

In addition, the challenge of Asia and the Pacific could also be the catalyst which forces Canadians to find new ways to work together to solve old problems. We are facing a crisis in our country at the present time. It is not, as is commonly believed, merely an economic crisis: it is a crisis of confidence. There are great opportunities challenging Canadians, but we seem to lack a unified direction and the necessary will and discipline to pursue them.

Part of the problem is that our country is separated in its interests both regionally and sectorially. For example, our exporting interests (mainly resource based in the West) are in conflict with the domestic manufacturers (mainly Eastern based) who are not only threatened by increased imports of finished goods from Asia and the Pacific, but are also frustrated by real and imaginary obstacles to their attempts to penetrate those markets themselves. These manufacturing interests are in turn in conflict with consumers who like having increased material choices at competitive prices.

Adding to the problem is the whole question of the long range resource interests of Canada. At some point we will need to ask ourselves how long as a society we can continue to export our natural resources — many of them non-renewable — while at the same time continuing to import ever-increasing numbers of manufactured goods until we are at the point of no return: creating jobs in the other countries by supplying natural resources to them, and consequently destroying our own domestic manufacturing industry without developing new employment opportunities.

While we have a very real obligation to continue to provide the raw materials that Asian and Pacific societies both need and have come to depend upon for the employment of their people, we must use our skills to find an appropriate balance of mutual benefit in the exchange. We must find some way in discussions with these countries to create in Canada, parallel with resource development, new activities that will endure long after our resources have been depleted. We must use our rich natural resource base to build a solid future for our citizens and to provide for them a stable and continuous employment opportunity.

To accomplish these unified long range goals we must first put our house in order. While there is great creativity in diversity of interests — and it is one of the virtues that has built this country — when diversity becomes merely divisiveness, it is no longer an asset. It weakens us as a society, slowly, but irrevocably. We must therefore find ways in which the regional and sectorial interests that now divide our country can focus the combined force of their creative energy outward for the benefit of all Canadians. We must move into a new era of co-operation if we are to succeed at another twist in the evolutionary spiral: we must learn domestically as well as abroad, the politics of relationship, not just the politics of confrontation.

An Asia Pacific Foundation could well give us the necessary opportunity to accomplish these goals. Functioning as an independent forum, it might be the best place to work out co-operative solutions to the kinds of specific problems that persistently sap our country's strength. It could develop projects that would unite rather than divide us, while at the same time understanding that regional and sectorial interests must be served. This can be accomplished by having on the Board of the Foundation representation of all regions and all sectors, as well as the two major cultures of our country, and those many individuals that are not represented by any organized sector. In addition, regional dynamism could be encouraged through the establishment of regional affiliates of the Foundation. In this way, the initial structuring of the Foundation would not preclude the future channelling of broad general interest and support.