

What then, is the Third Option about? In a historical sense, it is no more than one of many contributions to a debate that is as old as the American Revolution or the British North America Act. It is, in part, about sharing a continent with the United States — one of the very few foreign policy issues in which public interest is wide and high, and attitudes are strongly held. Just as every parent is an expert on education, so every Canadian is an expert on the Americans.

In a more contemporary sense, however, the Third Option clearly shows its birthmarks from 1971. It does reflect a determination to moderate in future the shocks to our economy which USA measures delivered in that year. It does embody the concern for our sovereignty that dominated the 1960s and 70s and was articulated in *Foreign Policy for Canadians*.

The Third Option was also designed to come to terms with some international realities confronting our policies across the board: the political and economic integration of Europe, with serious implications for our traditional ties with Britain and other European partners; the emergence of Japan as an economic power of the first rank, with special interests in our Western provinces; a sense of shift in the balance and distribution of power which could offer new opportunities to the smaller industrialized democracies such as Canada.

But the key element in the Third Option was that it was not exclusively a foreign policy. The first option, you may recall, was to maintain the *status quo* with the USA, with a minimum of policy adjustments. The second option was to move deliberately toward closer integration with the USA. The third, and I quote, was: "... a comprehensive, long-term strategy to develop and strengthen the Canadian economy and other aspects of our national life and in the process to reduce the present Canadian vulnerability".

It is difficult to understand how such a clear and straightforward, some would even say self-evident, objective could come to be described as: anti-American; bad for business; bound to undercut multi-lateral organizations; mindless diversification; and a doomed struggle against the realities of a continental economy. Moreover there is a key word in the Option which is frequently overlooked. That word is "long-term".

Among the risks of conceptualizing foreign policy is that it is seen to be time-bound. Some observers and commentators seem to regard a policy concept as akin to a carton of milk — on the shelf, getting older and more unpalatable and, written in the upper right-hand corner, the words "best before 1983".

This approach, by the way, is often adopted towards the 1970 documents of *Foreign Policy for Canadians* as well as the Third Option. Naturally, no policy is eternal, nor does it foresee all probable events. The Third Option did not anticipate the oil shocks of the years immediately following. But sound policies, rooted in broad national realities and long-term goals, do not suffer instant obsolescence. They live as vectors of the national interest. They provide impulse, direction, and a conceptual framework on which the future may build.

The 1947 Gray Lecture by Louis St. Laurent, for example, was the first broad articulation of modern