

THE FIRST DAY

NEWS RELEASE – 10:30 A.M., MONDAY, MARCH 11, 1985

Twenty years ago a news release was issued announcing the formation of The Council of Canadians. To celebrate our 20th anniversary, we thought members - both new and long-standing - would enjoy seeing this news release.

The formation of a new national organization was announced today in Ottawa. The Council of Canadians has as its fundamental goals, a new and better Canada with more and better jobs for Canadians, a higher standard of living for Canadians, and a sovereign Canada that plays an important role among the world community of nations.

Edmonton publisher Mel Hurtig said that the C.O.C. will be... broadly based both politically and geographically... and positive in its programs.

Ottawa Mayor Marion Dewar said: "Only by celebrating our strengths and culture and our unique role in the world community can we as Canadians embrace our global opportunities and responsibilities. The Council of Canadians brings together Canadians from every region, every political philosophy, and every economic sector towards that goal."

Speaking from Halifax, the Hon. Eric Kierans said: "Does it matter who owns Canadian farms, resources and markets? If it does, isn't it time to stop hemorrhaging? In many countries, both developed and developing, the phrase 'we don't want to be Canadianized' means that we don't want to lose control of our economy, our culture and our sovereignty."

Anne Claire Poirier, Montreal filmmaker, said: "At the mid-point of a life spent in seeking and defending my identity as a woman and as a Quebecker, I am today extending my action to the defence of Canadian autonomy, without which my identity is at risk. Twenty years of working at the National Film Board have finally convinced me that only powerful and

publicly supported cultural institutions will allow us, not only to continue to be what we are, but above all to become what we want to be."

The C.O.C. believes that Canada should have foreign and defence policies which reflect both the best interest of Canadians and the independence of Canada as a sovereign nation.

The C.O.C. believes Canada can and should play an even greater role among the world community of nations, especially in attempting to de-escalate the tensions between our superpower neighbours. The C.O.C. believes that Canada is both geographically and historically situated to work towards world peace and encourage other nations to these efforts.

Mr. Hurtig said the new organization is very concerned about the dangers of a possible comprehensive bilateral trade agreement with the U.S. and the potential harmful effects to the Canadian economy of such an agreement. The C.O.C. will devote much effort towards studying the economic and political ramifications of the soon-to-be-released report of the Macdonald Royal Commission, which is widely thought to be on the verge of recommending a free trade agreement with the U.S. Later this year the C.O.C. will release alternate strategies for diversifying Canadian trade.

Mr. Hurtig stressed that the new Council is not anti-American, narrowly nationalistic, or against all forms of foreign investment. However, he made it clear that the C.O.C. is very much opposed to the growth of foreign ownership and foreign control of Canada...

Mr. Hurtig said the C.O.C. does not support anti-Americanism or chauvinistic nationalism. Rather, he said, the new organization will advocate positive policies in the national interest, similar to policies other nations around the world adopt in the best interests of their citizens.

The C.O.C. has been formed because of a growing apprehension across the country to the "Continentalism" of the federal Conservative government, in some sectors of the business community and in some research and economic institutions.

Some of the members of the C.O.C. are: Doris Anderson, Margaret Atwood, Maude Barlow, Pierre Berton, Gerry Caplan, Stephen Clarkson, Sheila Copps M.P., Mayor Marion Dewar, Hon. T.C. Douglas, Graeme Gibson, Hon. Walter Gordon, Hon. Herb Gray, Grace Hartman, Mel Hurtig, Pauline Jewett M.P., Hon. Eric Kierans, Margaret Laurence, Gordon Laxer, James Lorimer, Paul Martin Jr., Farley Mowat, Peter C. Newman, Anne Claire Poirier, Heather Robertson, Lloyd Shaw, David Suzuki, Mel Watkins, and Robert White.

