartheid, or help fight famine.

We Canadians have a proud tradition internationally, and this government was elected to renew it - to modernize our foreign policy in the same way that we challenged and changed conventional thinking about deficits, and defence, and relations with the provinces, and the development of our regions. We have made real progress in all these reforms and, under the Prime Minister's leadership, no where more than in foreign policy.

In quick summary, we have helped shape the mandate of the new round of multilateral trade negotiations, particularly respecting agriculture; we have undertaken historic trade negotiations with our largest trading partner, the United States; we have carried out the first major review of defence policy in nearly two decades; we have led the internal reform of the United Nations, including persuading that cautious body to take the plunge and appoint Therese Paquette-Sevigny, a Canadian, as the first female Under-Secretary General in the United Nations' forty year history; the Prime Minister has regularly raised, at international Economic Summits, the inequity of third world debt and we have put our own aid program entirely on

an all-grant basis; we sent experts to Central America to help the Contadora countries devise an effective control and verification mechanism and have sent peacekeepers to Afghanistan and to Iran and Iraq; we have hosted a major international conference on the seismic verification of a nuclear test ban, and have been active in every international and alliance forum where arms control and disarmament are discussed; and we have opened up the process of foreign policy to all Canadians, whether by Canada's extraordinary response to the famine in Ethiopia and the Sahel, or by launching major public parliamentary reviews of foreign policy and aid policy, and then acting on most of the recommendations.

Naturally, some of these initiatives are controversial. You don't often make progress without controversy. Sometimes the debate is limited and largely internal. For example, former governments spoke more eloquently than they acted regarding the equality of women. When Brian Mulroney's government took office, only two of our posts abroad were headed by women. Today women are heads of posts for Canada in fourteen major missions including Spain, Kenya, Sri Lanka, Copenhagen, Hong Kong and others.

Sometimes the debate was more public. When Britain and the United States pulled out of UNESCO, Canada stayed, to reform from within. When Washington announced an embargo on Nicaragua, we immediately stated our own different policy. Former Canadian governments had worried about asserting Canada's sovereignty in our North; that territory is ours, and we have claimed it, and we are developing the means to assert our sovereignty in our North.

Knowing the risks, we have brought Soviet POWs out of Afghanistan: the Prime Minister has raised human rights questions directly with leaders of Korea, Zimbabwe, the Soviet Union, and Canada is among the leaders of the campaign to bring a peaceful end to the system of apartheid, which can tear southern Africa apart.

The world is too large to review country by country, issue by issue, and this nation is active almost everywhere. We have extended our peace keeping activities to the Sinai, and are in regular contact with Jewish and Arab leaders to see if there are ways we can help them move forward toward peace. We have established an active trading and diplomatic presence in Asia, opening new trade offices in Osaka, Shanghai, Bombay, and New Zealand.

In the last four years, it has been my privilege, on behalf of Canada, to meet Anatoly Scharansky in Jerusalem, and receive his thanks for the unrelenting support of the Canadians who sought his freedom; to host in Ottawa some of the mothers of "the disappeared" of Argentina, who had come to discuss human rights institutions with us, because they trust Canada more than other countries; to visit remote Asian villages where Canadians are overcoming tradition and despair so children can live and countries develop. There is a lot to say about Canada's role in the world - and a lot to learn about our own country by understanding how we are seen abroad.

Today, I want to turn that mirror around, and draw from our foreign policy some of the Canadian characteristics that make us effective and respected in the world. I do that deliberately in the week the free trade bill was adopted by the House of Commons, because the free trade debate has revived concern, among some Canadians, about Canada's ability to pursue an independent and distinct foreign policy. I don't share that concern - quite the contrary - but I treat it seriously, and want to address it precisely because I think it is wrong.

In a sense, a country is what its people think it is. If we are confident about ourselves, that shows. In fact, I believe there is a close connection between the self-confidence we are developing at home, in this diverse distinct country, and the growing expectations and respect we generate in the world. I regard the trade negotiations as one more assertion of Canadian maturity. It is an act of confidence in ourselves, and will lead to other confident actions, including in foreign policy, reflecting truly a country that is unlike any other in the world, and is prepared to act that way.

On Wednesday, in Parliament, the Prime Minister said: "Canada is surer of its identity than it ever was before. Canada's international personality in the global community is more mature and we express ourselves more independently than ever in the past. Our commitment and our capacity to project our economic, political and territorial sovereignty have never been stronger."

I emphasize, in particular, two of his words: "commitment" and "capacity". You need both to be effective.

Do we lose either to free trade? Do we become less willing to act independently? Less able? No, we don't. In fact, we become more able to pursue Canadian goals simply because a stronger economy means we can afford more initiatives. In concrete terms, it means we can afford an icebreaker. We can afford to be among the first countries to pay our dues to the United Nations. We can afford to pay for peace-keeping in the Middle East; or railway lines in the Front Line States; or development projects in Nicaragua; or emergency assistance in Bangladesh. Free trade with the United States helps Canada's economy grow, and so increases our capacity to pursue a distinctive Canadian foreign policy.

What about commitment? What about our will? Does a trade deal dilute our will to pursue an independent foreign policy?

Well, during negotiation of this trade treaty, Canada and the United States disagreed on a number of foreign policy questions.

Consider some examples.

The United States would have preferred Canadian government participation in the strategic defence initiative. We declined.

The two countries have sharply different approaches to the United Nations.

We have different policies on South Africa.

In Central America, the governments of Canada and the United States disagree basicly about the source of the problems. The Americans have boycotted Nicaragua, while we maintain aid and commercial activities throughout the region. Because of that difference, Central American Foreign Ministers want Canada to help them design a peace keeping system.

Those policy differences, and others, exist today, existed throughout the negotiations, and will continue tomorrow, precisely because we are different countries with different cultures, different histories, a different sense of who we are.

Many of the qualities the modern world requires are qualities which Canadians refined in building our own country. The skill of conciliation, the virtue of tolerance, the respect for diversity, are all more important in a world where superpowers are less dominant, and the consequences of conflict are more dangerous.

Canadians are a pragmatic people. We try to see the world as it is, and not through the filters of either marxism or manifest destiny. We have our own experience, at home and internationally, and, increasingly, that pragmatic Canadian experience is drawn upon.

I am proud of what we have been able to do, in foreign policy - but even more enthusiastic about what we can do. We should not exaggerate our influence, nor should we ignore it, nor decline to exercise it. We are a vast country whose only immediate neighbours are three oceans and two superpowers - a diverse society whose people came from every corner, every culture, every colour of the world, and whose interests reach everywhere. We need a foreign policy that reflects the whole Canada - a trading nation, a northern nation, a free nation of people who treasure human rights because close relatives are denied them, a developed economy, a former colony, an international people. Our teachers and traders and missionaries roamed far continents before there was a CIDA, or a CUSO, or a Department of Trade. Our soldiers went away to fight oppression when other countries hunkered down in isolation. Our diplomats and leaders created NATO, invented the peace keeping role of the United Nations, concluded the trade agreement which inspired the GATT, and now, in Brian Mulroney's administration, have found the way to launch La Francophonie, and the determination to bring down barriers to trade.

There is no prouder flag to fly than Canada's, no better passport; yet that reputation was not won by force of arms or power, nor by the purity of our soul, nor by the brilliance of a skilled elite. That unique Canadian reputation reflects the nature and history of this unusual country - it comes from acting abroad as we try to act at home. And we came to office to seize that reality, to extend it, to expand the degree to which our foreign policy reflects our Canadian culture.