

SPEECH BY SIR CHRISTOPHER SOAMES
VICE PRESIDENT OF THE COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES
FOLLOWING THE SIGNATURE OF THE AGREEMENT BETWEEN
CANADA AND THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY
OTTAWA - TUESDAY 6 JULY 1976

Mr Minister, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen. This Agreement that we have signed together today marks a new departure in the external policy both of Canada and of the European Community. It is the first agreement of its type that either of us has made with an industrialised partner. For us it gives a new international dimension to that collaborative approach to economic relations, which is one of the hallmarks of the developing personality of our young Community. And you in Canada see your own purposes and own interests reflected in it.

I will not dwell on the genesis of our Agreement, nor on the negotiations which brought it to fruition. Suffice it to say that in spite of the complexities involved, few negotiations have been completed so swiftly.

Why so? Firstly because we both had the political will, and secondly because we both knew what we wanted, and had taken the trouble to discover what each other wanted.

What does our Agreement mean in practice? It means we have set a scene, no more, and no less. The politicians and the bureaucrats have done their work and set up a framework for a more intimate economic relationship - a framework which offers each side possibilities for expansion and opportunities for cooperation in many areas of common interest. Now we need a response to this challenge from our businessmen, our firms, from our entrepreneurs, from our enterprise, both private and public.

In our sort of society, in our sort of economy, it is not for the likes of us to instruct businessmen in the making of their investment decisions, or to tell them where to send their goods and where to buy their raw materials. All this must be up to them, and our function can only be to set the scene and to facilitate cooperation and exchange.

It is a simple truism to say that Europe and Canada have much to offer each other. We are to each other, among other things, natural economic allies. The opportunities that this Agreement could provide us transcend straightforward trade: between countries such as ours, trade will flow in any case. The horizons that it opens up are wider. If it encourages enterprising and responsible people on both sides to see that they have a stake in the future of each other's economic resources, then a major advance could be made in the development of a new economic relationship between two economically powerful industrialised nations.

This Agreement is also in effect an acknowledgement of that high degree of interdependence to which we are both committed - or even condemned - in the modern world in which we live. This applies both to our relationships together and to each of our relationships with the developing world.

Mr Minister, Europe and Canada are bound together not only by the prospect of an increasingly interdependent economic relationship but also by a common tradition, a shared cultural heritage and a sense of natural affinity. You have developed a new way of life in a new world. But the roots of your civilisation lie in Europe, and the Canadian people have stoutly defended them in two world wars on European soil. European unity is making it possible to give our historical relationship a new substance. It is directed to a new and hopeful future - for it will be based not only on what we can do for each other, but also on what each appreciates it can do for others.

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