

Business and US made respectable

Ideological polarization has characterized recent North-South discussions. Those in the "North of the North" (e.g., US, Britain, Japan) have tended to take a very cautious and conservative approach to policies and practices of international cooperation for development. They have stressed economic liberalism as a philosophical underpinning for both international and national policies, and bilateralism as a technique. Those in the "South of the South" (e.g., Libya, Syria) have typically taken a sharply different stance, stressing multilateralism, strongly interventionist policies internationally and equally strong dirigiste policies at home. Each of these two poles typically has sought "unconditional surrender" rather than "peaceful coexistence" as the North-South dialogue evolved.

Mobilize "like-mindedness"

Our proposal is to build links among those countries that are "South of the North" (such as Canada, the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, Australia and New Zealand — the so-called "like-minded" countries) and those that are "North of the South" (including but not limited to Brazil, Mexico, South Korea, Singapore, Malaysia, Kenya and Yugoslavia), that have moved toward agreement on general approaches to global economic management as well as on certain specific programs. It is among this newly-evolving group of moderate "reformist centrist" countries that issues can be tackled on their practical merits without the encumbrance of sterile ideological debates. Canada, enjoying a reputation as a "bridge builder" within the world community, has the rare opportunity to help in identifying international development issues of common interest among middle powers.

How can this best be initiated? We suggest that the Canadian government begin by utilizing the existing personnel of established international institutions in Washington and New York, rather than considering costly and complicated new institutional mechanisms or other new fora. The government would incur no expense by instruct-

ing its executive directors at the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank in Washington and its UN ambassador in New York to invite their colleagues from "like-minded" countries of the North and South to informal discussions to sound them out on the prospects for such an initiative. Private meetings, far from the glare of media scrutiny, offer the best chance for frank discussions. If the discussions bog down, no public hopes will have been raised and then dashed. But if the discussions succeed and lead to one or more middle power initiatives on international development, this could be an important foreign policy achievement for the Canadian government.

Independence via North-South

The challenge of Canada's new government lies not only in maintaining but in enhancing Canada's traditionally independent foreign policy as we move towards closer economic linkages with the United States. We have been told that a step towards the US does not necessarily imply a step away from other countries. If this is correct, then a step towards like-minded countries on North-South development issues should not imply a deterioration in Canada-US relations.

As a nation heavily dependent on international trade and financial flows, it is clearly in Canada's long-term economic interest to seek progress on the North-South impasse. Moreover, this is absolutely essential to global peace and development. A Canadian-led middle power initiative on international development issues should go hand-in-hand with efforts to improve Canada-US relations and to defuse East-West tensions. It represents a unique opportunity for Prime Minister Mulroney to extend his calls for "civility," "harmony" and "renewal" to the international stage and to consolidate his domestic image and support. Canadian voters will be watching to see whether the new leader fulfills their high expectations for both a buoyant economic policy and an independent foreign policy. □