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Speech by the
Right Honourable Joe Clark,
Secretary of State for
External Affairs, to the
"Conseil des Relations
internationales de Montréal"
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OTTAWA

June 9, 1987.

I recently began a week in Washington, with one of my quarterly meetings with George Shultz. He had just returned from Asia where, in one day, he had had breakfast in China, lunch in Korea, and dinner in Japan. That is the glamorous life of a Foreign Minister. I ended that week in my constituency in Yellowhead where, in one day, I had breakfast in Whitecourt, lunch in Swan Hills, dinner in Fort Assiniboine, then a meeting in Barrhead. That is the life of a Foreign Minister who sits in the Canadian House of Commons and intends to stay there.

The two worlds are not as far apart as they might seem. Twenty-six years ago the first long-term agreement with China brought a great boost to the grain economy of Western Canada. When the Korean Trade Minister recently visited Canada, plans were announced for Korea to increase its imports of Canadian canola seed from 11,000 tonnes per year to 15,000 per year.

Every day, political decisions in Paris, Washington, Moscow and other capitals affect the markets and the prices of Canadian farmers. Mikhael Gorbachev is an important man to Fort Assiniboine. The Common Agricultural Programme of the European community has done as much damage to the farmers of Alberta as the National Energy Programme did to our oil worker. Jimmy Gardiner made his mark travelling the back roads of Manitoba. To do his job, Charlie Mayer spent a week in March in the Soviet Union looking for trade opportunities to help maintain Soviet interest in our grain.

That which is true in agriculture also applies to every other area of Canadian involvement. The message is simple: in an interdependent world, international relations are part of the daily lives of all Canadians, and the government must regard foreign policy as an internal priority.

This has been our Government's message since it came to power. We have decided that Canada's foreign policy must express and unify the various elements of Canadian society.

Today I want to discuss briefly two aspects of that growing identity between Canada's domestic interests and our international activity. The first concerns agriculture, which was once the most local of industries, but whose problems now can only be solved by international actions. The second is the deliberate assertion of the unique character of Canada in our international activities.

First, agriculture. Tomorrow, in Ottawa, the Prime Minister will open a special meeting of fourteen countries which consider themselves to be "fair traders in agriculture." Those countries include Argentina, Hungary, Thailand, New Zealand, and other nations who often differ in the crops we produce and the ideologies we profess, but who are common victims of the trade war in agriculture between the United States and the European Economic Community.

The group is called the Cairns Group, because its first meeting was held in Cairns, Australia. The purpose then was to ensure that agriculture became a major focus of the new round of multilateral trade negotiations, which were launched last September in Punta del Este, Uruguay.

We were successful in reaching that first goal. For the first time, the new round of GATT negotiations deals directly with trade in agriculture.

Last week, in Paris, at the OECD, more progress was made. My colleagues, Pat Carney and Michael Wilson, were instrumental in securing an agreement on several principles to guide trade in agriculture. Even more important, there was an agreement to establish a "truce" in the agricultural trade war - an agreement by Europe and the United States not to take new protectionist measures during the GATT discussions.

The meeting tomorrow will seek to broaden the number of nations who will endorse those principles and respect that truce. It will also seek agreement on ways to make faster progress in the GATT negotiations.

There are two reasons the meeting is in Canada. The first is that we are the only country that is a member of the Cairns Group and the Economic Summit, of the seven largest industrialized countries. We are, therefore, a link between countries who are engaged in the trade war in agriculture, and countries who are the victims of that war. Prime Minister Mulroney will be able to convey to other Summit leaders some of the concerns raised by the Cairns Group.

The second reason is that Canada has already played a leading role in putting agriculture on the international agenda. Mr. Mulroney raised the question as Canada's priority preoccupation at the Tokyo Summit last year, and we have maintained that pressure in the GATT, the OECD and elsewhere.

This initiative is proof that nations with a common interest can work together effectively. In this case, that is particularly important to farmers, whose livelihood is threatened by international subsidy practices. But it is also an important indication that the multilateral instinct is still strong in the world. Leadership in activities like this is a practical demonstration of the kind of role Canada can play in the modern world.

Now let me refer to how the unique nature of Canada contributes to our influence in the world.

We are a bilingual country, and each language connects us to a distinct and diverse family of nations - in one case, the Commonwealth; in the other La Francophonie. Both families will gather this year in Canada, La Francophonie in Quebec in September, and the Commonwealth in Vancouver in October.

It is only the second Summit of La Francophonie. For years, it was impossible to find a formula which would allow a Summit to be held. However, Prime Minister Mulroney and Premier Marc Johnson of Quebec reached an agreement which was acceptable also to New Brunswick, and allowed the first Summit of La Francophonie to be convened last year.

The Francophone Summit will become a pragmatic instrument for multilateral cooperation and is destined to become an integrating factor in the international system.

This was our vision when we emphasized the political aspect, thereby enabling the 41 heads of state and government of La Francophonie to consider it together.

No less important is the spirit behind this common undertaking. The recent Meech Lake agreement and the Johnson-Mulroney agreement on the Francophone Summit are the result of the feeling of confidence that now exists here.

We have thrown off the yoke of the past and its fears. We are now prepared to approach the subject of international relations from the viewpoint of obtaining concrete results.

This is the type of attitude that has enabled us to view the visit of a French President to Canada as a normal, albeit very important event.

The Commonwealth is not new - but in a sense it is reborn. In recent years, Canada, and other nations, had let the Commonwealth slip towards the margins of our attentions. This Government was determined to renew the importance of the Commonwealth, in the same spirit that we were determined to find a formula for La Francophonie. We have done that, in particular regarding the fight against apartheid in South Africa.

To Canada, the apartheid system is wrong and must be changed. But words don't change systems. Concerted action does, and the Commonwealth was one of the best instruments available to bring pressure upon South Africa, and simultaneously maintain moderation and unity in the black populations of Southern Africa. Zimbabwe, Zambia and Botswana are neighbours of South Africa and members of the Commonwealth. Since Zimbabwe was created, Mr. Mulroney is the only leader of a Western Government who has personally visited the region. We have been able to play a constructive role in the fight against apartheid, because we have respected and renewed the common traditions which unite the Commonwealth families. Our leadership in the Commonwealth is both an eloquent expression of the character of Canada, and an effective instrument of our international action.

In the spirit of bilingualism I have to demonstrate a certain capacity to speak the other language.

I was speaking about leadership, and I think I might be permitted to quote from Sir John A. MacDonalld who, with Sir Georges Etienne Cartier, founded this country. One of the phrases that guided Sir John when he was asked about how he approached public policy was, I quote him: "Look a little ahead my friend." Not so far ahead - these are my words not Sir John's - that no one will follow you, but far enough ahead to change things.

That is what we have been trying to do in foreign policy, whether it is in the approach to Apartheid in South Africa or the approach to the famine in Sahel; whether it has to do with the determination to have agriculture considered at major international economic meetings, or whether it is the diplomacy and the long hours we use to achieve a successful launch at Punta del Este of a new round of the GATT which will include, not only agriculture, but also new issues like services which not all of the world came to Punta prepared to contemplate in on agreement.

That is the attitude we have taken toward international agencies like UNESCO. Other countries have decided to pull out of UNESCO to show their disapproval. We have decided to stay in to achieve reform from within.

So we have taken an attitude towards the United Nations which was itself in great need of reform. A reform which has now begun in part because of the initiatives of Canada. A reform, by the way, that now includes the presence in the senior management of the United Nations, finally, in that headquarters of equality in the world, a woman. And the first woman to be named to a senior position in the United Nations system was a Canadian woman nominated by us, Therese Paquette Sevigny. We are proud not only of your gendre but her competence, and proud also that Canada has been able to exercise a slight liberating influence upon the traditions of the United Nations.

It is the approach we have taken to arms controls; our emphasis upon verification; our trying to get nations, ranging from Argentina to the Soviet Union, in Ottawa not long ago to discuss practical ways by which the verification which is essential to any confidence in arms control can be achieved.

It's the reason why we and Hungary, countries coming from different blocks, co-sponsored at the CSCE Conference in Vienna just a few months ago a resolution respecting the treatment of minorities within the countries party to the CSCE process.

It indicates the spirit in which we have approached opportunities for Canada in Latin America where we have great interest but not great influence. But where one of the areas where our influence can be applied is in trying to make effective the Contadora process if there is ever a peace to be kept. It is one of the vocations of Canada; that has been to be excellent in peace keeping. And that certainly, if agreements are reached in Central America, is a talent that will be well required, and Canada has contributed substantially to the development of the peace keeping mechanism there.

The approach we have taken; the deliberate opening to Asia at a time when restraint forces the Secretary of State to be closing embassies here and there. We have opened four consular offices and trade offices in the Asian Pacific Rim; in New Zealand; in Shanghai; in Osaka; in Bombay. We know that there is a great opportunity not only for trade but also for cultural exchange across the second of Canada's three oceans.

We are trying to follow a policy of maintaining steady pressure for progress in the world. We have the weight to do that; we have the will to do that. We believe that is what Canadians expect.

Let me say so, I think it is important in a world that is evolving that Canada play that role actively. We have some very unique credentials. We are partners, for example, with India and Zimbabwe in the Commonwealth; with Tunisia and Zaire in the Francophonie; with the Soviet Union in Northern development; with all of the industrialized powers in the Economic Summit; with Mexico and Argentina in support of Contadora; with Thailand and Brazil in the Cairns Group, whose meeting opens tomorrow.

Those associations give us a reach beyond our traditional roots. We are a country of considerable power, but not a superpower. One of the realities of our existence is that our influence exceeds our power, if we use that influence well, and if we make use of all of the instruments that are available to us.

The world needs the active participation of a country like Canada - respected, well connected, coming from literally all corners of the world - and a country, whatever the temptation, remains fundamentally committed to the importance of multilateralism in a world like ours.

This is not necessarily an easy age, an easy time for multilateral institutions. It is getting better. There is progress instead of conflict on the arms control front. There is reform in the United Nations rather than people stepping aside. There has been a time - certainly it is evident in trade questions - when the instinct to move together, to act together, has begun to erode. It is very important that countries like Canada, countries who were present at the beginning of the United Nations, present at the beginning of the GATT, present at the beginning of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, remember the stake we have and the influence we have in maintaining that kind of multilateral system.

The interest of every Canadian community, from the largest to the smallest, are directly affected by international questions. Today, for example, we are concerned with the safety of Canadian citizens in Fiji. But we are also concerned with the situation among our farmers, our businessmen and all Canadians affected by international development. We are part of a shrinking world.

It was a Canadian, Marshall McClewan, who invented the phrase, "The Global Village". I think we all marvelled at the wit of the phrase before we understood how directly it impacted upon all of our lives. That is no longer a phrase. That is now an inescapable reality. An inescapable reality which is not a threat to Canada, but rather an opportunity for us to shape the world in a way that accords more exactly with the traditions of tolerance and the traditions of moderation which have been part of this country.