

# Canada's

by Dale C. Thomson

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■ *There comes a time for renewal and in 1968 the Government saw that for Canada's foreign policy the time had arrived.* This statement, taken from the first in a series of six pamphlets entitled "*Foreign Policy for Canadians*", published in June under the authority of Mitchell Sharp, Secretary of State for External Affairs, may well herald a new chapter in Canada's relations with the rest of the world. Certainly, it marks the most ambitious attempt by any country to rethink its foreign relations without being forced to do so by a revolution or some other traumatic national upheaval.

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## Canada's 'quiet revolution'

In its own way, all of Canada has been going through a period of transformation over the past decade that might well be called a "quiet revolution" even though that term has usually been applied to developments in Quebec alone. A virtual *renaissance* in French Canada, a rapidly evolving economy, deep social stirrings in every region, and an increasing awareness of the outside world, have led Canadians to question many facets of both domestic and foreign policy, and even to probe the fundamental nature of the national policy. Four general elections in the 1960's, three of which resulted in minority governments, both reflected and contributed to this self-

analysis. The political uncertainty of the period produced a new Prime Minister, Pierre Elliott Trudeau, who said of himself "the only constant factor to be found in my thinking over the years has been opposition to accepted opinions," a comment that found an echo among many of his fellow citizens.

In April 1968, shortly after he became Prime Minister, Mr. Trudeau declared that his Government would "seek a new role for Canada and a new foreign policy based on a fresh appraisal of this rapidly changing world and on a realistic assessment of Canada's potential." In fact, a review of Canada's foreign policy had already been started by the previous administration of Lester B. Pearson. But the Trudeau Government broadened its scope, opening up to public debate a subject heretofore remote and somewhat esoteric. Meetings were held in various parts of Canada at which Government specialists came together with citizens interested in international relations, particularly university professors. In the political realm, the House of Commons Committee on External Affairs and National Defence contributed to the broad enterprise through extensive hearings on the military aspects of Canada's external role and on the timeless question of Canada's relations with the United States.

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## Six main theme areas

The process was complex and occasionally painful. Task forces of experienced foreign service officers were set up to examine specific subject areas, or policy towards specific geographical regions. The working papers that resulted, or the insights they contained, then had to be fitted into a conceptual framework developed by a

special group of policy analysts and arranged in six main theme areas: □ fostering economic growth; □ safeguarding sovereignty and independence; □ working for peace and security; □ enhancing the quality of life; □ and ensuring a harmonious national environment. The challenge was to apply them to Canadian foreign policy as a kind of litmus test of current practices, and as a theoretical setting for projections into the future.

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## Two-year task

For the Department of External Affairs, legatee of the Canadian foreign policy that evolved in the post-war decades, the task was a formidable one. It consumed two years, an enormous number of man-hours, and the production of a dozen drafts before finally being approved by Cabinet as a statement of Government policy. The texts inevitably reflect the compromises worked out in the lengthy process of consultation among officials and ministers, with as many as 20 departments and agencies involved at some points. In the interest of achieving consensus, the drafters apparently found it necessary to treat certain subjects with less firmness and definition than they might have wished. Another casualty of the operation: the range of possible options was not presented in each instance, and little explanation was provided for those adopted.

There is no separate statement on United States-Canadian relations. This is attributable not only to the daunting dimensions of such a task, but because they had been significantly dealt with in the Government's major review of defence policy, and because the Government is still considering a policy on foreign investment. Moreover, the