

That predisposition was reinforced by the composition of our people — French and English in foundation, multiracial in evolution, first inheriting and then importing values, customs, languages and beliefs from many parts of the world, and retaining ties or sympathies with them.

Our geography and demography are significant assets in shaping an approach to the world, but they also generate liabilities. Fragmentation and dissonance between regions, levels of government and ethnic groups; importation of political tensions or allegiances from offshore — and perhaps a tendency to concentrate on isolated issues rather than grapple with the complexity of the nation's interest as a whole.

**Dedication to
trade**

Another continuity has been our dedication to trade.

Trade brought a more detailed consciousness of the outside world, and of our dependence upon it, and gave us a direct interest in influencing events and decisions in foreign capitals. Trade also taught us our vulnerability to shocks and changes in the global economy, and has established a profound Canadian stake and investment in a fair and open international system.

But economic circumstances also provoked, and continue to present, the dilemma of promoting and protecting our own industry on a national basis. Tension between our dedication both to an open global system, and to provisioning our own sovereignty, is a fundamental feature of our national life and policy culture whether past, present or future.

But our formative continuities are not limited to functional matters. They embrace that "dynamic value system" which our UNESCO [United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization] definition of culture identities. In the global context, our values are clearly those of the contemporary, advanced industrial democracies. But what strikes me as unique, and I have no specific determining factors to explain it, is the peculiarly Canadian urge to "do something" about the shape of the world.

I have no embarrassment in talking about this missionary spirit. It has inspired some of our finest hours in international affairs. It is a spirit which may or may not be animated by a cold calculation of our national interest. It is the Canadian itch, and we have done well to scratch it. Our moral activism is, at its best, a proud projection abroad of our policy culture.

We are hopeful, constructive, conciliatory, optimistic and good joiners. But our missionary spirit can also, on occasion, lead us to overestimate our power and influence, to expose ourselves to the kind of criticism invariably levelled at idealists — accusations of naiveté, hypocrisy and self-deception.