

Pursuing the realistic goal of closer Canada-EEC links

By Jeremy Kinsman

Despite recent editorials, there is little indication that Canadians have the intuition that what the Europeans are doing and what we are doing and what the Americans are doing may involve considerably closer ties between Canada and Europe. Yet most Canadian observers accept the need for Canada to diversify external economic relations, and Europe is the most obvious candidate as an object of diversification. The entry of Britain into the European Economic Community should enhance both the realism and the popularity of efforts in this direction.

Except sporadically, Canadians haven't tended since the last war to think about Europe as a serious partner in Canadian development. Of course, we saw a role for Canada in the reconstruction of Western Europe after the war, in subsequent security arrangements and in the concept of an Atlantic Community. This idea, popular with the United States "Eastern Establishment", assumed a transatlantic community of view, which, if it had really existed in the extraordinary conditions of 1950, was certainly a vain illusion by 1960. Someone said that the Atlantic Community would have made a lot of sense to Henry James. It certainly made very little to President de Gaulle, who saw in the European Economic Community the possibility for Europe to define itself at a distance from the United States. His veto of Britain's entry into the Common Market in 1963 (Harold MacMillan was an Atlantic Community enthusiast) took most of the life out of the idea. The war in Vietnam and its multiple effect on both Europeans and the United States pretty well finished it off.

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Canadians flirted with the notion of the Atlantic Community as well, but almost exclusively English-speaking, in a sort of way. This was perhaps a natural product of the war experience when the alliance was for all practical purposes between ourselves, the British and the Americans. All the original EEC countries were defeated and occupied at various stages of the war. The "Anglo-Saxons" won, and we saw it; the rest, in one way or another, appeared to have lost. In the Fifties the Atlantic Community idea was an extension of the alliance. It became, moreover, an envelope in which we could somehow avoid paying the consequences of decisions that were continentalist. An Atlantic Community was about the right place to look for some Canadian complexes — a home arena for our ardent internationalism, where there would be enough support from the United States, without our having to fear we were being smothered, and not the whim of the British to oblige us to feel intimidated.

Little interest in Europe

There was little apparent interest in Europe *per se*. Many Canadians, royalists abandoned at the time of the British application to join the EEC, a few argued that EEC enlargement would assist closer Canada-European relations largely because these relations were seen to hold any particular importance. We had already enjoyed an extraordinary influence in the postwar period and in the 1950s and it must have been difficult to foresee that we should develop closer ties with Europe — not anybody else for that matter — as a function of fundamental self-interest. At the same time, some argued the merits of the EEC as a counterweight, for most the main issue about the EEC was the question of access to the Common Market for Canada's exports.

Some argued a bit for the French content in closer Canada-Europe relations, as a sort of added bonus