



# Statements and Speeches

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## POWER-SHARING A POLITICAL ISSUE

A Speech by the Honourable Mark MacGuigan, Secretary of State for External Affairs, to the North-South Round Table of the Society for International Development, Ottawa, November 15, 1980

...I am able to say that the objects of your concern — North-South relations, global accommodation, international equity — are at the forefront of the Canadian government's approach in international affairs. I am also able to say that as a government, we are committed to the imperatives which motivate the North-South Round Table.

I acknowledge that as the foreign minister of the country playing host to an assembly of such high purpose as yours, I could hardly be expected to say any less. But I hope you will take it at face value if I stress that we mean it.

We are committed to the imperative that global solutions have to be found, urgently, to our obvious problems, and to the notion that, as a participant in the process, the Canadian government has a role of creative responsibility to play. This is easily said. Far less easily done. For the dialogue which is supposed to apply to your deliberations, and to the world's North-South agenda, is clouded and confused.

On certain aspects of global relations, responsibilities are clear — the responsibility, for example, for the industrialized countries, even in time of economic difficulty, to increase their aid levels to the developing countries whose situations are vastly more hard-pressed. Our government has done this. We've put our aid budget back on the track of real growth. This is important. It is important to the governments, and through them, the peoples we assist. It also attests to the *bona fides* of the commitment which the Canadian people are, through their Parliament, making.

I disagree strongly with those who maintain that aid doesn't really aid. I have never heard this argument from representatives of the developing countries and peoples who benefit from assistance. Nor, for that matter, have I heard it from countries or governments which have a record of excellence in giving development assistance. I reject it. But we all recognize, I think, that aid is not the essential point in the North-South agenda.

### Economic opportunity

The essential point is that of economic opportunity itself. For decades now, the extension of economic opportunity has been seen by development economists as a function of structural reform. This is true, whatever value one attaches to the notion of reform. It is surprising, however, that it is not generally recognized that we are talking about an inherently political issue. It is a question not just of economic process, of mechanism, but is indeed one of power. Of the global sharing of power.

This should not conjure up images of power in the standard historical and symbolical sense — of armies and navies, of conquest and of spoils, though I know that the

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