

the diplomat reared in the aristocratic tradition to accept the public's intrusion into his private domain, the advent of internationally-conscious participating democrats leaves him no alternative. Never in the history of Canada have there existed so many opportunities for attentive citizens to play a part in the dialogue concerning the making and implementation of foreign policy that must remain the heart of the democratic system. The conveying of views to External Affairs is not limited to the means of direct

representation discussed here, but also involves the indirect channels provided by the various information media, by Parliament and by other domestic governments. When such opinions are recognized as legitimate, informed, clearly-defined and functionally manageable in the international arena and within the totality of Canadian Government priorities, the dialogue on policy will work best, and its results will be in every diplomatic bag.

Responsible government and foreign policy

by Denis Stairs

International politics used to be "high". It dealt mainly, that is, with politico-security issues – with alliances, peace-keeping, collective security, arms control and the related mechanics of peace and war. But increasingly, in recent times, it has come to deal with other matters as well, at once more common and more complex. The consumption of energy, the proliferation of peoples, the maldistribution of food, the depletion of resources, the pollution of environments, the misallocation of wealth – such problems now invade the agenda of world affairs with an urgency no modern statesman can afford to ignore.

The importance of these issues, moreover, is matched by their intractability. Perhaps they ought not to be further complicated by casual reflection from an ivory tower. Nonetheless, there is evidence that their rapid growth may eventually strengthen an already serious challenge to the survival of the constitutional principles and practices of "responsible government" as these have been developed in Western parliamentary systems. If so, the problem may warrant at least preliminary speculative examination. The difficulties involved are not entirely of international origin – they have domestic origins as well – but the global element is certainly an aggravating factor. It derives partly from the incapac-

ities of the policy-making process but even more from a conflict between the requirements of contemporary world affairs and the premises of the liberal democratic state.

The new international agenda – and in particular the increasing volume, complexity and interdependence of the issues from which it is derived – challenges the capacity of the policy-making process, first, by multiplying the number and variety of government departments and agencies involved in responding to individual problems and, secondly, by accentuating the technical obscurities of the factors that must be taken into account in the making of policy decisions.

Great acceleration

These are not entirely new phenomena, but in the foreign-policy field there is fairly general agreement that they have been greatly accelerated in the past 15 to 20 years. From the point of view of the public service, certainly, they have become familiar and pervasive features of modern government, and have produced an impressive array of visible manifestations. Among these are: (1) the constant complaints of public officials that they are unable to get on with their jobs because some other department is in the way; (2) the not-uncommon spectacle of different agencies of government rushing madly off in opposite directions (in Canada foreign-policy relations with South Africa are usually the textbook example); (3) the substantial increase in the number of inter-departmental committees, and the con-

Serious challenge to survival of responsible government

Professor Stairs is a member of the Department of Political Science and the Centre for Foreign Policy Studies at Dalhousie University. The views expressed here are his own.