

Canada has this unique position because we are members of the Commonwealth — and I, by the way, regard Commonwealth membership today much more positively than I did two years ago. I must confess that I was beginning to think that — let us say five or six years ago — the Commonwealth had passed its prime, lost its effectiveness and its usefulness. But I believe now that the Commonwealth in its new and altered form is an extremely useful forum that provides us with opportunities that would not exist otherwise for dialogue, for discussion between heads of government, between foreign ministers, and to encourage a consensus of views on certain matters. Our membership in the Commonwealth, a leadership role (if I may be so bold as to say so) both because of age in terms of membership and also because of our experience, has been of tremendous value. Similarly, our unique position as a bilingual country gives us a quite special role *vis-à-vis* the *francophone* countries of the world, and particularly those in the developing world. As a result, we have a particular capacity in that huge continent, Africa. Our status with the Commonwealth and with *francophone* countries gives us the opportunity to speak to both of those large constituencies, to work with them and also to call upon them for support on occasion, when there are issues on which we have a common feeling and which we wish to advance either at the United Nations or in some other international forum. Through our diplomats and through our professionals in the Department, we have to be very skilful in working through these kinds of organization and developing the kinds of consensus we have seen prove effective — for example, at the heads-of-government meeting of the Commonwealth held in connection with Her Majesty's anniversary last year in London and in a number of other places as well. I wish I could be more specific and take the time to give you definite illustrations.

There are other areas where it is very difficult to know what kind of role Canada ought to play. I am thinking, for instance, of such major trouble-spots as the Middle East. Obviously, if one is practical about it, one has to recognize that Canada is not a major player. Nor is it likely to exert the decisive influence in terms of how the conflict itself is going to be resolved in the Middle East. Obviously, as I have said on a number of occasions, the last few months have produced a situation in which nothing has changed and yet everything has changed. The whole atmosphere in which the 30-year-old discussion is taking place has changed markedly as a result of President Sadat's initiative and the events that flowed from that. But there are times when it is wiser for a country such as Canada to refrain from either commenting [on] or intervening in those kinds of situation. This is one of them, where I feel that we should allow the countries concerned to work as closely as possible together to achieve a solution and not do those things that may have a transitory applause result in terms of action but don't really contribute and may, in fact, retard the process.

I use that illustration to make another point about Canadian foreign policy. We must, as a country of our size, determine where we can be effective. We must determine a rather selective list of foreign-policy goals and objectives. In that spectrum I outlined in the beginning, it would be quite unreasonable for us, as what has been called a middle power (and I'm not quite sure what that word means), to be involved in all issues, to seek to do something in all of them, and in a real sense spread ourselves so thin that we would not be effective anywhere.