

A sample of expert opinion

four mentions; it had not become a member until the UN had celebrated its tenth anniversary.

Diplomats from no fewer than nine different countries, including members of NATO, the Warsaw Pact and the nonaligned movement, all identified their own countries as the ones behaving in the UN most like Canada. What does that say about Canadian diplomacy?

We requested the respondents to score, on a scale of one to seven, Australia, Canada, Netherlands, Norway and Sweden in terms of their commitment to the UN, independence in the UN, leadership in the UN, role as consensus builder, and support for self-determination, peacekeeping and international development. Sweden emerged as the front runner by all criteria. Averaging the seven ratings, Canada (5.2), came out decidedly below Sweden (5.9), but barely ahead of Norway (5.2) and substantially ahead of the Netherlands (5.0) and Australia (4.6). It led the Netherlands and Australia on each of the seven items. Canada was considered much stronger than Norway in "leadership," but trailed in "support of self-determination"; it was slightly ahead of Norway in support of international development, even though Norway's contribution, in terms of per capita GNP, was considerably greater. Canada's score was highest for "peacekeeping" (6.0), "commitment to the UN" (5.8), and "support for development" (5.7); it was lowest on "leadership" (4.5), "independence" (4.8), "consensus promotion" (4.8) and "support for self-determination" (5.0).

Had this been an *all-inclusive* popularity contest, Sweden might still have emerged at or near the top. Considerably smaller than Canada, it is also more single minded in soliciting Third World support. One Swede told us, with at least a trace of embarrassment, that his government decided that, since the UN was the Third World's club, Sweden would play by the Third World's rules. Its nonaligned foreign policy obviously made this easier. Several Third World countries, such as India and Yugoslavia, would almost certainly out-rank Canada and Norway in popularity. Canada's ranking in the "good company" of the Scandinavians, the Netherlands and Australia was nevertheless impressive.

Canada's best and worst features

We proceeded to ask the respondents to specify the *best* and the *weakest* characteristics of Canada's UN diplomacy. For the "best," a quarter cited our familiar roles as mediator, moderator or consensus-builder. Almost as many relied on flattering adjectives such as straightforward, consistent, fair, reliable, honest, frank, principled, sensible, pragmatic, pacific, friendly, likeable and able. Our diplomats were always well briefed, it was stressed, and up on the fine print. A smaller portion cited Canada's function as "friendly critic" of the United States, and praised its willingness to take "tough," "independent" stands. One respondent noted that Canada's main strength was that it was seldom a "demandeur." It was refreshing, after all this, to be asked by one interviewee: "But *does* Canada have a UN diplomacy?"

Far less consensus emerged when we turned to the perceived weaknesses. With a membership approaching 160, it should hardly be surprising that many of our respondents had had little opportunity to focus on Canada.

Some of our respondents could think of *no* defects in Canada's UN performance. Some suggested the same characteristic, such as "honesty" or "modesty," that they had cited as its strength — and could usually explain why. Almost a third raised Canada's close association with the United States; a smaller group claimed that our greatest weakness was our effort to appear different from our major ally — "a bad case of Scandinavianitis," one complained.

Canada's Ambassadors

The second largest group was critical of Canada's "low profile." It was too quiet, they frequently said, too withdrawn, too unassertive, too inactive or too indefinite. (These responses, it should be noted, were given before Stephen Lewis became Canada's UN Ambassador.) One interviewee said Canada suffered in the UN by not being one of the LDCs (Less Developed Countries); a couple of other complained that our weakness lay in being intimidated by the LDCs. Several said our greatest weakness was strong partiality for Israel. Others said we were excessively anti-Soviet. Several held that we were too spread out over a large number of issues. One said the greatest weakness was "proximity" to Ottawa, and the consequent necessity to deal with a flood of visitors expecting attention. (As the recipient of many mission favors, this author understood, and blushed.)

We asked respondents to distinguish, if they could, Canadian and US diplomacy in the UN. Only a handful said they could see no difference, but a sixth considered it to be trivial. The largest portion, a third, noted Canada's greater understanding of the LDCs and generosity towards them. A half that portion had observed Canada's greater support of arms control. Other small minorities noted Canada's more positive stand on the Law of the Sea, greater "balance" in dealing with the Middle East, and stronger support for human rights and other humanitarian measures. A dozen respondents stressed that Canada's UN diplomacy was less rigid or ideological; it was also seen as friendlier and more concerned to build bridges. Unlike the United States, we were told, "Canada really believes in the UN, supports it, and uses it."

One diplomat could detect *no* similarity between the Canadians and Americans except that "they speak the same language." A considerable majority clearly could distinguish between the two diplomacies, in both style and content. Almost all of the stated differences were in Canada's favor, and many went out of their way to stress that they saw Canada as independent. Difficult to ignore, however, was the observation of a much respected Western ambassador that "Canada, like fifty-six others, hides behind the US veto." It is easier to be a nice guy if you are confident that someone else will block unpleasant measures.

Is the US a stigma?

"Influence in a group or groups," it will be recalled, was ranked second among the factors of overall influence in the UN, and Canada's primary association is almost inescapably with the US and NATO. When we asked: "Would Canada's diplomacy in the UN be more effective, or less