

LEA 3 Anglais CIVILISATION

The following is an abridged transcript of the interview the CBC's chief correspondent, Peter Mansbridge, conducted with U.S. President Barack Obama at the White House on Tuesday 17 February 2009, two days before Barack Obama's visit to Ottawa.

MANSBRIDGE: Mr. President, thank you for doing this — Canadians are very excited about your trip.

OBAMA: Thank you.

MANSBRIDGE: When they watch you today sign your recovery bill into law, how concerned should they be that the "Buy America" clause is still there, even though you've given assurances international trade agreements will be respected — how concerned should they be?

OBAMA: I don't think they should be too concerned. You know, I think that if you look at history, one of the most important things during a worldwide recession of the sort that we're seeing now is that each country does not resort to "beggar thy neighbour" policies, protectionist policies. They can end up further contracting world trade. And my administration is committed to making sure that even as we take steps to strengthen the U.S. economy, that we are doing so in a way that actually over time will enhance the ability of trading partners, like Canada, to work within our boundaries. And my expectation is, is that where you have strong U.S. competitors who can sell products and services, that a lot of governors and mayors are going to want to try to find U.S. equipment or services, but that we are going to abide by our World Trade Organization and NAFTA obligations just as we always have.

MANSBRIDGE: You mentioned NAFTA. A year ago you were pretty critical of NAFTA. In fact, you even suggested at one point that the U.S. opt out if it couldn't renegotiate. Do you think that's the time now to be making that case, or is it something that's set aside now?

OBAMA: I think there are a lot of sensitivities right now because of the huge decline in world trade. As I've said before, NAFTA, the basic framework of the agreement, has environmental and labour protections as side agreements. My argument has always been that we might as well incorporate them into the full agreement so that they're fully enforceable. But what I've also said is that Canada is one of our most important trading partners, we rely on them heavily, there's \$1.5 billion worth of trade going back and forth every day between the two countries and that it is not in anybody's interest to see that trade diminish.

MANSBRIDGE: Especially now?

THE PRESIDENT: Absolutely.

MANSBRIDGE: Part of that trade involves the energy sector. A lot of oil and gas comes to the United States from Canada, and even more in the future with oilsands development. Now there are some in your country — and Canada, as well — who feel the oilsands is dirty oil because of the extraction process. What do you think? Is it dirty oil?

OBAMA: What we know is that oilsands creates a big carbon footprint. So the dilemma that Canada faces, the United States faces and China and the entire world faces, is how do we obtain the energy that we need to grow our economies in a way that is not rapidly accelerating climate change? That's one of the reasons why the stimulus bill that I'll be signing today contains billions of dollars towards clean energy development. I think to the extent that Canada and the United States can collaborate on ways that we can sequester carbon, capture greenhouse gases before they're emitted into the atmosphere, that's going to be good for everybody. Because if we don't, then we're going to have a ceiling at some point in terms of our ability to expand our economies and maintain the standard of living that's so important, particularly when you've got countries like China and India that are obviously interested in catching up.

MANSBRIDGE: So are you drawing a link, then, in terms of the future of tarsands oil coming into the U.S. contingent on a sense of a continental environment policy on cap and trade?

OBAMA: Well, I think what I'm suggesting is, is that no country in isolation is going to be able to solve this problem. So Canada, the United States, China, India, the European Union, all of us are going to have to work together in an effective

