

Chapter III

SHAPING POLICY

The world does not stand still while Canada shapes and sets in motion its foreign policy. The international scene shifts rapidly and sometimes radically, almost from day to day. Within one week an assassination in Cyprus, a decision about another country's import policy, a coup in Cambodia, an important top-level meeting of two German leaders, a dispute in Niamey—while not all such events affect Canadian interest, some have done so, others will.

It is much the same on the domestic scene. An oil-tanker foundering in Canadian territorial waters endangers marine life and underlines once again the need for international co-operation to deal effectively with pollution of the sea as regards both technical remedies and legal responsibilities. A wheat surplus in Western Canada poses very difficult domestic problems and externally requires action to get effective international co-operation in marketing and production policies. A criminal trial in Montreal is considered in a friendly country to have race undertones and causes concern for Canadians and for Canadian business firms there.

The scene shifts constantly, foreign and domestic factors interact in various ways at the same time; they appear quickly, often unexpectedly, as threats or challenges, opportunities or constraints, affecting the pursuit of Canadian national aims. National policies, whether to be applied internally or externally, are shaped by such factors. The trick is to recognize them for what they are and to act accordingly.

The problem is to produce a clear, complete picture from circumstances which are dynamic and ever-changing. It must be held in focus long enough to judge what is really essential to the issue under consideration, to enable the Government to act on it decisively and effectively. That picture gets its shape from information gathered from a variety of sources—