

FIRST MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY/CANADA JOINT COOPERATION COMMITTEE

BRUSSELS, 10 DECEMBER 1976

OPENING REMARKS BY PRESIDENT F.X. ORTOLI

Minister,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you, in company with Canada's distinguished Ambassador to the Communities, Mr Cadieux, and your impressive team of advisors from Ottawa, to this, the first meeting of the Joint Cooperation Committee which is now to be set up under the Framework Agreement for Commercial and Economic Cooperation between Canada and the European Communities.

As my friend and colleague, Mr Max Van der Stoel, said last July in Ottawa, this Framework Agreement constitutes a wholly novel instrument in the Community's external relations. This is in fact the first time that the Community has concluded a non-preferential agreement with a highly industrialised country.

It is surely right that we in Europe should not concentrate all our efforts in the external field on building up links just with other European countries outside the Community, or solely with developing countries. It is surely important that we have sought closer ties with Canada - a country which shares our democratic ideals and institutions, whose origins go back to two of our Member States and whose economic interdependence with us is a factor of our daily life. You have developed a new way of life in a new country; but the roots of your civilization lie in Europe. And we share with you, as with the other major industrialized countries, the United States and Japan, a heavy and continuing responsibility for the way in which the world economy develops. A closer relationship between us, which is directed against no-one, must, I believe, prove to be in both our interests.

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The preamble to the Framework Agreement calls for "close coöperation across the whole range of commercial and economic endeavour". Probably never before has such cooperation between us been so necessary and its potential scope so vast, reaching as it does from the discussions on important fishery matters upon which we are already embarked, following the decision which we have both taken to extend our fishing waters to 200 miles; to the respective and complementary roles which we are called upon to play in Geneva, in Paris and at New York on matters affecting the world economy; to the practical work of implementing together, through this Joint Cooperation Committee a pragmatic and constructive programme of commercial and economic work.

I should like to say a word, at this stage, to the dedicated officials on both sides who will now be settling down to their new tasks in the Committee, and whose efforts and imagination will contribute so largely to the future success of the novel enterprise upon which Canada and the Community are now embarked.

I do not mean by this that the Joint Cooperation Committee will constitute the absolute be-all and end-all of our Transatlantic relationship. What we shall be doing here is partly to build upon and to complement the relations which Canada already enjoys with individual Member States of the European Community. And partly to facilitate and encourage the all-important efforts of our businessmen and entrepreneurs. In many sectors, it will be up to private industry to intensify the economic cooperation between Canada and the Community which all of us so desire - economic and commercial cooperation through the private sector for which the Agreement will provide only the frame.

But what I do most earnestly state is that the Government of Canada and the Institutions of the European Community cannot afford to rest on their laurels, content with a piece of paper duly signed and sealed, and with oral professions of mutual good intent. It will fall to both sides, and notably to this Joint Committee, to act as the midwives of change and as the exponents of what we in the Commission sometimes term the new economic diplomacy.

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Things are not what they used to be. Times are changing. We cannot be content with the rules of conduct, with the aspirations and attitudes of the 1950s and 1960s, where these will need further development and elaboration if they are to help us through the 1980s.

Economic integration across the Atlantic has reached an unprecedented degree of density. But it is also unprecedentedly exposed to challenge on the domestic front both in Europe and in North America. We must therefore learn the full lessons of our interdependence and we must bring our economic and commercial policies closer into line.

Accordingly, the diplomacy of economic cooperation will be the art of persuasion and consensus. We must initiate a process of growing together. Rather than waste time attempting to renegotiate the established legacies and fixed policies of the past, we must aim to construct the joint consensus of the future.

Coming now to the immediate business which we have to hand, I take encouragement from the various constructive ideas which our respective officials have been exchanging and which they are now to nail down under the detailed agenda points for today's meeting.

Procedurally, I think it is sensible and businesslike to establish a minimum necessary infrastructure to support the present Committee, which in normal circumstances is not likely to be able to meet more often than once a year. In the proposed Preparatory and General Cooperation Subcommittee and Industrial Subcommittee (should they meet with your approval), it will be possible to examine further the programme of work which it is now suggested that Canada and the Communities should tackle over the next two years.

I find the suggested programme rich, varied and interesting. We must certainly consider ways and means by which our commercial exchanges should be expanded and diversified. And we must review the industrial and other sectors in which economic cooperation looks really promising - non-ferrous metals, construction, nuclear industries, marine resources and the rest.

Naturally, we shall not be able to run before we can walk. I think both sides have seen the Framework Agreement as an essentially evolutionary instrument, likely to offer initially perhaps only modest results; but which will progressively lead on to greater and more ambitious things, as policies on both sides of the Atlantic develop and permit; and as the necessary consensus for positive action is hammered out.

The Scylla and Charybdis of the new relationship will be two equal and opposite temptations - first, the temptation to take on too much - a vaulting ambition which overleaps itself and falls on the other side; and, second, the temptation to content ourselves with a mere exchange of information, thereby converting the Joint Cooperation Committee into a talking-shop in which able and scarce senior officials will do little more than waste their time and our respective taxpayers' money.

Over the next year or so, therefore, I believe that we shall need to find two or three projects, two or three areas of endeavour, where our mutual interests meet and match each other and where Canada and the Community can succeed in realising opportunities and securing practical and beneficial results which would otherwise have passed them by or lain beyond their reach.

I am confident that the Community and Canada will together go forward to success and prosperity. What is certain is that the new relationship is now well implanted; that there is anything to play for; and, in short, that cooperation between us is, to use the vernacular, "a natural".

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I confess that the Framework Agreement is one which it has given me personally great pleasure to help create. Its origins go back some way now. I think in particular of the Paris Summit in 1972, when the leaders of the old Community of the Six called for the establishment of a "constructive dialogue" with Canada. I think also of Prime Minister Trudeau's own visits to Europe in 1974 and 1975 and of the talks that we had together here in Brussels on the need for a new relationship between Canada and the enlarged Community of the Nine.

I now look forward, Sir, with keen interest, to your own introductory words, so that together we may launch the Joint Cooperation Committee on its path. And then, after we both have had our say, the time for speeches will definitively have run to its end. Of these speeches, I will not say that there have been too many! But there have certainly been many of them - speeches at the opening of the negotiations and at their close; speeches at the signature of the Agreement and at its ratification; speeches in Brussels, in Ottawa, in Strasbourg and Luxembourg; speeches after dinner, at lunch and even, I suspect, sometimes before breakfast. Powerful though is the spoken word, we can, I think, today at last move on to something more down-to-earth. For today we announce an era for action, a time for translating today's broad aspirations into tomorrow's accomplished facts.