

SDI too was very much an open issue. There was widespread concern over its potential to speed up the arms race, but also significant division of opinion on the actual merits of the program. A small majority (56 percent opposed to 42 percent) in fact held a favorable opinion on the program, and a rather larger majority (66 percent opposed to 34 percent) favored some form of Canadian participation in SDI research. They did so because of the potential attractiveness of a defence system able to protect Western countries from missiles launched against them, and not because of the potential economic or technological benefits which might flow from Canadian participation.

Chart 1

Support for NATO Membership

	Percentages
Canadians	85 (1984)
West Germans	67 (1981)
British	67 (1981)
Dutch	62 (1981)
Italians	60 (1981)
Americans	58 (1982)
French	45 (1981)

Third World needs

If Canadians are as capable as other national groups of forming reasoned judgments on their security interests, they are probably more altruistic than most in their concern for the Third World — and proud of their country's record in helping to reduce hunger and poverty.

Last year, more than 80 percent of respondents said they thought aid was a moral responsibility, and only slightly lesser numbers indicated a determination to ensure development assistance funds were put to best use. Most believed that effectiveness required a long-term commitment of funds and would prefer those funds to be devoted to stimulating long-term economic development.

In 1985 73 percent thought that Canada had the right to give recipient countries direction on how aid funds could be used more effectively. But they drew the line at tying aid to the purchase of Canadian products and services, or at denying aid because of a recipient government's failure to respect human rights. However, when human rights violations did occur, two-out-of-three expected Canada to object publicly even if it were to cost us politically or economically. (About the same number thought that if any Canadians were in danger in a foreign country, the government should be prepared to use the Armed Forces to rescue them if necessary.)

In 1985 a majority (59 percent) believed that Canada was spending about the right amount of money on development assistance (in 1984 53 percent thought so), and of those who disagreed more believed more should be spent rather than less spent. If more were to be spent, 67 percent thought the burden should be shared equally between the government and the private sector.

A large majority also thought that Canadian aid had been effective over the years, but two-out-of-three were prepared to believe that "a fair bit of the aid money Canada provides goes to rich people in poor countries." A rather smaller majority expressed some impatience with the performance of developing countries themselves, agreeing that "we shouldn't keep on helping them forever."

Canada/US relations and free trade

Canadians showed a marked preference in the 1985 poll for a relationship with the United States which was neither too close nor too cool. Almost half thought the ideal would be a relationship that was "businesslike but neighborly," and a marginally smaller number preferred "strong allies and trade partners." As in previous years a majority believed Canada should be prepared to pursue its own independent policies even if this involved some cost to the relationship. The poll also confirmed a lingering concern that Canadian governments have not, over the years, been forceful enough in their dealings with the United States (see Chart 2). Opinion was rather evenly divided over whether a close relationship with the United States increased or undermined Canada's influence with other countries.

Chart 2

Canadian Forcefulness Towards USA

	1982	1984	1985
	Percentages		
Government does not push enough	58	53	55
Government pushes about right	31	38	36
Government pushes too strongly	9	9	8

The 1985 poll talked respondents through an extensive set of questions on the subject of a possible trade agreement with the United States. The results suggest that the population is far less distraught on the subject than the media had suggested. In fact, Canadians seem to be largely supportive of the project, at least in concept. Three-out-of-