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A worthwhile review

The dull name and ugly cover of the federal government's discussion paper on Canada's foreign policy should not deter Canadians from reading its 43 pages, forming opinions and joining in the national debate.

Its title, *Competitiveness and Security: Directions for Canada's International Relations*, is as trite and meaningless as the titles that too many academics put on too many incomprehensible books. Fortunately, this Green Paper does not suffer from the normal academic failure to communicate on paper. It is clearly written.

That is good because its purpose is to inform and to stimulate. It does more of the first than the second but that does not diminish its value. A better-informed public can play a useful role in examining Canada's foreign policy. Ideas, in fairly short supply in this paper, can as well come from the knowledgeable citizen as from officials of the Department of External Affairs.

The concept of citizen involvement in the government's review of foreign policy is important. External Affairs Minister Joe Clark deserves praise for seeking it out by publishing this paper and asking for public participation in the review. His attitude seems more relevant than the instant negativism of Liberal and New Democratic Party MPs chosen to respond.

NDP MP Pauline Jewett dismissed the review as a

"charade" and offered her opinion that there was no point in the NDP taking part in joint committee hearings on Canada's foreign policy that she claimed were to be held only to give employment to bored Conservative backbenchers. Liberal MP Jean Chretien, whose brief reign as external affairs minister was without achievement of any kind, and whose party lost power because it would not listen to anybody, had little more to add.

A review that has not yet begun cannot be a charade, unless evidence is not required by those making such foolish statements. The fact that Canada's foreign policy goes on every day, that decisions may have to be made soon by the government on participation in the U.S. Strategic Defence Initiative research effort and about free or freer trade with the United States, does not divest of interest or importance a review that necessarily must take several months.

If the review does make Conservative MPs outside the cabinet feel that they are doing something useful then that is a good thing for Canada's Parliament. If they also educate themselves about the issues and listen to Canadians outside Parliament that is even better.

Once they have got over the shock of being asked, Canadians should respond by reading this paper and saying what they think about Canada's foreign policy.