

It is not easy for us in the contemporary world to maintain the cherished independence of thought and decision obtained in the past 100 years. There are two reasons for this.

In the first place, no nation can enjoy the degree of independence in decision which existed in earlier times. Every major decision has become immensely more complicated by the considerations which new military technology, science, economics and humanitarian obligations present to the governments concerned. The great powers have more complex considerations to weigh but the lesser powers cannot expect to have much freedom of choice either. Independence in foreign affairs cannot have quite the same meaning as in other fields.

In the second place, Canada has its own unique problems in maintaining independence. We are a nation of relatively limited population in an immense territory, with our only neighbour the most powerful nation in the world. We are a new nation which has strong cultural links with many countries but particularly with the United States, Britain and France. We have had to develop an identity in the midst of these influences in a century in which two world wars and the military and economic pressures leading to collective action have set a high premium on conformity in views.

The problem remains, and I have, therefore, chosen to speak about the fact of our independence and about the means of preserving it. I believe that correct public understanding of the formulation of our foreign policy is of the greatest importance today.

There are two directions from which we must approach this subject. Both are essential to a full understanding.

In the first place, I should like to establish the basic fact of our independence in relation to some of the world problems of the moment, because there are people who doubt it.

In the second place, I should like to explain why we can take an independent and useful role in world affairs and what are the means chosen by the Government to ensure that we can continue to do this. A nation which does not understand the conditions on which its strength and independence rest will not be able to preserve them effectively.

There are persons who ask whether we have a foreign policy centred on Canadian interests and viewpoints. I do not think they realize the extent and intensity of the work which is done to produce exactly that kind of policy. Every week hundreds of telegrams and despatches arrive from Canadian missions abroad. Every week scores of memoranda are prepared within my Department or in other departments in Ottawa recommending courses of action which best seem to meet Canadian external interests.