

It is not the Government's intention, however, to follow blindly in the course that has been charted by previous governments over the years. We have both an opportunity and a responsibility to review the direction of our foreign policy to satisfy ourselves that we are in fact serving the best interests of Canadians.

I shall come back to that point in a moment, but before I do I want to mention another important consideration that must be kept in mind in developing and putting into effect our foreign policy. And that is that Canada has now become a major actor on the international stage. We are no longer just a junior partner in the British Empire or a pioneer society living under the shadow and influence of our American neighbours.

By almost any yard stick, Canada ranks with the world's leading countries. Ours is one of the world's largest economies and we are a great trading nation. In a world composed of some 150 independent states, our Gross National Product ranks ninth in the world, and seventh in the free world. Our trade is 5% of all the world's trade. It is natural, therefore, that Canada should be a member of the Group of Seven industrialized countries and that we sat as equal partners at the Tokyo Summit. Our physical size and strategic location give us special importance, and influence, in the security of the West. We have the eighth largest aid program in the world and in certain regions, like Africa below the Sahara, it rivals in size that of the United States. Our British and French heritage give us special links with the Commonwealth and la Francophonie, both of which are important in improving understanding between industrialized and developing countries. Certainly, my recent trip to Cameroon, Zambia and Tanzania proved to me the high regard in which Canada is held, and the very useful role we can play in that part of the world. It was very appropriate that Canada should be one of the five Western powers from the Security Council trying to find a solution to the Namibian crisis, and that Canada should have served as one of two co-chairmen of the recent north-south meetings on international development in Paris. We also play a leading role in the resolution of such complex questions as the Law of the Sea and the control of nuclear proliferation.

Changes in the world may be opening greater possibilities for Canada to practice an imaginative and influential foreign policy than at any time since the immediate post-war period. Then our influence derived from our economic and military strength -- as well as the strength I mention all this because I want to emphasize that what we as a country do internationally will affect not only ourselves, but to a lesser extent many millions of others.