

Third Option can work well for both Canada and the U.S.

Ambassador's viewpoint

By J. H. Warren

The article on Canada-U.S. relations by the then Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mitchell Sharp, published in this journal three-and-a-half years ago, was the first attempt in many years to articulate in some detail official Canadian policy in our relations with the United States. In view of the pervasive importance of this relationship in almost every part of our national life, it is perhaps strange that this should have been so. Some critics of the Government's 1970 review *Foreign Policy for Canadians* certainly thought so; one of the most frequent criticisms was that it contained no analysis in depth of so critical an element in our foreign policy as Canada-U.S. relations. Was it enough, many commentators asked, simply to identify as an important national challenge the problem of "living distinct from but in harmony with the world's most powerful and dynamic nation, the United States?"

The fact is that only rarely have Canadians thought seriously of having a policy relative to the United States. In the early years of the new American Republic, our relations derived from the results of the Revolutionary War; our distinctness, and even a certain degree of hostility, were almost taken for granted. The War of 1812 now seems remote in our past and the Fenian raids and major border disputes as the West was opened have also tended to fade into history. For most of the last 100 years the infrequently-examined premise underlying the way we thought of our relations was that the natural tendency of our two countries would be to co-operate, to settle problems individually as they arose, in a practical and business-like way. As Mr. St. Laurent, then Secretary of State for External Affairs, put it in 1947: "Like farmers whose lands have a common concession line, we think of ourselves as settling, from day to day,

questions that arise between us, without dignifying the process by the word 'policy'."

Nous avons changé tout ça! — or have we? After almost four years, it is perhaps fair to take a look at some of the ways in which our relationship with the United States has or has not been changed by the Government's adoption of the last of the three options put forward in "Options for the Future". Having examined the case for the only two other options considered realistic — continuing as before or actively seeking closer integration with the United States —, Mr. Sharp's article came down on the side of what has since become known simply as the "Third Option", which called for "a comprehensive long-term strategy to develop and strengthen the Canadian economy and other aspects of our national life and in the process to reduce the present Canadian vulnerability".

Greater self-assertion

The choice of this option implied policies of greater self-assertion by Canada in the conduct of our foreign policy. It should perhaps be remembered that the American view of our relationship was, in a sense, developing along parallel lines at the same time. When President Nixon went to Ottawa in 1972 and endorsed the premise that mature partners must have autonomous, independent policies, he was not just recognizing Canada's obvious right to independence; he was also proclaiming American independence from special obligations towards Canada.

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