

All this is a very great responsibility - one that I have no intention of shirking. But in one sense I want to share that responsibility with you more than has ever been done before. As a Minister of the Government of Canada I have many dedicated, highly trained and intelligent advisors. They bring me the fruits of their experience, their study and their diligence. What they cannot bring me is an accurate and broad understanding of what the people of Canada are thinking.

If we are to reexamine our foreign policy, and I'm determined to do that, and if we are dedicated as a government to be more open and more sensitive to the thinking of the citizens, we'll be asking you to help us decide where Canada should be going on the international front.

To a certain extent the Government itself can help to facilitate public participation in this process. And if anyone thinks we are not serious in this intent, let me give you a concrete example of what we have already done on one important issue -- Vietnamese Boat People.

Very early in my term of office I realized that the refugee situation in South-East Asia demanded two different kinds of action. The first was on the political front. It was simply intolerable to the new government - as I am sure it was to the people of Canada - that the government of Viet Nam was pursuing a deliberate policy to expel hundreds of thousands of its own citizens. You will remember that for years - all through their war with the United States - Canada kept up good relations with the Government in Hanoi. We did not take sides in that conflict. Our moderate position was well recognized and appreciated by Hanoi.

But in light of the policy of violation of human rights that has been recently followed by Viet Nam we have cut off our aid programs to that country. I personally have spoken to representatives of that government in Ottawa and abroad emphasizing that the goodwill between our peoples is seriously jeopardized by their actions. At the Geneva conference on the refugee situation I called on all other governments to exert whatever pressure they could to deter the Vietnamese from their inhumane course. And although I wouldn't for a moment claim all the credit, Canada's representations along with those of several other countries resulted in at least a temporary change in Viet Nam's policies. The flow of boat people was stopped. Illegal departures have been checked. Making that kind of appeal in that kind of forum is something that only the government could do - though we could not have taken so strong a stand if we weren't certain of support for it among the Canadian people.