

independent state. Canadians were not amused.

On 19 March 1943, the Prime Minister of Canada for the first time since the outbreak of the war was asked in Parliament to set forth his views on foreign policy as it might develop in the postwar world. Here was a subject on which Mackenzie King cared not at all to dilate: "The more [the] public . . . is diverted to questions about what is going to be the attitude of this country and that country at the peace table and [in] the postwar period, the less the country will be impressed with the fact that this war itself is not yet won." But something needed to be said, and what he chose to say was what he had said in the House of Commons as long ago as May 24, 1938:

"Our foreign and external policy is a policy of peace and friendliness, a policy of trying to look after our own interests and to understand the position of other governments with which we have dealings. It is a policy which takes account of our political connections and traditions, our geographical position, the limited numbers and the racial composition of our people, our stage in economic development, our own internal preoccupations and necessities — in short, a policy based on the Canadian situation. It is not and cannot be under these circumstances a spectacular headline policy; it is simply the sum of countless daily dealings with other countries, the general resultant of an effort to act decently on every issue or incident that arises, and a hope of receiving the same treatment from others."

The authors of the volume in the *Canada in World Affairs* series for 1941-44 in which this passage is quoted allow themselves a restrained but telling comment: "Mr. King did not make any modification of this five-year-old statement to conform with the revolutionary development which had taken place in Canada's war potential and industrial production."

Indeed he did not. That would have been inconsistent with his style — a style which, when he came to enunciate principles of foreign policy, chose (to adapt the lyrics of a song of that era) "to eliminate the positive, latch on to the negative".

Even in 1938 — so it seems to one fair-minded and knowledgeable observer, Nicholas Mansergh — the statement over-drew the difficulties, stressing "the precariousness of Canada's export markets, but not the value of her exports; . . . regional and cultural tensions within, but not the growing sense of unity; . . . the conflicting pulls of geography and history to which

indeed every 'settled' country is subject, but . . . not the immense strength of Canada's position in the heart of the English-speaking world". In 1943 the statement greatly underrated the country's power. Canada's uranium alone might have been used to extract from the Anglo-American partners in atomic-energy production virtually any concession on postwar status. But that is not how its leaders chose to play their hand.

Still, it was plain folly to continue to be content with lipping their hope for decent treatment in a world about to gain knowledge of the holocaust and to witness Hiroshima. Such ultra-diffident diplomacy would lose Canada's case by default. Even Mackenzie King was soon compelled to realize as much. July 1943 finds him, for the first time, striving after a postwar status commensurate with wartime stature:

"A number of new international institutions are likely to be set up as a result of the war. In the view of the Government, effective representation on these bodies should neither be restricted to the largest states nor necessarily extended to all states. Representation should be determined on a functional basis which will admit to full membership those countries, large or small, which have the greatest contribution to make to the particular object in question."

Here is the germ of "the Canadian doctrine of the middle powers", for a moment's reflection upon its implications is sufficient to indicate how inadequate the "great power/small power" dichotomy had become. "The simple division of the world between great powers and the rest is unreal and even dangerous," Mackenzie King declared to Parliament in August 1944:

"The great powers are called by that name simply because they possess great power. The other states of the world possess power and, therefore, the capacity to use it for the maintenance of peace — in varying degrees ranging from almost zero in the case of the smallest and weakest states up to a military potential not far below that of the great powers."

Somewhere on this spectrum of power lay Canada.

But where? Policy-makers developed a concern with ranking. "We are moving up in the International League," L. B. Pearson told a Toronto audience in March 1944, "even though we are not yet in the first division." And, in a letter written at that time, Pearson groped closer than anyone had thus far done to the concept of the "middle power":

*Ultra-diffident
diplomacy
would have lost
Canada's case
by default*

*Great power —
small power
dichotomy
had become
inadequate*