



Statements and Speeches

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NEW DIMENSIONS IN NORTH-SOUTH RELATIONS: A CANADIAN PERSPECTIVE

An Address by the Honourable Mark MacGuigan, Secretary of State for External Affairs, to the Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, England, July 7, 1980.

William James once referred to the "great, blooming, buzzing confusion" of the perceptual world confronting a new-born child. We are none of us infants any longer, but I personally sometimes feel a little dizzy faced with the "great, blooming, buzzing confusion" of the world of North-South relations. It is a world in which the easy labels of North and South hide as much as they reveal, a world in which we must pick our way very carefully through the rhetoric, the maze of issues, and a profusion of meetings, groups and organizations. Confronted with this complex environment, perceptions of even well-informed observers can differ markedly.

Despite this complexity and the inevitable diversity of impressions, I hope we can agree on the fundamental importance and urgency of North-South issues. Interdependence between North and South has always been evident to developing countries, at least to the extent that they feel very directly the consequences of conditions in and decisions by the developed countries. In the past ten years, this awareness of interdependence has become more acute in the developed countries as well. It has been clearest in relation to energy, but it is also very evident in international monetary and trade issues. What is more, I think there is a general recognition that the developed market economies have an increasing strategic interest in military and political developments throughout the Third World. The urgency of North-South issues relates especially to the disruptions of the world economy from two major oil shocks. The latest of these has hit the poorest developing countries very hard and poses acute problems for the international financial system in particular.

The next year or so will see intense activity in the North-South dialogue. The United Nations Special Session late next month is likely to approve an International Development Strategy for the 1980s and it will launch the new round of global negotiations that will start in earnest next year. Canada is deeply committed to progress at this round. We believe that the world community should take advantage of these negotiations and of their probable coincidence with three summits in 1981 to try to come to grips with some of the most serious problems.

The first summit is likely to be a so-called mini-summit of the type proposed by the Brandt Commission. It would be a gathering of 20 or 25 heads of government from a representative selection of countries. Canada, which co-chaired the Conference on International Economic Co-operation in the mid-70s, has expressed its support for such a summit. Prime Minister Trudeau and I have been discussing it in both bilateral and multilateral meetings of the past few months. We believe this North-South Summit should supplement and give impetus to the global negotiations.
