



Statements and Speeches

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THE COMPELLING NEED FOR PROGRESS IN NORTH/SOUTH RELATIONS

A Speech by the Right Honourable Pierre Elliott Trudeau, Prime Minister, to the House of Commons, Ottawa, June 15, 1981

It is obvious to all of us that our world has become unpredictable and unstable. We would also agree that it has become more dangerous. Mankind is living in a state of more or less extended crises. Violence and disorder have become banal. Injustice no longer causes indignation.

This global instability has many causes. There are many more countries in the world community than there used to be, and each is vigorously asserting its own particular needs and ambitions. Economic problems and international disputes have increased in both number and severity. While the super-powers have grown stronger, they often seem to have lost control over events. We have seen international law and economic systems break down more frequently, causing people to believe that things are out of control. There is a generalized condition of crisis expectation.

We usually think of crisis as a sudden shock, as a surprise, a burst of violence, an invasion. Obviously, the world needs to prevent such incidents when prevention is possible, and to contain them when they occur.

It must be understood, however, that such incidents usually result from pent-up tension. They are the flash-point of deep-seated problems. If the world hopes to prevent such shocks, we have to deal with the basic conditions which cause them. The only effective way to manage a crisis is to go to its roots.

Unfortunately, a succession of jarring events can so monopolize the attention and energy of governments that they neglect to deal with the persistent, underlying problems in world affairs, thus guaranteeing more shocks in the future. Effective management of crises means getting at the basic causes of the conditions we deplore, and really changing them. The challenge is extremely complex and difficult, but not hopeless. If we can muster the will to do the job, it can be done.

The necessary strength of will and sense of common purpose which is required of the industrialized democracies will not likely be forged out of any perception of immediate physical danger to ourselves, posed by the anger and frustration of the suffering peoples of the world.

The starving refugee lying in the hot dust of the Sahel can scarcely summon the strength to help himself, let alone strike out at us. If his children survive they will remember us, and with fury in their hearts, you can be sure. But that is a threat for another time. It does not frighten us into action today.

If the more powerful countries are to summon the will to respond in a more effective
