

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES



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CANADA IN A NEW WORLD

An Address by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Mitchell Sharp, to the Vancouver Board of Trade, January 17, 1972.

I have now been Canada's foreign minister for nearly four years. In a man's life, this is a significant period. In the history of civilization it is imperceptible. Yet in those four years we have seen profound changes in our world and in Canada's perception of it. In 1968, the new Government realized that the world was in the throes of the kind of periodic transformation that brings about a fundamental realignment of power relations. I do not suggest that we had the prescience to foresee the course this realignment would take, but the indicators were clear enough for the Government to give priority to consideration of Canada's international posture and relations, and to Canada's capacity to respond quickly and effectively to new situations.

It was for this reason that the Government, as one of its first actions, embarked upon a re-examination of its foreign policy. Not to challenge the past -- certainly not in search of change for the sake of change. What we had to determine, and determine quickly, was the future course of Canadian foreign policy in a period of uncertainty in international affairs. As a politician I do not discount the part that chance plays in the affairs of men and nations and it was indeed a fortunate thing for Canada that we took action at the time we did. But good fortune is more often than not founded in good judgment and certainly it takes good judgment to get the maximum advantage from good fortune.

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Since the Second World War, we have been living in a bi-polar world in terms of power relations. Events in the industrialized world have been dominated by the clash of competitive ideologies and interests between the United States and the Soviet Union, and the Third World, though unaligned, has had to live with the bi-polar reality. Waiting in the wings, obsessed by its own internal problems, there was China.

In this bi-polar world the socialist nations of Eastern Europe had little or no influence with the Soviet Union. Deviations from the official line, in East Germany, in Hungary and in Czechoslovakia were resisted. The United States, a free, open and democratic society worked with its allies around the globe, providing leadership, guaranteeing their security and in