

There has been increased understanding, I believe, of some of the unique features of our history. Until the Commonwealth Caribbean nations began to achieve independence, we were alone as an independent monarchy in the Western Hemisphere among republics. Canada had been a colony which evolved gradually towards independence, a nation which emerged fully in international affairs in its own right only after the First World War. It has a bicultural society with distinctive attitudes towards European motherlands.

Our history has not, however, led us to look only to the North Atlantic and Europe. We have long recognized that the republics of North and South America, acting through regional political institutions, have contributed to the preservation of order and to the promotion of peaceful change. Their actions have benefited many other nations and we have realized the need to support their efforts in the ways appropriate to us.

We have also felt, of course, that the degree of international stability which could be achieved by such arrangements in this Hemisphere has always been dependent, in the long run, on the maintenance of stability in other regions as well. This is a feeling which has been deeply rooted in Canadian minds and has influenced some of our greatest decisions as a nation.

I make this point, however, not in order to discuss the past but by way of preface to remarks about some of the main current concerns of Canada - and of many other nations too - in world affairs. The situation in Rhodesia, where our concern is shared by other Commonwealth countries in this region, the conflict in Vietnam and the internal problems in NATO resulting from the French withdrawal from the integrated military structure of the alliance earlier this year have all loomed large in our external policy discussions.

At times some of these problems may appear remote to people in parts of this Hemisphere, compared with local political and economic problems. And yet can it be doubted that the problem of relations between races and of political justice in Rhodesia, with which our Prime Minister is very directly concerned in London, has very wide implications?

In Vietnam, Canada has served for 12 years as a member of the International Control Commission. We hope that, even under present conditions there, the Commission will be able to exert some influence in limiting the conflict. We have taken direct initiatives to explore the possibility that there might be some common ground between the protagonists that could lead to negotiation. Who can doubt that, beyond a certain point, the conflict in Southeast Asia could create an even greater political and military crisis with the most profound dangers for the whole world?

In the affairs of the North Atlantic alliance, we have worked with other members to preserve the unity and military effectiveness of the alliance in the face of major readjustments required by the French action. Canada has been particularly concerned, however, both to maintain conditions under which France could continue to make an important contribution to the alliance and to explore any ways of reducing East-West tension and achieving a European settlement. We believe that the experience of recent years has indicated the great importance for this Hemisphere also of working towards these objectives.