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A sense of direction for Canadian foreign policy

"Canada can seek to maintain more or less its present relationship with the United States with a minimum of policy adjustments; Canada can move deliberately toward closer integration with the United States; Canada can pursue a comprehensive long-term strategy to develop and strengthen the Canadian economy and other aspects of its national life and in the process to reduce the present Canadian vulnerability" — these were the three options referred to by the Secretary of State for External Affairs Mitchell Sharp in a speech to the Canadian Press on May 2. The choices available in Canada's relations with the United States had been the subject of a study in a special autumn issue of *International Perspectives*, a bimonthly publication of the Department of the External Affairs.

Passages from Mr. Sharp's address follow:

...I cannot say that the appearance of that long-awaited, loudly demanded and — if you will permit me — lucid study of Canada-U.S. relations produced a sensation.... In fact the study was barely noticed when it appeared in October of last year....

But it has by no means been ignored and I venture to predict that to an increasing extent the debate about Canada-U.S. relations will revolve around the three options discussed in that paper. It is even beginning to have some effect upon the direction of Canadian Government policy! Just the other day for the first time a report to Cabinet passed under my eye which referred to the Third Option in support of its recommendations.

At any rate I make this submission to you: far from reluctantly meeting the demands of public opinion in the area of foreign relations, the Government has actually stimulated demand, invited criticism, acknowledged it when it came, and even, if you can believe it, applied these public expressions of view to the conduct of our foreign operations....

In the paper on Canada-U.S. relations published last October in *International Perspectives*, for example, the Government came out in favour of what has been termed the Third Option. I confess that there were some misgivings in government circles about opting for

any particular direction in our relations with the United States. Why take a public position? Why not play it by ear? Why not leave all options open? Why give the Opposition something else to criticize? After all, it was argued, we have got along for years without any such statement of policy. Remember what that durable practitioner of the political art, Mackenzie King once said: "I made only one memorable speech in my career and I always regretted it."

It was tempting politically to follow this cautious advice but we finally came to the conclusion that a sense of direction had to be given to our relations with the United States. Economic integration with the United States as a direction policy we ruled out as unacceptable to the Canadian people. The choice was then between continuing on a more or less *ad hoc* course, reacting to events in our great neighbour to the South, as we have been doing with some success, or — and this is the third option — pursuing 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....

Surely there is fundamentally the same rationale for giving a sense of direction to foreign policy, particularly in relation to a great friendly giant like the United States beside whom we want to live distinct from but in harmony.