



Statements and Speeches

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CANADA'S FOREIGN POLICY HAS STRONG PACIFIC DIMENSION

A Speech by the Honourable Mark MacGuigan, Secretary of State for External Affairs, at the Pacific Rim Opportunities Conference, Vancouver, November 19, 1980

...So much is being said at present about the economic dynamism of the Pacific region that to rehearse the statistics and cite the authorities on the area would be redundant in a gathering such as this. Suffice it to say that all observers are in agreement that the region has vast potential: in some forecasts, by the turn of the century, it could be the focus if not the engine of growth in the world's economy.

Yet, while there is so much confidence in the economic future of the Pacific area, there is also some uncertainty about precisely what must be done to develop and direct the forces shaping the future for the maximum benefit of all countries in the region. How should we, as members of a vast and diverse neighbourhood organize ourselves to derive mutual advantage from the challenges of the future? As you know one important idea now in play is the notion of a "Pacific Community" organization constituted essentially to come to grips with economic problems in the first instance. Yet despite the considerable interest and momentum that has been built up in recent months, the concept has encountered and indeed generated a number of reservations, mainly political, which suggest that a structured community may take some time to shape. But the sense of community is there, and we must built on it.

To date, Canadians in the private sector, in government and in the academic world, have shown an active interest in helping to build this Pacific Community, and a readiness to participate in the evolution of the concept from the outset. All of us who are interested in these questions have been approaching the political issues of membership, organization and the Community's eventual responsibilities in a deliberate and careful spirit, but with open minds and in a positive fashion.

Needless to say, your discussions on Friday on the Pacific Community will inevitably have an impact on Canadian views concerning this concept, and on the positions we take in exchanges with our Pacific friends. In fact, I look to this conference to provide new momentum and direction in public thinking generally about the Pacific, for use as a basis of policy formation.

The truth is that we still lack, in Canada, a well-developed public sense of where we are going and what we should be doing in the Pacific. Until very recently we have been overwhelmingly an Atlantic nation in outlook — turning East to our European roots and history, our traditional flows of trade, and our major security considerations; looking south to the American colossus, our closest friend and ally and the mainstay of our economic well-being. Canada, Europe and the U.S.A. have been inexorably linked together in our national psyche and in the main themes of our foreign policies.
