I would like to welcome you all here, particularly our American and our Mexican visitors. Many of our Trilateral Commission members have served in this House of Commons and in the Senate. I have to tell you we are very proud of this building. We are very proud of this institution. It was my privilege to serve down the hall here in the Green Chamber in the House of Commons for some 15 years. It was a great privilege, as any member of any legislature will say, to represent your constituents, but also in this particularly interesting building.

This building actually was burned down in 1917 and rebuilt. For those of you who are history buffs, you may wish to just go up to the end of the hall before you have dinner and look in the library, which is at the far end. That library survived the great fire, and so did the original piece of building of the House of Commons which was built in the 1870s. It is a very attractive place and represents a little bit about what Canada was like in the 1870s. It has all of the provinces around the room, but some of the modern provinces are not there. It has a big statue of Queen Victoria. I'm not too sure what that statue would be if we were building it today, but it might not be the British Monarch.

I just want to welcome some of our friends from other legislatures. Jim McCrery is here. He would be very happy, he is from Louisiana, this is a bilingual legislature, and so he can speak as much French as he likes in this building. We are very happy to have him and his colleagues here.

This room, you might be interested to know, is called the Railway Room, but for a long time it was the Reading Room. In an earlier time when Parliament was less stressful, Prime Minister Pearson would walk out of the House of Commons down to the library and sit here and read. Older members of Parliament say that if you wanted to chat with the prime minister, you could find him sitting in a corner reading, and you could go and talk to him. Prime ministers don't do that anymore. They don't have the time or even perhaps the inclination. I won't speak to that.

So we are now in a reading room where you may get railroaded if you aren't careful. We are very fortunate tonight to have two remarkable Canadians with us.

André Pratte, on my right, is the editor of La Presse, which is certainly, I would say, the most
influential francophone newspaper in our country, certainly by virtue of its distribution, but also by the fact that it is read. André, I can promise you in Toronto we can buy *La Presse*, and we do read it. We are very glad to have you here with us tonight. André is also a well-known author. He has written many books about confederation, about federalism, and is a widely respected member of Canada.

Andrew Coyne, to my left, is presently the highly respected national editor of *Maclean's Magazine*. He has also been not only a commentator on the Canadian political scene for many years, he is regularly seen on national television as a member of a panel which is a very popular panel for those of you that watch CBC, and sort of give us the overview of the week. He can tell you where all of the bodies are buried. He's killed a few of them, so he should know.

What we are going to ask of Andrew and André is ten minutes each, sort of a tour d'horizon of Canada, the economy, but also the politics. We just had an election which didn't quite inspire the enthusiasm of the election that we had in the United States, but it was an election nonetheless, and we obviously have the same economic problems.

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I might just make two very quick observations. Our colleagues from the United States and from Mexico living in congressional systems with regular periods of elections perhaps might not appreciate the comments about minority governments, which are important in a parliamentary system. It was my role, at one time, to be the leader of the opposition in the Parliament of Canada. I have to tell you that in this House, when we had a stable majority government, there was a certain degree of respect on either side of the House of Commons for one another and an understanding that it was four years before the next election. There was a stability in the process.

When you have a minority situation, every day could lead to an election the next day. The degree of partisanship, and I know we have some colleagues from the United States who understand this, came to the point where I can honestly say, as a former member of Parliament, that if we talked to many of our citizens, they felt that they lost respect for the institution of Parliament. They watched what happened here and said that those people are behaving irrationally.

What they didn't realize was, of course, that every day was a fight to the death. You never had an opportunity for the opposition to stand back and say that we have to rethink what we are going to do, we want to take a long-term strategic view. As leader of the opposition if I said to my caucus that we don't want to go after that issue, let's leave it, we want a long-term view, they would say don't be ridiculous. You have got to go for the jugular. You have got to kill them tomorrow, and the same thing on the government side. There was no sense of taking a longer, more balanced perspective within the House itself, within the political system. That creates great instability that perhaps those of you who live in a congressional system, both Mexicans and Americans, perhaps wouldn't appreciate, but those who live in a parliamentary system would
understand the nature of that.

Second, I think that André's point about the movement of power, economic and structure, to the west is not dissimilar to that that we saw when we were dealing with our American friends. We have here two former ambassadors from Canada and the United States who would both, I am sure, agree with me that politically we saw a move from the northwest and from the north towards the southwest and the south in the United States, and that had an effect on our relationship with the United States, because all our northern friends and those congressional friends that we developed were suddenly replaced by Californians, by Texans, by others that really had little understanding of Canada.

So the change in the demographics and the change of the economic power structure within the United States itself have had an influence on Canada's relationship with the United States and how we have developed it in an institutional framework and on a political basis. In that sense, we are lucky to have as a member of the Trilateral Commission Peter Lougheed, who is here with us tonight. Peter was the prime minister of Alberta who really developed Alberta as the modern economic power that it is today, with some understanding about what a province has to do to preserve its wealth and develop it in a way which is for the benefit of the citizens, not just exploit the natural resources that are there.

Canada is still a heavily resource-dependant society. You can see that reflected in our Canadian dollar. We went from $1.10 last year, vis-à-vis the U.S. dollar, down to 77 cents today. This is totally insane. Nobody can deal with these kinds of violent swings, but it has a lot to do with commodity prices, the price of oil and other things, and it reflects the sort of view of the world.

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