

Furthermore, when we take a hard look at the Canadian situation, it is clear that we can have an important role in the opportunities that are emerging. For one thing, we are a major Pacific nation; not from the point of view of our population, or even our political power, but from the point of view of our advanced technology, our skilled labour force, and our large land mass with its rich natural resources. These are important facts which allow us to make a contribution to the North-South dialogue in the region where we naturally play both a "North" and "South" role: our industry and technology are developed, yet our natural resources are presently our main export into the region.

Another reason why Canada could play a major role in an emerging Pacific Community is the mosaic-like structure of our own society. We contain within our country a substantial cross-section of all the major nations in the Asia Pacific region – a microcosm of multi-culturalism. It is a situation which provides us with an additional wealth of cultural traditions, knowledge and skills to draw on in pursuing our opportunities in the Asia Pacific region.

The fact that we are not a major world power works to yet another advantage for Canada: our motives are less suspect, thus allowing us a greater measure of trust, and providing us with a unique opportunity to be a co-ordinator and a natural joint venture partner within the region. Furthermore, since Canada is both a Pacific and an Atlantic nation, it could, through its influence, add another whole dimension to an emerging Pacific community: it could provide a channel between the Pacific and the Atlantic.

However, the great opportunity for Canadians in the Asia Pacific region is a double-edged sword: we also face a great risk. If we fail to take an active leadership role now in an emerging Pacific community, others will take our place; they will see to it that their interests, not ours, are advanced. The result will be that we will have nothing to say about the structure, the purposes and rules of a game that will have a deep impact on our lives.

In addition, it is imperative that we find a mechanism for a total rather than fragmented Canadian involvement in the region, for Canada's strength lies in its totality, not in individual regions or provinces. If the Western provinces alone become too involved in the emerging Pacific community, this will be at the risk of greater difficulties for the Central and Eastern provinces.

One of the first tasks we must do then to meet the challenge is shift our consciousness away from its historic Euro-centric focus. Up to now we have always looked to Europe for our cultural roots and economic ties...seeing ourselves as trading partners with our mother countries and with the United States, as well as the cultural offsprings of England and France. However, the present realities of our economic situation do not square with the traditional views. In 1981 trade with Asia and the Pacific exceeded for the first time that our combined trade with all of Europe. While it would be suicidal to ignore our on-going and important relationship with the United States and the European countries, these new economic facts cannot be ignored. It is now time to broaden our horizons and begin to shift some attention to our 'Near West' rather than our 'Far East'.

Unfortunately, the problem facing us at the beginning of the 80's is that we have neither the awareness nor the organizational structure in place to accomplish this task. All we have is a number of bilateral organizations that have sprung up over the years