

# Identity and Interdependence within the Global Community

In the introductory comment to the previous External Affairs *Annual Review*, 1972 was identified as a watershed year marking the transition from the frozen immobility of postwar confrontation to the comparative fluidity and unpredictability of a new era in international relations. The justice of this evaluation was amply proved during 1973, when the conduct of international relations was increasingly influenced by circumstances that to a remarkable extent bore little relation to the classic East-West issues. A combination of the petroleum crisis and rocketing prices for almost all important commodities confronted nations in East and West, North and South, with the same challenges. All were economically and politically vulnerable, in varying degrees, to changes in the supply of energy resources, food and other key materials.

This shock came at a time of economic strain caused in part by lack of progress in adapting the postwar agreements governing world trade and finance to the needs of the Seventies. Frustrated by shortages — either real or apparent — of many vital raw materials, confronted by rapidly-mounting food prices and baffled by a universally-spiralling rate of inflation, governments and peoples alike were brought to face the reality of interdependence within the global community as a salient fact of life.

This fundamental truth did not lessen the urgent need to achieve further progress in reducing East-West tensions—and, indeed, important gains were registered in this sphere — but it did add a further dimension to the challenge of policy-making for the future.

It was somewhat as if, in the course of a musical composition, a sub-theme — always present but only faintly discernible — had with dramatic suddenness become dominant. Henceforth the same sort of effort that had characterized the search for *détente* would need to be directed towards achieving a greater degree of international understanding and co-operation in the exploitation of the world's finite storehouse of resources. There is certainly no evidence to suggest that the latter objective will be any easier to reach than a secure peace, but in a world of sovereign states the challenge remains to achieve the maximum possible international co-operation.

In this context, Canada is one of the few industrially-advanced Western nations to possess substantial raw material reserves, including potential self-sufficiency in petroleum. This fortunate circumstance, combined with Canada's generally good relations with the developing world, long experience in working through international organizations, and profound self-interest in promoting a balanced utilization of the world's resources, would appear to dictate that this country will have an important role to fulfil in interpreting the requirements of commodity producers and commodity consumers alike. While it seems unlikely there can be any return to the *status quo ante* of bargain-priced raw materials, a rational and healthy world economy demands that the imbalance not swing too far in the opposite direction. It is to be hoped that both producer and consumer nations will perceive an equal interest in reaching a reasonable measure of agreement on the manner in which the world's