Chairman's Opening Remarks

Ara Mooradian

I anticipate a delicious problem this morning. I know our moderator and all of our speakers who are now with me on the stage. Each alone could profitably occupy the entire session in conveying their insights and perspective of the events and characters which have made for so eventful and significant a half century. I myself am not noted for brevity. There is a risk that we shall be tempted to review the past 50 years in real time.

If we are to receive a balanced and comprehensive overview, all of our speakers must be heard. I therefore apologize to you in advance if I am driven to arbitrarily impose time constraints. I understand that the proceedings of the session are to be published in full and that the authors will have a second opportunity to touch any points which should have been heard at this session. [Editor's Note: this has indeed been done.]

This Special Symposium is to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the discovery of fission and has been jointly sponsored and organized by the CNA, and the CNS with co-sponsorhip from the Royal Society of Canada, Canadian Society for Chemistry, Canadian Association of Nuclear Medicine, Canadian Association of Physicists, Canadian Society for Chemical Engineering, and the Chemical Institute of Canada.

Their timing is impeccable. Half a century is no more than a sufficient perspective from which to confirm the significance of the discovery, nor is it so long as to have lost the integrity of the history.

Many, including governments, make the mistake of characterizing atomic energy as merely an option, an industry, a project, or even a business. Events have now confirmed that its significance is nothing less than that predicted by the most visionary of the early pioneers. What was launched 50 years ago was nothing short of an era, a watershed that changed forever the outlook for humanity.

Never before has man had in his hands the key to so much power: power to light the world, power to preserve his health and environment, power to extend his knowledge and power to destroy himself.

These are no longer the projections of a handful of early visionaries. The past five decades have actually witnessed the demonstration of all of these capabilities. It seems that, simultaneously, we have been given the tools to get on with the business of world civilization while being subjected to

the most unforgiving discipline against the failure to do so.

To a significant extent, the next half century and beyond will be characterized by how well we manage our nuclear affairs. If we are to chart a sensible course, it is important that we understand the roots and significance of the epoch in which we find ourselves.

We are indeed, this day, commemorating the launching of an era. How better to do this than to hear the story directly from those present at the launching party and those who have played an important role in confirming its significance. All of our speakers today have authored distinguished careers and remain very active. Together they constitute an historical resource exceeding 200 years of pertinent total recall.

Now Ladies and Gentlemen, the time has come to turn you over to our moderator, Dr. Robert Bothwell, Professor of History, University of Toronto, who will introduce our speakers and impose a coherent historical perspective throughout our session this morning. Professor Bothwell is uniquely qualified for the task. While he is more broadly noted as a specialist in the history of twentieth century Canada, he is better known to this audience as the author of two works bearing directly on the Canadian nuclear industry - the first a history of Eldorado Nuclear and the latest "Nucleus - the History of Atomic Energy of Canada Limited" published just last year.

In the eloquently simple statement of C.D. Howe who authorized the Canadian nuclear program back in 1942, "Okay" Dr. Bothwell, "let's go".