

FOREWORD

The Work of the Committee

The Special Joint Committee on Canada's International Relations was established in June 1985 expressly to "make recommendations ... concerning the objectives and conduct of Canada's international relations". We were directed by Parliament to complete our report by May 31, 1986, a limit later extended to June 25. This was a huge task whose accomplishment required hard work and dedication by all the members of the committee.

The government first announced its intention to ask the Senate and the House of Commons to establish a special joint committee to consult the Canadian people on the full range of Canada's international relations in the speech from the throne opening the first session of the thirty-third parliament. Some six months later the Secretary of State for External Affairs took the next step and released the government's Green Paper, *Competitiveness and Security: Directions for Canada's International Relations*. On some issues the Green Paper stated positions, while on others it asked questions. In both cases, its function was to give focus to the proposed parliamentary review. In his foreword to the Green Paper, the Right Honourable Joe Clark made this clear with his description of the paper as an aid to the review and his encouragement to "all Canadians with an interest in the future of their country and the contributions Canada can make to a safer, more prosperous and humane world to come to the parliamentary hearings ... and make their views known".

The review of Canada's international relations that the Special Joint Committee conducted during the past ten months is wholly unprecedented in Canada and rare, if not unique, within the international community. The only comparable attempt by government was the preparation of *Foreign Policy for Canadians*, which was published in 1970 in six small booklets. While the scope of that exercise was similarly broad, it differed in two major respects: it was undertaken by the bureaucracy rather than by a parliamentary committee, and it lacked the vital element of public participation that has made the work of our committee both rewarding and unique. Never before in Canadian history has a committee of Parliament had the opportunity and the challenge to review the entire scope of Canada's external relations. Our inquiry was conducted in the full light of public scrutiny, and we deliberately solicited the widest possible range of Canadian views by holding hearings across the country and by inviting the public from every province and territory to give us their perceptions of Canadian foreign policy. Indeed, the entire Special Joint Committee process can be seen as an exercise in participatory democracy.