

□ INTERVIEW □

tioning the validity of the instruments used in international cooperation. If you are a member of the Commonwealth, and I believe that most Canadians feel we should be, you must take part in its summits. And if you do that, sometimes you must host them. This involves expenses. You cannot expect spectacular results from every summit, regardless of where it is held. Breakthroughs will occur at some of them, while others are little more than very high-level meetings that give the Heads of State an opportunity to get to know one another. They must be well-acquainted if they are going to solve international problems together. The summits give them an opportunity to become so. Sometimes you will also benefit bilaterally, because good personal contacts between governments will open doors.

The summits also make it possible for work to proceed in some areas. This does not mean that everything will be taken care of, since international activity consists of a series of conferences and meetings where gradual progress is made. When the time is right, problems are sometimes solved. Those who are expecting concrete, measurable results on a kind of decision-per-dollar basis are not being realistic. This is not how international affairs should be evaluated.

To say that the summits are too expensive and should be discontinued, is the same as saying that we will not participate in the Commonwealth or La Francophonie. And if we do not take part in important meetings when they are held, things of concern to us might be discussed in our absence.

We must of course keep the costs down, and we are trying to do this. We are going to remain within the budgets, and try to save by using existing

federal, provincial and even municipal government resources. We try to obtain partners in the private sector. We realize that the cost element might be misunderstood, and we take this into account. We try to minimize them, but costs there will be.

S. G. : How are the preparations going?

G. M. : A critical path has been set. This was one of the first stages. The time required for each operation was calculated. It is reviewed regularly and periodically in order to determine where we stand. The critical path might be only one centimetre wide, but every sector is controlled. This type of activity is always somewhat nerve-wracking. It's like being in a taxi and watching the meter run up. You realize that with every passing day you have 24 hours' less time. There are always complications and problems, but on the whole, everything is going well both in Quebec City and in Vancouver. As for the Economic Summit, we have not yet begun to do any detailed planning. We have taken the precaution of reserving 3,000 hotel rooms, knowing that we would need them. You cannot wait until three months ahead of time to do that. It would be foolish to decide to hold the summit at a certain place, only to find out that there were no rooms available. We expect to have 3,000 journalists attending. We must have space, and it must be reserved. One of the first things we did was to pay some visits and make sure that there would be a place for the conference, for the media, for the final press conference, etc.

S. G. : So you can say that the preparations are going well, even though the meter is running?

G. M. : Obviously you cannot anticipate everything. I imagine that every summit will involve last-minute decisions and

changes. There are plans for an operations centre, equipped with very good means of communication, and representing every sector, so that regardless of what happens we are in control, knowing what is going on and being able to make the required adjustments.

S. G. : What specific role does the Department have in preparing for these events?

G. M. : First, the Summits Management Office is a unit within the Department. This is one aspect different from 1981, when the Montebello Summit was organized by the Privy Council Office. This time, the Department is taking the responsibility. The Summits Management Office is headed by a steering committee chaired by Ambassador Doucet. One advantage of having three summits within a year is that you can use one team to take care of them.

The Summits Management Office is a unit of the Department that uses many of its services. We will need the cooperation of CIDA and perhaps of other sources for the liaison officers assigned to the delegations. They are one of the central aspects of the organization and will give us a channel of constant communication between the delegations and central control, enabling us to meet all the administrative needs and correct whatever little problems might crop up along the way.

S. G. : Mr. Mathieu, thank you and good luck □