

The Commonwealth

The nurturing of one of our other cornerstones of foreign policy, the Commonwealth, is a basic feature of our external policies. In the past few years membership has been progressively enlarged until today it embraces 16 sovereign states. The majority now are in Asia and in Africa. It is because of the special insight which the Commonwealth gives us into the new forces which have emerged in the post-war era that we most value this unique association of states. The Commonwealth practice of continuing consultation among members on matters of mutual concern is especially valuable in a world in which race and colour have too often tended to be divisive forces.

The French Community

A second important group of newly emerging states meriting special attention from Canada are the 20 French-speaking states of Africa, most of which are members of the French Community. It is only natural that Canada, a bicultural state, should wish to contribute to the advancement of this important group of French-speaking African countries as it does to the African members of the Commonwealth. There is a natural link here that also prompts French African states to turn to Canada. Like all the countries of that continent, these states are faced with the enormous problems of education and economic and cultural development. It is our intention to increase the level and quality of our assistance to them in terms that are represented by the announcement I made a few days ago, the details of which are now being formulated into a plan, which will, I hope, be of increasing value in manifesting Canada's concern for these countries.

Canada and OAS

...This Government is fully aware of the role that the Organization of American States plays in hemispheric affairs. We are aware, too, that there has been a noticeable growth of interest on the part of Canadians in connection with developments in Latin America, with which many of our citizens have a cultural, religious and social affinity.

This is not a question which can be settled summarily. There are a great many factors which the Government must take into consideration and which are being carefully weighed. To this end I have had discussions with the President of the Council of the Organization of American States, and I have had discussions with the President of the Inter-American Bank. We are watching carefully the discussions now going on within the organization concerning terms of membership, a matter of considerable importance as well to the Commonwealth countries of the Caribbean, which are showing increasing interest in participation. All these aspects of the question are now being actively reviewed....

Objectives of Foreign Policy

A number of years ago a former Secretary of State for External Affairs, Right Hon. Louis St. Laurent, gave the following description of how Canada should pursue its international responsibilities: