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CANADA - A MIDDLE POWER IN A CHANGING WORLD

An Address by the Honorable Mitchell Sharp,
Secretary of State for External Affairs, to
the Council on Foreign Affairs, New York,
October 20, 1969.

When Canada's Prime Minister, Pierre Elliot Trudeau, addressed the National Press Club in Washington earlier this year, he said that Canada is rather in the position of someone sharing a bed with an elephant; however well-disposed the beast is, every twitch and grunt affects you. His colorful language exactly describes the situation between our two countries. When your President addresses the nation on television, our networks carry the program as a matter of course. This isn't just a friendly gesture to a neighbor; it isn't just because Canadians take a neighborly interest in American affairs; it is because everything the United States does and everything your President says is of direct and immediate importance to us and, for that matter, to every country on earth.

Nothing is in itself more important to Canada than our relation with the United States. It is probably the closest and most complex relation existing between any two nations. It covers the whole spectrum of affairs, from the maintenance of jointly-owned border monuments to the orderly development and effective defence of the North American continent. As Canada's Foreign Minister, I am also very aware of your country's position as leader of the Western nations and as a preponderant influence in the world as a whole. Canada is a sovereign nation and acts as such. It is also, we like to think, a pragmatic and realistic nation. We pursue a foreign policy designed to promote our own national interest, but we know that in the development of every aspect of our foreign policy the foreign policy objectives, initiatives and activities of the United States must be taken into account.

Canada is actively carrying on negotiations in Stockholm aimed at an exchange of diplomats between Ottawa and Peking. How these negotiations will end remains to be seen. I mention them here only by way of example. In this particular case, the views of my Government are at variance with the views of yours but that doesn't mean that we failed to take the United States position into account. Exchanges between our governments on this subject have been - to