

against institutions or individuals, and a tendency to prefer gossip about policy process to the substance of policy itself.

The Kent Commission addressed this problem and identified a decline of professionalism in the management of foreign news by Canadian newspapers. The Commission says:

"A vicious circle is at work. There are few Canadian correspondents abroad. Consequently, the editorial staffs of Canadian newspapers include too few people with knowledge of the outside world. Consequently, they do not know how to handle foreign news well. Consequently, the editors are able to convince themselves that what they cannot handle confidently is not what the readers want."

I share the Kent Commission's concern about the nature of newspaper work on foreign affairs. In television, sensational film of a flood or an earthquake tends to displace the thoughtful commentary of a Joe Schlesinger, a David Halton, a Craig Oliver, a Peter Trueman, a Madeleine Poulin, or a Pierre Nadeau. It is disturbing to note this trend at a time when so many other elements of Canadian society are displaying renewed attention to international politics and economics. The media are, with the possible exception of radio, an uncertain intellectual force in the definition or interpretation of Canadian foreign policy. The world does not present itself with clarity in forty-second clips.

I do not ask for, or even expect, media agreement with one or another government policy line. What I look for, and I think you look for as well, is a distinctively analytic and interpretive capacity in foreign affairs, from a point of view which stimulates, challenges the Canadian public at large, and policy-makers in government. In so far as fault may lie with officials, and in large part it does. I recognize that we need to do more to inspire, to inform, to explain and to revivify a constructive dialogue with the Canadian media.

I should try now to pose a few final questions, and to draw a few conclusions from these highly personal reflections on foreign policy and the public interest.

We envy the homogeneity of some countries. We see in Japan, in France, in Singapore or in Israel, societies dedicated to a common ethic or a dominant priority. The shared assumptions of their university graduates, their trade unions, their entrepreneurs, and their media, seem to give those societies an ability to move internationally with solid purpose and concentrated energy. On the other hand, we look with occasional dismay at the diffusion of effective power within the American system, where the play of institutions, regions and special interests has never been more complex.

The question for Canadians is whether in practice we can do better than a ragged and uneasy coherence of competing groups and interests. Whether there is perhaps a silent majority which still expects our foreign policy to be something more than the sum of many parts. Whether fleeting coalitions, of national and public interest, can sustain the long-term dedication which must underlie the most significant linkages between domestic and foreign policy.

As always, there are trends and counter-trends. I fear that many of the single-interest constituencies

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