

THE NEW ALCHEMY INSTITUTE ARK

Opening Ceremony
Prince Edward Island

PRIME MINISTER TRUDEAU:

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen. Those who are concerned about the future of mankind are haunted by three questions: will there be enough food, will we have enough energy, and can we produce both without destroying the environment; without making the earth a place which is not good to live upon? The Ark--which I have the pleasure of declaring officially open this morning--is answering "Yes!" to those three questions. And that is why I consider it a very exciting moment.

Some of us in our jobs are trying to answer the questions of today and tomorrow, and very often, we find that the urgent is replacing the essential. Well, the essential is being talked about here, worked on here, and that is why I believe there is a sense of excitement that is shared by all those who are here today, all those who know about this work. The Indian Chief Seattle used to say that "whatever befalls the earth will befall the sons of the earth." And what is befalling the earth is known to all of us--the high techniques, the high mechanistic civilization which we have developed have produced great abundance, great affluence, but it is also destroying the earth--destroying the rivers and the streams, fouling the air and the land, destroying the landscape, and even the mighty oceans are endangered. And as we know, when the oceans are dead, the planet will be dead.

On those questions--the questions of how to build our techniques into a technology; how to insure the machines we have created. Those wonderful machines; each one in itself, whether it be an automobile, helicopter, a modern house or a ship, or a petroleum-burning machine--all these things are great creations of the human brain. But we have not yet, as mankind, built a philosophy of those machines. And this is what is being done here in a practical way. As Dr. Todd reminded us, there is perhaps no more natural place to be doing that than Prince Edward Island--where agriculture, where fisheries are so important to the livelihood of the people; where a sense of community prevails, and particularly, an island which has proven receptive to new ideas.

More than one-hundred years ago, the idea of confederation was developed here, and now I like to think that this island, which has shown hospitality to this political idea which created Canada, is now providing hospitality to a new commitment: a commitment in which the environment was referred to--and I think it's a beautiful phrase--as "living lightly on the earth." I like to think that Prince Edward Island, the experience of the Ark, and all those connected with it, will be at the birth of this new commitment, of the new philosophy which we will be able then to call a technology.

I want to express my appreciation for having been invited here. I want to thank all those who are associated with the project: the Federal Department of the Environment, the Federal Department of Urban Affairs, the government of Prince Edward Island which has cooperated in so many ways, and especially Dr. Todd and all those who are working with him here. I think this is a very important moment in the history of our country, and I am very happy to be associated with it.

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DR. JOHN TODD:

Welcome, Mr. Prime Minister, Mr. Premier, distinguished guests, and all of you to the consecration of the house. The Ark is a house, but it is something much more. I think it represents a new way of thinking about human habitations and communities. What we've tried to do here--and I hope that later on this afternoon you'll have the chance to come through and see--is to try and bring together diverse kinds of emerging knowledge, gathered from the various branches of science; bring it together into a single whole. For what we are trying to do here is the search for non-exploitive and less destructive ways of living and working with this world. There are many, many answers that we're trying to find here, and a few have begun to emerge.

First of all, we would like to find out if it is possible to create a high degree of freedom from our dependency upon large amounts of fossil fuel. Those of you who can see the south side of the building out there, realize that right now that building is receiving--even with this overcast sky--a fair amount of energy. And over there behind the building is a new--and we hope--very important kind of windmill producing electricity which provides some of the power needs of this structure. Another thing that we are attempting to do in designing arks and structures like this is to find ways of doing much much more with less. I have to thank the set of brilliant architects for designing ways in which a house can actually operate upon very, very little.

The third thing we're attempting to find out is if human habitation need not pollute, need not wreck rivers, destroy lakes, etc.. The Ark itself purifies and utilizes all its own wastes, so that nothing leaves. What is in normal habitation a problem, in a structure like this is actually a new source of energy in a new form. The Ark is not just a place of living, but a place of sustaining one--actually getting into some of the vital support systems of society. The residents here will be able to grow their own food. Further, through the integration of appropriate technology and agricultural ecology, the Ark is not just a house, but is becoming an economic unit in its own right. 20,000 fish can be cultured within this building at any one time; between 10,000 and 15,000 fruit and nut trees can be cultivated--cuttings rooted within the structure; thousands of pounds of vegetables each year--as we begin to develop these techniques--will be able to be produced. We're beginning to look forward to the time when economies can begin on a small scale and a human scale.

We're often criticized that the Ark is a retreat, an escape from the world; I don't believe so at all. Not only are there developing micro-economies or micro-farms within places we live, but there is also the possibility that we can be even larger contributors to society. This morning, we did our

first test with the Ark's electricity being generated out on to the Island network via the windmill. The windmill's generating power went through the Ark and is out on the Island's network. So you can see that even households will contribute in a way that we hadn't normally foreseen or thought possible.

I'd like to get personal for just a moment--I can't help it, being in this part of the world. The Ark is a bringing together of the talents of some 40-50 people, representing four nations to sort of be as an endpoint here. Almost every realm of science has had some input in its design; and many of the people--if not most of the people--who have helped with it are here today, and I want to thank you. I'd also like to thank Urban Affairs for originally risking this project, and Environment Canada for taking it on and supporting it. We hope they'll find it is fully justified. I'd also like to thank the Prince Edward Island Institute for Man and Resources and Premier Campbell's government for helping us--not only with land provided for us here, but without their logistic support, we never would have made it on time. I think our greatest gift and one we really didn't expect was our neighbors. Coming from away, and some of us from very far away, we thought we'd be outsiders; before we knew it, we were not only being accepted by many but being helped by many--it was really very beautiful. And the men who built this place are about the finest craftsmen we have ever seen--the people who live in this area.

On a closing note, I would like to say that I don't think that this is an accident that the Ark and concepts of contained ecosystems for human beings are being developed in maritime Canada. Here, where the sea and the land and the wind and the sky come together, there's a sense of place, there's also a sense of the past, and there's a sense of what we have and our own limits. And perhaps it is through this sense of place and past that we can begin to design and create for the 21st century. To my way of thinking, the path of restoration begins from the bottom up, away from the dubious atom and dependency on the waning fuel toward human habitation as the center of new beginning.

Thank you very much.

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PREMIER CAMPBELL:

It is a pleasure for me to associate with Dr. Todd and all of you here today in the official dedication of the Ark to the future of mankind. This is one of the more exciting, if not the most exciting, individual project that I have witnessed and experienced in my public career, because we see ideas being interpreted into real, live things before our very eyes. It is difficult to imagine all of the work that goes into the thinking and the creating of an Ark such as this. And I simply want to say at this very informal opening ceremony, my personal thanks to everyone who has been involved in the planning and in the execution of the work leading to this day.

This has become very much a part of Spry Point; it has become very much a part of this community and I am impressed with Dr. Todd's report to me of the support and understanding which come from this very community towards the work which is being conducted here and toward the research programs to be undertaken here. I believe there is a very real understanding developing as to what this project may hold for us in Prince Edward Island and for many people throughout many parts of the world in the future--in terms of meeting our fuel and energy needs of the future.

This morning, I thought I'd try to read up a little bit on another Ark which Noah was called upon to build when he was 600 years old, and I came across a very interesting paragraph from Genesis: You'll recall that after about eleven months at sea, Noah opened the window of the Ark; held out a dove and allowed the dove to fly out, to find out if there was any dry ground around. That was followed by the report, "But the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot." I thought those words might be appropriate for this occasion because the Ark represents a challenge--not only to the New Alchemists and the people of this community and province, but to governments and people throughout the world--to find no rest for the sole of their feet in our search for self-sustaining life for Earth or Mankind.

Good luck in this endeavor.