

FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES

The Outlook

1. Canadians are not especially worried about international events. They do not really see their independence (78%) or economic wellbeing (70%) being threatened over the next 30 years. A very high proportion (87%) express some degree of concern (very 34%, somewhat 53%) over the current state of East/West relations, but by a 2:1 ratio they believe the superpowers will be able to avoid a nuclear war (though the younger they are, the less they believe this). They are evenly divided over the prospect of another world economic depression such as was experienced in the 1930's. And Canadians are not very sanguine about the prospects of the developing countries, only about a third expressing optimism over the eradication of poverty and starvation in those countries (in this case, the younger they are, the more optimistic they are).

2. Prompted by a list of issues which might threaten Canadians' security, half thought the acquisition of nuclear weapons by smaller countries such as one of the Middle East states posed the most likely danger. Another quarter selected Soviet military power, and the rest were split between American military power and Communist subversion. Asked to select from a list of events which could produce a nuclear war, almost half chose a regional crisis such as the Middle East (43%), followed by accident or equipment malfunction (24%) and Soviet aggression (22%). Aggression by the United States was chosen by only 9%.

The Priorities

3. When respondents were asked to select their "most important" priority from among the six foreign policy themes enunciated in the 1970 Foreign Policy for Canadians, they chose two in particular: promoting world peace and security (38%), and fostering economic growth and prosperity (28%). Women favoured the former, men the latter. More altruistic themes, such as protecting the world's natural environment and resources, improving the quality of life through cultural and educational exchanges, and promoting social justice through assistance to developing nations were rather more secondary concerns. Safeguarding Canadian sovereignty and independence was also somewhat secondary.

4. There were notable discrepancies, however, between the priority accorded policy themes and that accorded 24 particular policy issues. Of special note is that the protection of the oceans and fisheries resources, and acid rain were ranked no. 2 and 3 respectively, while the expansion of international trade ranked only