

Option policy and the growing climate of economic nationalism is not surprising. We should not expect, however, that the contribution of public opinion to the continuing debate regarding foreign-policy options would range much beyond this general sense of "climate" or "mood" until such time as the shift in emphasis of Canadian foreign policy became more clearly embedded in the public consciousness. Nevertheless, it may be argued that, in the past year or two, the broader public attention accorded foreign-policy issues has begun to have its effect in the development of a more genuine body of opinion.

Accordingly, we attempted to measure for the first time public predispositions towards the direction implied by each of the three foreign-policy options originally set out by Mr. Sharp by including a question on this subject in our 1973-74 national survey. The question was repeated in the 1974-75 survey, with several more-specific items in the area of foreign policy and a sequence of questions we have used for several years to test general public attitudes towards foreign investment. It was desirable to measure as accurately as possible the direction of public attitudes towards key elements of each of the three foreign-policy options as they were first proposed. We therefore employed a survey question modelled on Mr. Sharp's summary of the options, but in a form that attempted to present three equally-attractive alternatives. (Some critics of the Sharp paper have argued that the options were presented in such a way as to pre-judge the choice of Option Three). While it is not always possible to achieve complete neutrality in survey questions, care must be taken to present alternatives to the respondent in as unbiased a way as possible. The form of the questions employed in the 1973-74 and 1974-75 surveys was:

It has been suggested that Canada has three long-term options that should be seriously considered as an industrial strategy. First, Canada can seek to maintain its present relationship with the U.S. with no policy adjustments; second, Canada can move toward closer integration with the U.S.; or, third, Canada can seek a stronger relationship with Europe and/or Asia. Which of the above three do you feel would be most advantageous to Canada's long-term well being?

The national cross-section sample to whom this question was first put in the 1973-74 survey revealed the largest proportion of the population (42 per cent) favouring the first of these options, which,

for the sake of brevity, we refer to from now on as the "stay-as-we-are" option. By comparison, the Third Option was supported by only 30 per cent of the survey respondents. Of those surveyed, 18 per cent favoured the choice of moving Canada closer to the United States, while the balance of the respondents (10 per cent) expressed no opinion. When a new survey was conducted in the following year (1974-75), a nearly-identical distribution of opinion was obtained. As the Third Option policy has moved more distinctly into the public arena over the past year, public opinion does not appear to have shifted perceptibly in the direction of support for the new posture in foreign policy.

"Stay as we are"

When the sample of the population surveyed is broken down into its component socio-economic sub-groups, support for a shift in the direction of Canadian foreign policy does not vary appreciably from the levels cited for the population as a whole within any particular group. The Third Option does, however, tend to be slightly more popular among men, persons under 30 and urban-dwellers than it is among the opposite population sub-groups. It should be emphasized, however, that in no group does support for the Third Option exceed that for the "first" ("stay as we are") option.

Similarly, a breakdown of the data by region discloses only relatively modest variations between sections of the country, although some significant shifts of opinion between the 1973-74 and 1974-75 surveys are found in two provinces - Quebec and British Columbia. The pattern runs in opposite directions in these two areas, support for the Third Option having declined in British Columbia at the same time it has increased in Quebec. At the time of the first survey, British Columbia had been the only province in which the Third Option was more popular than either of the alternatives tested. But, in the most recent survey, support for the Third Option in that province declined to 34 per cent (from 41 per cent in the 1973-74 survey), while support for the status quo in foreign policy remained constant (36 per cent). There is at present no province in which the Third Option commands more public support than alternative policies.

To some extent, this finding seems to be at odds with our findings regarding the increasing climate of nationalism in Canada over the past five years. Certainly, diversification of trade and investment is seen by many as one of several alternative

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