

MEIJI GAKUIN UNIVERSITY

Remarks on the occasion of receiving an Honorary Doctorate

YOUR IMPERIAL MAJESTY, PRESIDENT OSHIO, MEMBERS OF THE SELECTION COMMITTEES, MEMBERS OF THE FACULTY AND STUDENTS OF MEIJI GAKUIN UNIVERSITY, FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES, GOOD MORNING.

ALLOW ME TO BEGIN BY THANKING MOST SINCERELY HER IMPERIAL HIGHNESS, PRINCESS TAKAMADO, FOR ATTENDING THIS CEREMONY TODAY. I AM MOST GRATEFUL.

I AM MOST INDEBTED AS WELL TO PRESIDENT OSHIO AND THE MEIJIING GAKUIN COMMITTEES - 大学評議会, 常務理事会, 理事会 - FOR THE SINGULAR AND GREAT HONOUR THEY HAVE BESTOWED UPON ME, AN HONORARY DOCTORATE FROM THIS FINE UNIVERSITY. I ACCEPT IT WITH CONSIDERABLE HUMILITY AND NOT INCONSIDERABLE JOY.

I ACCEPT IT AS A MARK, NOT OF MY ACCOMPLISHMENTS, BUT OF MEIJI GAKUIN UNIVERSITY'S CENTURY LONG EFFORT TO MAINTAIN AND EXPAND ITS HISTORIC RELATIONSHIP WITH THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, INCLUDING WITH CANADA.

MEIJI GAKUIN UNIVERSITY HAS COLLABORATED WITH CANADA IN THE SPREAD OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT CANADA AND JAPAN TO OUR RESPECTIVE STUDENTS AND CITIZENS FOR MANY YEARS. IT HAS ESTABLISHED AND MAINTAINS AN ACTIVE CANADIAN STUDIES CENTER. MANY MEIJI GAKUIN UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS HAVE PLAYED EXTREMELY IMPORTANT ROLES IN FURTHER BUILDING OUR RELATIONS.

PROFESSOR SATO AYAKO, A GRADUATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA, HAS BEEN A DRIVING FORCE IN THE CANADA JAPAN RELATIONSHIP. OTHER MEMBERS OF THE CANADIAN STUDIES CENTRE INCLUDE TAKAHASHI HARUTAKA, WHO HAS TAUGHT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF REGINA, AND TAKAKUA MITSUNORI, FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA. MEIJI GAKUIN UNIVERSITY MAINTAINS A VERY

STRONG RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY,
WITH MANY STUDENTS GOING TO CANADA EVERY YEAR.

MGU IS PART OF THE JAPANESE CONSORTIUM OF UNIVERSITIES
THAT ARE PARTICIPATING IN THE JAPAN-CANADA STRATEGIC
STUDENT EXCHANGE PROGRAM THAT CREATES LINKS
BETWEEN 15 UNIVERSITIES IN EACH COUNTRY AND ALLOWS 15
STUDENTS TO RECEIVE A ONE-YEAR SCHOLARSHIP TO STUDY IN
THE OTHERS COUNTRY.

THESE EXAMPLES AMONG MANY DEMONSTRATE MEIJI GAKUIN
UNIVERSITY'S CANADIAN DIMENSIONS. IT IS A RICH HERITAGE
THAT WILL ONLY BECOME GREATER AS THE YEARS GO BY. MEIJI
GAKUIN UNIVERSITY IS REPRESENTATIVE OF THOSE GREAT
JAPANESE INSTITUTIONS THAT ARE THE AGENTS OF CHANGE,
AGENTS OF ADAPTATION; AGENTS THAT PREPARE THE
JAPANESE PEOPLE TO SHAPE THEIR OWN FUTURE. IT HAS
PLAYED THIS ROLE SINCE ITS INCEPTION IN THE 19TH CENTURY,
AND WILL CONTINUE TO DO SO IN THE 21ST.

LIKE ALL GREAT INSTITUTIONS OF LEARNING, THE INFLUENCE OF MEIJI GAKUIN UNIVERSITY IS IMMESURABLE. KNOWINGLY AND SOMETIMES UNKNOWINGLY, THIS UNIVERSITY, ITS CREATORS DURING THE EARLY YEARS OF THE MEIJI ERA, ITS LEADERS THROUGHOUT ITS HISTORY, ITS FACULTY AND ITS STUDENTS HAVE SEEN THEIR INFLUENCE EXTEND THROUGHOUT JAPAN, AND INDEED THROUGHOUT THE WORLD. EDUCATION, HERE AT MEIJI GAKUIN UNIVERSITY AND IN ALL INSTITUTIONS OF LEARNING, IS SOCIETY'S MOST DYNAMIC PROCESS. IT TAKES THE MINDS OF YOUTHS, WITH ALL OF THEIR ENERGY AND CURIOSITY AND MALEABILITY, AND PROVIDES THEM WITH THE MEANS TO UNDERSTAND THEMSELVES AND THE WORLD IN WHICH THEY LIVE. MODERN EDUCATION PROMOTES THE ACCUMULATION OF KNOWLEDGE OF COURSE, BUT ALSO RATIONAL DISCOURSE AND THE TECHNIQUES OF THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD. IT PROVIDES THE TOOLS OF INDEPENDENT THOUGHT. IT PROTECTS US AGAINST THE EXCESSES OF RELIGIOUS BELIEF AND THE FANATICISM OF IDEOLOGIES.

AT ITS BEST, EDUCATION CONVEYS NOT ONLY THE LESSONS LERNED BY PAST GENERATIONS, BUT ALSO THE INTELLECTUAL MEANS TO TRANSCEND THOSE LEGACIES. IT PERMITS US TO CREATE A WORLD SOMEWHAT MORE PROSPEROUS, SOMEWHAT MORE HEALTHY, SOMEWHAT MORE JOYFUL, AND SOMEWHAT MORE PEACEFUL.

TO EDUCATE YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN IS TO LAUNCH THEM, LIKE ROCKETS, INTO THE WORLD, AS INDIVIDUALS AND AS CITIZENS, AS AGENTS OF CHANGE, AS PHYSICISTS AND ANTHROPOLOGISTS, DOCTORS AND LAWYERS, POETS AND POLITICIANS, BUILDERS AND PHILOSOPHERS.

EDUCATION IS THE PROVERBIAL STONE THROWN INTO THE WATERS OF A QUIET POND, CREATING CONCENTRIC CIRCLES OF WAVES WHICH TOUCH AND SOMETIMES DISTURB THE AIR ABOVE AND THE WATERS BELOW. THEIR IMPACT ON THE SHORELINE IS AS INESCAPABLE AS IT IS IMPERCEPTIBLE, AND SOMETIMES AS TRANSFORMATIVE AS IT IS SURPRISING.

AN INSTITUTION SUCH AS MEIJI GAKUIN UNIVERSITY HOWEVER DOES NOT JUST THROW ONE STONE IN THE POND, IT LAUNCHES THOUSANDS OVER THE YEARS AND DECADES, CREATING NOT ONE SERIES OF CONCENTRIC WAVES, BUT MILLIONS OF CROSS-CUTTING WAVES AND EDDIES AND VIBRATIONS THAT REACH ACROSS JAPAN AND MUCH OF THE WORLD.

IT DOESN'T TAKE TOO GREAT A POETIC IMAGINATION TO VISUALIZE ONE OF THOSE TINY VIBRATIONS CAROOMING HAPHAZARDLY ACROSS THE PLANET AND SPARKING THE IMAGINATION THE YOUNG FARM BOY THAT I WAS, LIVING IN RURAL ONTARIO IN THE 1950s.

RURAL LIFE IN CANADA DURING THOSE YEARS WOULD HAVE FOUND ITS MIRROR IMAGE ON THE RICE PADDIES AND GRAIN FIELDS OF JAPAN. IN BOTH COUNTRIES, TRANSFORMATION AND MODERNIZATION WERE THE RULE. MECHANIZATION OF FARM LABOUR GREATLY INCREASED THE ECONOMIC EFFICIENCY OF FARMING, AND REDUCED THE NEED FOR LABOUR. THIS MEANT THAT UNLIKE MANY OF OUR RURAL PARENTS IN CANADA AND IN JAPAN, CHILDREN DID NOT HAVE TO SACRIFICE SCHOOLING

FOR HARD LABOUR IN THE FIELDS. WE HELPED OUR PARENTS DURING THE EVENINGS AND ON WEEKENDS PERHAPS, BUT OUR FIRST PRIORITY WAS EDUCATION.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND ECONOMIC SPECIALIZATION MEANT THAT THE MARKETS FOR OUR FARM PRODUCTS WERE BOTH NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL, AND THUS THE STANDARD OF LIVING OF FARMERS ROSE RAPIDLY DURING THE POST-WAR PERIOD. FARM FAMILIES, LIKE CITY DWELLERS, COULD AFFORD TO BUY THE APPLIANCES THAT DEFINED MIDDLE CLASS LIFE STYLES. TELEVISION IN PARTICULAR BUT ALSO INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL PROVIDED HERETOFORE UNIMAGINABLE OPPORTUNITIES TO SEE AND UNDERSTAND THE WORLD.

IN SOME RESPECTS, THE 1950s HOWEVER WERE NOT TOTALLY DISCONNECTED FROM THE PAST.

WHAT TURNED OUT TO BE, HAPHAZARDLY, OF GREAT SIGNIFICANCE TO ME WAS THE FACT THAT JAPAN, EVEN AFTER

THE WAR, WELCOMED THE ACTIVITIES OF FOREIGN EDUCATORS AND MISSIONARIES IN ITS SCHOOLS AND UNIVERSITIES.

ONE OF THOSE EDUCATORS WAS THE ELDER SISTER OF MY MOTHER. SHE ARRIVED IN JAPAN IN 1949, AS A MEMBER OF A RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY OF TEACHERS, WHICH DIRECTED SCHOOLS THROUGHOUT JAPAN BOTH BEFORE AND AFTER THE WAR. MY AUNT WAS SENT TO AIZU-WAKAMATSU, IN FUKUSHIMA PREFECTURE WHERE SHE TAUGHT ENGLISH FOR 35 YEARS, ONLY RETURNING TO CANADA TO RETIRE WHEN SHE WAS IN HER 60s.

IN THIS, SHE WAS FOLLOWING JAPANESE EDUCATION POLICY, SET DURING THE MEIJI PERIOD, WHICH SOUGHT TO INVOLVE FOREIGN BORN TEACHERS IN THE PROVISION OF SOME EDUCATIONAL SERVICES TO YOUNG JAPANESE. NEEDLESS TO SAY, MEIJI GAKUIN DAIGAKU, AS WELL AS AOYAMA GAKUIN DAIGAKU, SOPHIA UNIVERSITY AND OTHERS ARE PART OF THAT TRADITION.

AS EVERYONE KNOWS, LIKE THE STONES THROWN IN THE POND, THE WAVES AND EDDIES GENERATED BY THOSE POLICIES OVER THE DECADES HAVE BEEN VERY SIGNIFICANT INDEED. ENTIRE GENERATIONS OF EDUCATORS, FROM CANADA AND ELSEWHERE, SOME SECULAR, SOME RELIGIOUS, HAVE LIVED PART OF THEIR LIVES IN JAPAN. THEY WERE MEANT TO BRING THE WORLD TO THEIR STUDENTS, BUT THEY ABSORBED A GREAT DEAL ABOUT JAPAN AND THE JAPANESE AS WELL, AND MUCH OF WHAT THEY LEARNED WAS SENT BACK TO THEIR HOME COUNTRIES.

FROM FUKUSHIMA, THROUGHOUT THE YEARS OF MY YOUTH, MY MOTHER'S SISTER SENT TO US A STEADY STREAM OF NEWS ABOUT HER LIFE IN JAPAN, ABOUT HER SCHOOL IN FUKUSHIMA, AND ABOUT THE CULTURAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN JAPANESE AND CANADIANS. THESE LETTERS WERE USUALLY SUPPLEMENTED BY PHOTOS, OR POST CARDS OF FAMOUS JAPANESE SCENERY. FOR CHRISTMAS, WE WOULD RECEIVE MINIATURE KIMONO CLAD STICK FIGURES, PAPER UMBRELLAS, A TINY ZEN GARDEN COMPLETE WITH MONK IN

CONTEMPLATION, HINA DOLLS, KOKESHI AND SMALL WOODEN KAMO DOLLS OF BOYS IN JAPANESE COSTUMES.

AS A RESULT OF THIS STEADY STREAM OF JAPANESE IMAGERY, I HAD A MUCH CLEARER IMAGE IN MY YOUNG MIND OF MOUNT FUJI THAN I HAD OF THE CANADIAN ROCKY MOUNTAINS.

UNTIL I RECEIVED MY FIRST ATLAS AT THE AGE OF 9, I THOUGHT THAT THE WORLD CONSISTED OF THREE COUNTRIES: CANADA, THE UNITED STATES AND JAPAN.

I ALSO RECALL THE PHOTOS OF THE DAILY LIFE OF THE JAPANESE. I CAN NEVER FORGET THE PICTURES OF MY AUNT WITH HER YOUNG FEMALE STUDENTS, ALL IN SCHOOL UNIFORM, THEIR HAIR ALSO IN IDENTICAL “刈り上げおかつぱ” OR THE “サザエさんのワカメちゃんカット” STYLE SO PREVALENT IN POST-WAR JAPAN. THIS APPEARED TRULY STRANGE TO A CANADIAN BOY BEGINNING TO THINK ABOUT GIRLS.

ONE SUMMER, WHEN I WAS ABOUT TEN YEARS OLD, MY AUNT SENT US A REAL, LIVE JAPANESE PERSON, A YOUNG MAN, THEN

A UNIVERSITY STUDENT WHO HAD EARLIER GRADUATED FROM MY AUNT'S SCHOOL IN FUKUSHIMA AND WHO WAS SPENDING THE SUMMER IN CANADA. HE STAYED WITH US FOR SEVERAL DAYS, PROVIDING FOR ME AND MY FAMILY OUR FIRST EXPERIENCE WITH REAL JAPANESE PEOPLE.

I HAVE NO DOUBT THAT THESE EXPERIENCES, THESE WAVES AND EDDIES EMANATING FROM JAPAN WERE AT THE SOURCE OF WHAT BECAME A LIFE-LONG INTEREST IN ASIA. I STUDIED POLITICAL SCIENCE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA. WHEN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES DEPARTMENT HIRED ITS FIRST PROFESSOR OF CHINESE HISTORY AND POLITICS, I WAS AMONG THE FIRST STUDENTS. THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT LAUNCHED ITS FIRST COURSES IN THE CHINESE LANGUAGE AT ABOUT THE SAME TIME, AND I REGISTERED FOR THAT AS WELL, LEARNING TO READ THE CHINESE CHARACTERS WHICH I HAD THOUGHT, AS A CHILD, WERE PARTICULAR TO JAPAN. THESE STUDIES ALSO SERVED TO SET FIRMLY THE DIRECTION OF MY LIFE.

AS SOON AS I JOINED THE FOREIGN SERVICE OF THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA, I MADE IT CLEAR THAT I WAS PRIMARILY INTERESTED IN PURSUING A CAREER IN ASIA.

FROM THE START, MY CONCEPT, HOWEVER UNFORMED, OF THE ROLE OF THE DIPLOMAT WAS TO BE A BRIDGE BETWEEN CULTURES, A TRANSLATOR IN BOTH DIRECTIONS OF THE MATERIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL REALITIES EXPERIENCED BY PEOPLE OF VERY DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS. I FELT THEN, AS I DO NOW, THAT A SUCCESSFUL DIPLOMAT IS ONE WHO DOES EVERYTHING IN HIS POWER TO NEUTRALIZE THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PEOPLE, TO PROVIDE TO EACH A SENSE OF WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE ON THE OTHER SIDE, SO THAT THE COMMON AND SHARED INTERESTS CAN BE BROUGHT TO LIGHT AND MUTUAL BENEFIT DEVELOPED.

DIPLOMATS, AS PEOPLE, POSSESS IN THEIR HEARTS OF HEARTS, THE DESIRE TO UNDERSTAND "THE OTHER", WHETHER IT IS "THE OTHER" PERSON, THE "OTHER" SOCIETY, THE "OTHER" NATION OR THE "OTHER" GOVERNMENT. GOOD DIPLOMATS, AS PROFESSIONALS, MUST TAKE THIS INTEREST AND

UNDERSTANDING AND USE IT TO THE BENEFIT OF THEIR OWN COUNTRY. GREAT DIPLOMATS USE IT TO THE BENEFIT OF THE MANY.

MY PERSONAL VIEW AS WELL HAS BEEN THAT THE GREATER THE CONTRAST BETWEEN MY OWN CULTURE AND BACKGROUND AND THAT OF “THE OTHER”, THE GREATER THE PROFESSIONAL CHALLENGE AND THE GREATER THE INTEREST.

FOR A BOY FROM RURAL SOUTHERN ONTARIO, IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO THINK OF CULTURAL WORLDS MORE DISTINCT AND DIFFERENT THAN THOSE OF ASIA. THEREFORE, I CONSIDERED THEN AS I DO TODAY THAT THE BEST CONTRIBUTION I COULD MAKE WAS TO PLAY A ROLE IN CONNECTING CANADA WITH THE COUNTRIES OF ASIA.

BY GOOD FORTUNE, MY FIRST FOREIGN ASSIGNMENT WAS TO SAIGON, IN SOUTH VIETNAM, WITH THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION FOR CONTROL AND SUPERVISION. THIS WAS A SHORT-LIVED INSTITUTION THAT HAD EMERGED FROM THE PARIS PEACE AGREEMENTS IN 1973. THIS FIRST FOREIGN

POSTING HAD A DOUBLE ADVANTAGE: IT PROVIDED ME WITH MY FIRST DIRECT EXPERIENCE OF LIFE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA; AND IT EXPOSED ME TO THE REALITIES OF PEACE KEEPING AND PEACE SUPERVISORY OPERATIONS. WHAT I REMEMBER MOST CLEARLY ABOUT MY FIRST DAYS IN VIETNAM WAS HOW COMFORTABLE I FELT ROAMING THE STREETS OF SAIGON, DESPITE BEING SO FAR AWAY FROM THE CANADIAN WORLD THAT WAS FAMILIAR TO ME. I FELT IMMEDIATE EMPHATHY WITH THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE AND THEIR CULTURE, AND I KNEW THAT I HAD MADE THE RIGHT CAREER CHOICE.

FROM VIETNAM, I WAS DISPATCHED TO THE OTHER END OF ASIA, TO THE ANATOLIAN PLATEAU OF EASTERN TURKEY AND ITS CAPITAL OF ANKARA. THERE AS WELL, THE WAVES AND EDDIES OF JAPAN LOCATED ME, IN THE MOST UNEXPECTED WAY. NOT LONG AFTER BEGINNING MY POSTING TO THE EMBASSY IN ANKARA, THE HEAD OF THE POLITICAL SECTION OF THE CANADIAN EMBASSY, WHOSE NAME WAS LEN EDWARDS, HIRED A NEW LIBRARIAN AND RECEPTIONIST BY THE NAME OF KUMRU AYTUG. HER FATHER, TURGUT AYTUG, WAS A RECENTLY RETIRED SENIOR TURKISH DIPLOMAT WHO HAD

SERVED AS TURKISH AMBASSADOR TO THE REPUBLIC OF CHINA IN TAIPEI, AND THEN IN THE FINAL CHAPTER OF HIS PROFESSIONAL CAREER, AS TURKISH AMBASSADOR TO JAPAN. MISS AYTUG HAD IN FACT RETURNED FROM TOKYO JUST TWO YEARS EARLIER.

TO MAKE A LONG STORY SHORT, MY PROPOSAL OF MARIAGE TO MISS AYTUG TOOK PLACE JUST A FEW DAYS BEFORE THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT IN CANADA ANNOUNCED A DECISION THAT WOULD TRANSFORM MY LIFE UTTERLY: THAT I WAS TO BE POSTED TO JAPAN.

I HAVE OFTEN THOUGHT ABOUT THESE AMAZING COINCIDENCES, AND CAN ONLY CONCLUDE THAT PERHAPS THERE IS SUCH A THING AS FATE.

AND BY THE WAY, YOUNG MR. LEN EDWARDS, WHO HIRED MY WIFE KUMRU, AND WHO IS TODAY CANADA'S DEPUTY MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND G8 SHERPA, AND WHO IS SUBJECT TO THE VAGARIES OF HIS OWN EDDIES AND CURRENTS, ALSO SERVED AS AMBASSADOR TO JAPAN.

THE WAVES AND EDDIES AFFECTING MY LIFE WOULD SOON BEGIN TO BRING ME CLOSER TO MEIJI GAKUIN UNIVERSITY, IF BY CONSIDERABLE INDIRECTION.

IN THE LATE SUMMER OF 1975, I BEGAN THE LABORIOUS AND STILL UNFINISHED TASK OF LEARNING TO SPEAK AND READ THE JAPANESE LANGUAGE, AT THE UNITED STATES FOREIGN LANGUAGE INSTITUTE IN YOKOHAMA. THE FIRST TWO MONTHS OF THE TWO YEAR PROGRAM OF LANGUAGE STUDY WERE BASED NOT ON READING SIMPLE KANJI, BUT RATHER LEARNING JAPANESE THROUGH ROMANIZATION. THE ROMANIZATION SYSTEM, AS ALL WESTERN STUDENTS OF JAPANESE KNOW, WAS DEVELOPED BY DR. JAMES CURTIS HEPBURN, AN AMERICAN MISSIONARY LIVING IN JAPAN, WHO PUBLISHED THE FIRST FULL-FLEDGED MODERN ENGLISH-JAPANESE DICTIONARY IN 1867 – BY THE WAY, THE SAME YEAR THAT FOUR COLONIES IN BRITISH NORTH AMERICA CAME TOGETHER AND CREATED THE NEW COUNTRY CALLED CANADA.

AS EVERYONE FROM MEIJI GAKUIN DAIGAKU KNOWS, THIS SAME DOCTOR JAMES CURTIS HEPBURN FOUNDED, EARLY IN THE MEIJI ERA, THE HEPBURN ACADEMY, WHICH WAS THE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION ON WHICH MEIJI GAKUIN UNIVERSITY, WAS ULTIMATELY FOUNDED.

I KNOW THAT I AM NOT THE BEST OF LANGUAGE STUDENTS, SO IT IS THANKS TO DR. HEPBURN THAT I SURVIVED THOSE FIRST WEEKS OF TRAINING, USING HIS ROMANIZATION TO MEMORIZE ON MY FIRST DAY AT LANGUAGE SCHOOL THE FIRST MAJOR HURDLE OF LESSON ONE, THE EXPRESSIONS “DOU ITASHIMASHITE”, SO MUCH MORE DIFFICULT THAN “KON NICH I HA” AND “DOMO ARIGATO GOZAIMASHITA” WHICH I ALSO HAD TO LEARN AT THE OUTSET, SO UNFAMILIAR WAS I WITH THE JAPANESE LANGUAGE. HEPBURN PROVIDED THE POINT OF DEPARTURE FOR MY STUDY OF JAPANESE AND EVENTUALLY THE MEANS TO ASSIMILATE KANJI, WHOSE BEAUTY AND DEPTH I HAVE ALWAYS ENJOYED, EVEN AS I REMAIN UNSKILLED.

THIRTY EIGHT YEARS SEPARATE MY ARRIVAL IN JAPAN AND TODAY’S CEREMONY. FROM BEING BOBBED ABOUT ON THE

CURRENTS AND EDDIES CAUSED BY OTHERS, I AM NOW AT THE ORIGIN OF SIMILAR FORCES. DURING THE PAST THREE DECADES, MY WIFE AND I HAVE LIVED IN JAPAN FOR SEVENTEEN YEARS. OUR THREE CHILDREN WERE BORN HERE; EVEN OUR CAT AND OUR DOG WERE BORN IN JAPAN. OUR DAUGHTER IS NOW STUDYING JAPANESE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA AND OUR SONS REGULARLY VISIT JAPAN.

MY CAREER, WHICH WAS MARKED BY THOSE EARLY LANGUAGE STUDIES IN YOKOHAMA, HAS PROGRESSED UP THE LADDER OF DIPLOMATIC DESIGNATIONS, FROM THIRD SECRETARY UPWARD, AND NOW TO THE RANK OF CANADA'S AMBASSADOR TO JAPAN. REFLECTING ON THESE YEARS, I CAN GO BACK TO HEPBURN WHO WROTE, IN THE PREFACE OF HIS DICTIONARY, THE FOLLOWING SENTENCE:

“IN INTRODUCING THIS DICTIONARY TO THE PUBLIC, THE AUTHOR FEELS NO SMALL DEGREE OF DIFFIDENCE.”

GIVEN HIS VERY SIGNIFICANT ACHIEVEMENTS, DR. HEPBURN HAD NO NEED TO FEEL DIFFIDENT, BUT I DO.

I KNOW THAT THROUGHOUT MY YEARS IN JAPAN, I HAVE GAINED IMMEASURABLY MORE THAN I HAVE GIVEN.

I BELIEVE THAT I HAVE ALWAYS DONE THE BEST JOB THAT I CAN. I KNOW THAT I HAVE ACHIEVED PROFESSIONALLY THAT WHICH I SET OUT TO DO. I TRUST THAT OVER THE YEARS, ON THAT LENGTHY AND SLIPPERY SCALE WHICH STRETCHES FROM “BENEFIT” AT ONE END, TO “HARM” AT THE OTHER, MY CONTRIBUTIONS HAVE BEEN POSITIVE. IF THAT IS THE CASE, THE CREDIT BELONGS IN PART TO THE LESSONS THAT I HAVE LEARNED DURING MY MANY YEARS IN JAPAN.

JAPAN AND THE JAPANESE PEOPLE HAVE BEEN MY TEACHERS.

IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO SUMMARIZE EVERYTHING THAT I HAVE LEARNED. I CAN SAY THAT JAPAN AND THE JAPANESE CONTINUE TO TEACH ME THE IMPORTANCE OF KNOWLEDGE OF THE PAST TO UNDERSTAND THE WORKINGS OF THE PRESENT.

YOU DEMONSTRATE THE COMPATIBILITY OF SPIRITUALITY ON THE ONE HAND, AND BOTH UNIVERSAL AND NATIVIST BELIEFS ON THE OTHER. YOU HONOR AND APPRECIATE THE MOST REFINED ARTISTIC EXPRESSION, WHILE YOU CAN ALSO ENJOY THE ENTERTAINMENT OFFERED BY MASS CULTURE. YOU INSIST ON THE PRESERVATION OF OUTWARD FORMS, IN EVERY THING FROM SOCIAL LIFE TO THE STYLE OF SUSHI BARS, WHILE IMBEDDING THEM WITH THE MOST ADVANCED TECHNOLOGIES AND SKILLS. JAPAN RETAINS IN MANY WAYS ITS ISLAND MENTALITY, WHILE TRANSFORMING THE WORLD, INCLUDING CANADA, THROUGH THE SPREAD OF ITS CAPITAL AND ITS CONSUMER PRODUCTS. THIS KNOWLEDGE HAS HELPED ME IMMENSELY IN MY WORK OVER MANY YEARS IN JAPAN.

AT A MORE HUMAN LEVEL, JAPAN HAS TAUGHT ME THAT NO APPRECIATION OF OTHER PEOPLE IS POSSIBLE WITHOUT ACCEPTING, IN EQUAL MEASURE, THE DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES THEY HAVE WITH ONESELF; THAT PRIDE AND HUMILITY ARE NOT INCOMPATIBLE AND ARE BOTH ESSENTIAL GUIDES FOR LIFE; THAT THERE IS NO HOPE OF WISDOM ABSENT AN OPEN MIND; AND THAT THERE IS NO END TO LEARNING.

NO DOUBT EVERYONE IN THIS ROOM IS AWARE OF THESE LESSONS, BUT TRULLY, I UNDERSTOOD THEM THANKS TO MY YEARS IN JAPAN.

PRINCESS TAKAMADAO, DR. OSHIO, FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUE, THANK YOU FOR LISTENING TO THESE BRIEF REFLECTIONS ON MY ROAD TO JAPAN AND TO LEARNING.

THANK YOU, MEIJI GAKUIN UNIVERSITY, FOR YOUR CONTINUING EFFORTS TO BRING YOUNG CANADIANS AND YOUNG JAPANESE TOGETHER, TO THEIR BENEFIT AND TO THE IMMENSE ADVANTAGE OF CANADA AND JAPAN.

AND THANK YOU, DR. OSHIO AND MEIJI GAKUIN UNIVERSITY FOR THIS HONORARY DOCTORATE.

JOSEPH CARON
TOKYO, MARCH 5, 2008