

No other country has our particular set of national attributes. We have shaped, and have been shaped by, these attributes. They affect our view of the world and how the world sees us. They are the genesis of our world-wide interests and responsibilities.

CANADA AND THE WORLD

An extraordinarily fortunate people, but we can no longer take our prosperity or security for granted.

We have been an extraordinarily fortunate people. For most of our history we have lived at a safe distance from a turbulent world. We have known prosperity and peace, while others have often lived in hunger or fear. To be sure we have worked hard to develop our land and we have crossed the oceans to defend our way of life. But we have been able to rely on the richness of our soil, on the wealth beneath it and offshore, and on the expanses of ocean separating us from potential enemies to pursue our lives in relative tranquility. Our natural resources and our physical location seemed able to assure our economic prosperity and our security.

Times have changed. Oil shocks and interest rates have demonstrated our vulnerability to the outside world. We have just emerged from the worst international economic period since the drought and depression of the 1930s. As elsewhere, real output in Canada declined, unemployment rose and interest rates sky-rocketed. For Canadians this meant the loss of 575,000 jobs, and of countless homes, farms and small businesses. We can no longer take our prosperity for granted.

We can no longer take our security for granted either. We have experienced an international political recession, more threatening and sustained than any since the Cold War. After the optimism of detente, tensions have increased between East and West, contacts decreased and the arms race accelerated. This has meant renewed anxiety, increased expenditures on defence, reduced family visits, fewer scientific exchanges and lost commercial contracts.

We have also witnessed, through television, poverty and famine in developing countries and bloodshed and destruction in virtually every corner of the world. More than ever, we are aware of massive food shortages and of refugees looking for safe haven.

And we have seen faith in international institutions begin to flag. Some of the institutions which we painstakingly helped to build have coped poorly with change and no longer make the contribution needed. Super-power rivalries, the emergence of new states, competition between blocs, economic interdependence, and population growth in the poorest countries have all made international cooperation more difficult, even as they have made it more necessary. For Canada, this has created a serious challenge to a principal vehicle of Canadian foreign policy, the world's multilateral agencies.