

# Canada's dialogue with the EEC problems of making it effective

By James Langley

The ambivalence of our ancestors towards Europe, compounded of nostalgia and resentments which may still be fresh in the memories of those who recall the inter-war years, has given way in more recent times to a cooler calculation of the Canadian interest — which has, however, not yet provided the key to the riddle of our relations with Europe. The two poles of public opinion, represented by the catchwords of current debate, “continentalism” and “diversification”, are both sustained by respectable doctrine but lead to dramatically different prescriptions for the conduct of our foreign relations. Even if the consensus has moved decisively in favour of “diversification”, the implications for foreign policy towards particular areas, such as Europe, are not at all self-evident. With limited resources for all those activities through which a nation manifests itself abroad, governmental and private, from commerce to culture, the

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problem of choice remains — when our efforts best deployed and to precise ends?

The situation is no clearer viewed from the European perspective. There is, of course, an immense goodwill for Canada and Canadian each of the countries of the old continent. Perhaps our common heritage, the experiences of two world wars and particular contribution made by Canadian forces to the liberation, are the most important factors. One who lives in Europe cannot also but be impressed by the identical interest, respect and affection which our country, its myths of forest frontier, our domestic and international record and our people are held.

None of this, unfortunately, is translatable into specific knowledge or understanding. Thus in Europe there has been a tendency to assume that our interests lie in other associations — bilateral, Commonwealth or North American — and that friendship was sufficient content for our bilateral relations. While it is arguable that benevolence has not served Canada badly in dealings with a multinational Europe, these contacts have lacked depth in human and economic terms, except in Britain. As a result, there has been a certain insubstantiality to our relations with the other countries of Europe, except perhaps, in the security context — and here the overwhelming weight of the United States tends to dominate the scene.

The creation of the European Communities and their recent enlargement added a new element from both the Canadian and European perspectives. In simplest terms, a new level of European Economic Community policy and administration has been added to the traditional government machinery of the member countries. This in itself complicates particularly during this formative period when the Community is necessarily occupied with the internal problems