

THE PEACE PROCESS

The Basis of My Approach

I have continued to base my approach to Middle East questions on the premise stated in my interim report - that while Canada has important economic interests in the area, our most fundamental goal there is to contribute to a just and lasting peace. My reasons for adopting this attitude are straight forward. The dispute between Arabs and Israelis has resulted in the disruption and uprooting of peoples and an immense and wasteful diversion of scarce resources to military expenditures. It has caused great suffering on both sides. It has also been a source of continuing world tension and uncertainty, and carries the threat of wider conflict which could engulf the entire international community.

In reporting I have not presumed to outline the specifics of a settlement of this very complex and sensitive issue. I do not think that anyone can foresee the exact shape of a settlement. Rather, I have tried to put forward positions and recommendations which could be considered by the Government as a basis for Canadian policy in the area. In doing so I have borne in mind that Canada is not a major world power like the United States. The Americans have had and will continue to have a particular responsibility in fostering the peace process in the Middle East. While Canada's influence on events is necessarily limited this does not mean that we cannot be effective. My discussions with Middle East leaders have convinced me we can make a real contribution to peace if we have the respect and friendship of the governments and peoples of the area.

In considering what Canadian policy should be, I have seen no need to hide our sympathies. We have had a longstanding and close relationship with Israel since that country's birth. Canadians continue to have an abiding admiration for the Jewish people who have made so many significant contributions across the field of human endeavour. They have suffered much over the centuries, and most recently in the terrible events of the Holocaust, but throughout they have maintained deep emotional links to their ancient homeland. The Israelis, in little over 30 years, and against formidable odds, have established vigorous democratic institutions and through them have done much to make their new country prosper. Canada's commitment to friendship with Israel and to that country's well-being cannot be subject to question. Our close ties with Israel should remain a fundamental cornerstone of Canadian Middle East policy. The Israeli leaders I met affirmed to me the importance and value they attach to these ties between our governments and, equally important, between our peoples.