

with a creed of hard work and independence and enterprise. Don has always represented those qualities for me. Now he will represent those qualities for America.

Mr. Secretary.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:32 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary Evans' wife, Susan Marinis Evans. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Secretary Evans.

Remarks Following Discussions With Prime Minister Jean Chretien of Canada and an Exchange With Reporters February 5, 2001

President Bush. It's my honor to welcome the Prime Minister of our closest friend to the White House. This is the first visitor I have received since I've been the President. We've just had a very good visit. We talked about a lot of subjects, and I confirmed to the Prime Minister that America appreciates our friendship, appreciates our trading partner. We share a long border, and it's been a peaceful border.

I assured him that we will consult and keep him abreast of decisions that we make here that will affect Canada and peace in the world. And I look forward to not only reaffirming our friendship with the country; I look forward to developing a friendship with this good man right here. So it's an honor to welcome you here, sir.

Prime Minister Chretien. Thank you very much, Mr. President. For me, it's a great pleasure to be the first foreign leader to come and visit with you. But we feel it's a kind of a cousin coming to visit, because you know, we are two neighbors for so long, 4,000 miles of border, with no problems, big problems. Whenever they were our problems, we can talk, consult, and try to find an acceptable solution.

So I can tell the press that it was a very friendly meeting and a very productive meeting. We covered a lot of areas and look forward for a very good period with President Bush. On behalf of the Canadians, I want to wish you the best luck in your job. You're at the beginning, and

I know that you will be successful. And when you need us, we'll be there, and we hope that when we need you, you will be there.

President Bush. Thank you, sir.

Prime Minister Chretien. Mr. President, if you will allow me in French, now, we had a very good meeting. This is the first time that I had a state visit—President Bush. We talked about many, many issues. We talked about our bilateral relations. We talked about other leaders and other people, and I think that the beginning of our personal relationship is a very good one.

Canada-U.S. Relations

Q. Mr. President, what issue do you think will be the one that will be the biggest test of the leadership in the next 6 months?

President Bush. For me as the President, in regards to Canada?

Q. Yes.

President Bush. Convincing Congress to promote free trade throughout our hemisphere. A free trading hemisphere is going to benefit Canada and will benefit the United States, and we've got a lot of work to do—for me to do—to get fast-track negotiating authority.

We're going to have a summit in Quebec, and I'm looking forward to being hosted by the Prime Minister, here, and the whole notion is to promote free trade and open markets around the hemisphere.