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THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

BACKGROUND BRIEFING
BY
SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL
ON THE VISIT OF
PRIME MINISTER MULRONEY OF CANADA

September 25, 1984

The Briefing Room

1:27 P.M. EDT

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: The meeting, including the Rose Garden event with the astronauts and the luncheon, went on for approximately an hour and forty-five minutes.

The atmosphere was as friendly as it could be. And there was a positive and open discussion between the President and Prime Minister on a wide range of issues.

The President began by congratulating the Prime Minister on his recent overwhelming electoral victory and commented on the very busy first week in office the Prime Minister has had with the visit to Canada of both the Pope and the Queen.

The first part of the meeting was devoted to a discussion of global issues, including East-West relations, the President's UN General Assembly speech, arms control and the NATO Alliance.

With regard to East-West relations, the President indicated he wanted to pursue the ideas mentioned in his UN General Assembly speech. He noted he wanted to build a sustained dialogue with the Soviets. And he said he wanted to improve the atmosphere between the U.S. and the Soviet Union and build a more constructive relationship.

The Prime Minister encouraged the President in his efforts and said he hoped they were met with Soviet responsiveness.

There was a discussion of new approaches in our dialogue with the Soviets and expectations for Friday's meeting with Foreign Minister Gromyko.

The President said it was in both the U.S. and Soviet interests to resume serious discussions on arms control and said the U.S. was ready, willing and able to sit down.

The Prime Minister characterized the President's UN General Assembly speech as remarkable and commended him for his initiatives.

The Prime Minister indicated his commitment to enhancing Canada's NATO ties, a position which was welcomed by the President.

There was also a discussion of the role Canada can play in international affairs as a middle power.

Some time was spent on bilateral issues, including a discussion of trade, investment and environmental issues.

With regard to trade, the Prime Minister talked of stimulating domestic Canadian growth. And there was a discussion of the strength the U.S. economy has shown and the positive effects this can have on Canada's recovery.

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The Prime Minister noted the need to ensure Canadian access to U.S. markets, expressed appreciation for the President's recent decision on steel.

The Prime Minister said these actions were an indication Canada has much to gain by maintaining friendly relations with the U.S.

The Prime Minister spoke of his desire to increase private investment flows in Canada in order to reinvigorate Canada's economy.

On the question of management of U.S.-Canada relationship, the Prime Minister spoke of the importance to Canada of its relations with the U.S. He talked of more high-level meetings at the Cabinet level.

With regard to managing the relationship better, there was an agreement between the President and Prime Minister that the dialogue begun today should continue, most likely on a yearly basis with meetings between them.

The President noted that Secretary Shultz was committed to continuing his quarterly meetings with his Canadian counterpart. In that regard, we would like to announce that the next such quarterly ministerial meeting will be held October 15 and 16 in Canada.

It is important to note, this was not a negotiating session. No decisions or commitments were expected or made. It was meant to be the opening dialogue between the President and Prime Minister with a detailed discussion of the multilateral and bilateral relationship to be left to the October Foreign Ministers meeting.

Q Did acid rain come up? And, if not, why not?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: It was mentioned in passing, along with a number of other bilateral issues, as a way of underscoring them for consideration at the upcoming ministerial meeting. There was not a discussion of positions or of any of the details regarding acid rain.

Q Was there a desire

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to avoid it? It seems to have been conspicuously absent from the agenda.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: No, I don't believe there was a desire to avoid it. The time on the schedule, almost an hour and 45 minutes -- actually, an hour and a half if you delete the astronaut portion -- was open for whatever the President or Prime Minister wanted to discuss.

Q But isn't that the most pressing bilateral issue? It's clear it's something that neither of them wanted to discuss.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: No, I don't believe that's correct. You have to understand the Prime Minister's been in office -- a week ago yesterday is when he started. I think there was a decision on both sides that a detailed discussion of the bilateral and multi-lateral agenda would be left to the upcoming ministerial meeting. Afterall, that's only two and a half weeks off.

You also should understand that it's -- I believe there will be a -- the Throne speech made in Canada sometime late October, early November, which is the point at which the Canadian -- new Canadian government would be presenting its ideas on many of these issues. In some ways, it would have been premature to try to go through all of the files today.

Q Was there any note of concern when he raised it? Did he say this is an issue which Canadians care a lot about or was there any kind of concern? Or was it just listed, is the way you seem to --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: It was listed with a number of other bilateral issues for the ministerial meeting. However, there isn't any need to underscore it. I think it's very clear, both at the White House and at the State Department, for that matter, that acid rain is the number one issue on the U.S.-Canada relationship. After all, almost every meeting we've had at the ministerial level has, at some point, considered the acid rain question. And I might point out that when Mr. Mulroney was here last June, he mentioned the acid rain issue in very specific terms and made a suggestion about what he felt the President should do regarding it.

Q How did the Canadians say there were going to enhance their NATO ties?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: There was a discussion of the increase in defense spending along the lines of what Mr. Mulroney mentioned during his campaign. In addition, there was a general comment by the Prime Minister regarding keeping Canada's NATO commitments.

Q Did Central America come up?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: It did not.

Q Could you list all the bilateral issues that were touched on, please?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Well, there was a discussion of trade FIRA, investment, the national energy program, although there was not specific mention of the back-in -- acid rain. There was also a fairly lengthy discussion of -- at the request of the Prime Minister -- of various programs that have been started by the U.S. administration in the area of finding waste and duplication in the U.S. government.

Q Could you describe the personal chemistry? Was it sort of like a vice president of a company meeting the chairman of the board?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Not at all. It was very much a conversation between equals, as I might point out, their discussion in June was.

When I said in starting that it was as friendly and positive as a meeting could be, I checked that with Mr. Mulroney's staff afterward because, really, I don't think two people could have gotten on better.

Q Did his advice ask to include cutting -- how to cut social spending?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Pardon me?

Q Did the advice asked about cutting government spending include --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: No, it was government waste and duplication, not necessarily in the area of spending for government programs. More in the line of the Grace Commission and some of the management programs that we've seen the U.S. administration undertake.

Q That previous question on how they got along and the chemistry, that's not a bad question because when they came out and the President was speaking and the Prime Minister was waiting his turn, he didn't seem to know what to do with his hands. He kept putting them in his pocket and he kept -- we wondered whether there was some -- he had some problem there. (Laughter.)

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: The President or the Prime Minister?

Q The Prime Minister. I mean, we can show you the video tape -- those hands are just like this as he's waiting to speak, and we just wondered if there was some nervousness or upset between them.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I can't comment on why he was doing that, if, in fact, he was doing it. However, I might point out -- excuse me -- if I could answer the question.

Q Please.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I might point out that there was absolutely nothing in the meeting that would have led anyone to be uneasy walking out of it. It was very, very friendly.

Q Did they talk about sectoral free trade?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Not specifically. Just in the sense that trade and investment in Canada was very important, especially as a means of Canada making its way out of the economic situation that it's in -- with high unemployment, a deficit nearly twice ours as a percentage of GNP.

Q Did the Prime Minister make clear he was changing FIRA and the National Energy Program?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: No, he didn't. He indicated that he expected to have some initiatives in those areas soon, perhaps when he calls Parliament back into session.

Q And they're meeting for sure now once a year? There's an agreement on that?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: That's certainly what it seemed like to me. The President was very specific in his answer when the Prime Minister

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suggested yearly meetings.

Q Anything about high interest rates and deficits?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: No there wasn't. There was a discussion of general economic trends and the need to spur increased growth in Canada. There were some comments about the strength of the American economy and its recovery, but not specifically about interest rates.

Q Did the Prime Minister suggest how Canada might act as a middle power in sustaining the dialogue with the East bloc?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: That was in the context of the traditional role that Canada has played, and his desire to continue that role. I think those of us who follow the Canadian scene understand what the specifics of what that is. He did not go into any of those specifics, though.

Q Is there any --

Q What about acid rain? What did they say?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: As I said earlier, it was listed as one of those bilateral issues that should be left for further discussion at the ministerial meeting to take place in approximately two and a half weeks.

Q Well, what did they spend an hour and a half talking about?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: That's -- excuse me, let me finish this one. Pardon me?

Q Is that what they said you would tell them --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: That's what Mr. Mulroney said when he was talking about a series of issues, yes.

Q Is there any prospect for any agreement or tangible progress on the ministerial meeting on this particularly touchy subject?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: We'll have to wait and see. After all, it's a new government; a government that's been in power for -- this is the 8th day. A lot of new ministers who are getting into their departments. I think the ministerial meeting -- that would be, what, three and a half weeks after they came into power, I think it could be a very useful session.

Q Well, is there any groundwork at this point that would lead one to expect tangible results from that meeting on this subject?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Well, we see it as an opportunity to walk through the entire agenda, see where -- what there positions are, any changes that -- they might be considering; to go through our positions and see what sort of programs and management techniques we can devise at that meeting and after that meeting to address where we are. We very much see that as the kick-off.

Q Were there any differences of view expressed on any

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subject -- differences of view, or differences of approach on subjects, at all?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: The Prime Minister reiterated some comments I believe he had made earlier during the campaign about the level of dialogue that existed between the U.S. and the Soviet Union over the last few years. During his campaign he was encouraging increases in that dialogue, and he reiterated that concern -- the concern of the Canadian people regarding the state of U.S.-Soviet relations.

Q Excuse me --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: But again, that was in a very constructive way, given the Gromyko visit coming up, and expectations for that meeting.

Q The previous Prime Minister was quite critical of the way President Reagan conducted East-West relations, and nuclear arms control talks. Are you saying that the Prime Minister today was just reflecting the views of the Canadians and not his own?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Well, first of all, regarding Mr. Trudeau's approach -- our opinion of the Trudeau peace initiative was that it was constructive, not that it was critical.

Q "Dammit, Pierre," is constructive? You call that remark --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: That was -- wait -- that was a different setting. That was at the London Summit. When they met here to specifically discuss that initiative, the President's quote was that he wished Mr. Trudeau Godspeed in his efforts. So --

Q Yes, but that's not -- (Laughter.) -- it's somewhat broader than just Trudeau's peace initiative. I think he did have a track record of being fairly critical of the United States in regard to East-West relations.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: In the years he was in power, yes, he did comment. With regard to specifically what Mr. Mulroney said, though -- he was talking about his comments -- Mr. Mulroney's comments during the campaign. That's all I'm trying to reflect in the meeting.

Q Was there any indication by the President or the Prime Minister that this is a different kind of relationship, now; that they agree politically? That he and Trudeau did not? That they have a different view of the world? Was there any of that kind of talk in the meeting at all?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: It was not a discussion relating to their agreeing politically. It wasn't a discussion, really, of political philosophy. The discussion did not develop that way. When you ask, do we foresee a major change in U.S.-Canada relations -- we'll have to wait and see. Our position has been that two or three years ago -- U.S.-Canada relations -- there was a downturn; but in the last few years, especially with Secretary Shultz's commitment to meet four times a year, things have improved. That's been reflected on both sides of the border in comments by the Canadian Foreign Minister and Canada's Ambassador here to

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the U.S. So I think we're starting from a much improved situation. There's always room for it to improve from there, however.

Q Well, isn't it clear the President's just a lot happier to have this guy in power than the person he succeeded? I mean, there isn't any secret about that, is there?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: All I can tell you is that they got on very well today. I think that bodes well for the President's relationship with the Prime Minister. What that means from a historical point of view, I'll leave to the historians.

Q Can you clarify whether, when Mr. Mulroney was praising the President's steel decision, he was praising it because it is not protectionist or because it is protectionist? (Laughter.)

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: From the Canadian point of view, I believe it's that it was not protectionist.

There's a very interesting aspect to that. Approximately 11,000 truckloads of steel move from Canada to the U.S. through four or five border checkpoints every month. If there were global quotas that had to be imposed at those checkpoints we, in essence, would be closing down those checkpoints. So --

Q If we --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: -- from that point, it continues the present level of steel imports to this country from Canada and exports to Canada.

I think you have to note that it's an integrated North American steel industry, and I think his comments were a reflection of that.

Q Do we have any information yet as to whether the new government will replace Ambassador Gotlieb and his letter-writing wife? (Laughter.)

Q Or either one of them? (Laughter.)

Q One or the other.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: That's really not something for me to comment on.

Q Well, I mean, it is. Do we know yet whether they've notified us that they're going to change Ambassadors? That's all I'm asking.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: There's been no such notification.

Q Would you expect it?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: We'll wait and see if it happens.

Q Mr. Mulroney made a comment about --

Q This is a clue, Sam --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Excuse me. If I might add one thing here: During the time I've been working on Canadian-U.S. relations, my experience has been that Ambassador

Gotlieb has been a very effective Ambassador in this town for Canadian interests. I think --

Q So we don't want him replaced. (Laughter.)

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I think that's a reflection of how he's viewed at the State Department. So we're certainly not going to be commenting on whatever Mr. Mulroney decides to do with his Foreign Service. That's his choice.

Q You're not in the pay of The Post, are you?
(Laughter.)

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I guarantee you, I am not in the pay of The Post. (Laughter.)

Q On the subject of the yearly meetings, I assume you mean in -- I assume you mean in addition to the Summit meeting, since the Prime Minister and President do see each other there.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: That's right. In fact, this may develop along the lines that Secretary Shultz' meetings have developed. Two of the Foreign Ministerial meetings are full bilateral, multilateral agenda meetings, last the better part of two days, one in this country, one in Canada. The other two quarterly meetings take place on the periphery of multilateral events, like the ASEAN meeting in Djakarta, Indonesia a few months back or one of the NATO Ministerial, something like that, where they'll meet for a shorter period of time.

I suspect that if this works out the way we -- the way it might possibly work out, we could have one meeting between the President and Prime Minister, followed by, perhaps, something bilaterally at the Economic Summit.

Q Well, would the President go to Ottawa next and -- Are we talking about President Reagan going to Ottawa?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: You're raising a protocol question and those certain kinds of meetings have to be exchanged from one country to another country and so perhaps it would be --

MR. SIMS: Last question, please, sir.

Q Mulroney made a remark about not being subservient. Did anything like that come up in the meeting?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I'm not familiar with that remark.

Q His remarks with -- at the Astronaut ceremony, he talked about refurbishing the relationship, but not being subservient, but a maturity of the relationship.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I think it was very clear from the meeting that Mr. Mulroney is going to be a -- the Prime Minister is going to be a very active and effective advocate of Canadian concerns. He comes across in a very precise and assertive way.

Q But did he make remarks along those lines in the meeting, suggesting that we'd like to get along, but you should

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understand we're not going to be subservient?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Not specifically.

Q Well, what did he --

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: He did not specifically touch that.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END

1:48 P.M. EDT