



Statements and Speeches

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FOREIGN POLICY REVIEW

A Statement by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Flora MacDonald, before the Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence, Ottawa, October 30, 1979

I want to begin by saying how delighted I am to appear before this Committee, for the first time as Secretary of State for External Affairs. Since my appointment, I've had the opportunity to speak to a number of you on matters relating to foreign affairs. In addition, my officials, on my instructions, have been available for briefings to your respective caucuses on matters you viewed to be important. It is my intention to continue this policy of providing a flow of information to parliamentarians, especially the Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence.

Prior to an examination of the supplementary estimates, which is the subject of this morning's meeting, I thought that it would be appropriate for me to make a few brief remarks concerning my approach to foreign policy and the foreign policy review presently under way.

One of the points made to my leader by Progressive Conservative members of this Committee in the last Parliament was that "for too long the making of Canada's foreign policy has been shrouded in the domain of public servants, diplomats and cabinet committees."

Among the first things I sought out to accomplish after June 4th was to increase public interest in external and aid policy. If the Government of Canada is to continue and even increase its commitments in these fields, it is essential that it have the active support of the Canadian people. I also believe very sincerely that an informed public will support humane and enlightened policies both at home and abroad.

Foreign policy must not be the exclusive preserve of the few, inside or outside government. I believe that the time is right to undertake a comprehensive review of Canada's foreign policy. The last foreign policy review took place ten years ago but it has largely been overtaken by events. A lot has changed in the past decade.

New areas of instability have emerged while some old ones linger on. Economic interdependence has increased, while discrepancies between different groups of countries in the developing world have grown. There has been extraordinary growth in the production and sale of conventional arms, of an increasingly sophisticated kind, all over the globe. More and more countries have been manoeuvring for position, exercising political, economic or military leverage under the nuclear arch provided by the United States and the Soviet Union. It is clearly time to stand back and take a good look at all this, to ascertain what it means for Canada, and to chart our course for the future. That is the purpose of a foreign policy review at this time. It is not a
