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Speech by the Honourable Paul Martin, Secretary of State for External Affairs, to the Faculty of Law, University of Ottawa, December 4, 1967.

It is the undoubted responsibility of the government in a democratic society to provide leadership in the conception and implementation of foreign policy. This responsibility is an extension of the role played by the government in all areas of public policy.

But in a democracy, foreign policy cannot be the sole prerogative of government. The public has an integral part to play. As Mackenzie King once wrote, "where there is little or no public opinion, there is likely to be bad government, which sooner or later becomes autocratic government".

Tonight I should like to discuss the role of the individual in relation to government in the development and execution of Canadian foreign policy.

The Canadian public - both individually and collectively - is becoming increasingly knowledgeable and articulate on international issues. It was not always so. Even in the recent past, the interest of Canadians was limited, and where it did exist, was concentrated on one or two traditional issues which affected us directly. In the period before the Second World War, for example, André Siegfried, the French observer of Canadian society, could comment that, "in so far as the Canadians are concerned, collective security (a major issue in the League of Nations at the time) is only a conviction de luxe". There were opportunities for discussion but debate was desultory and detached. Canadians thought that they could afford to look at their country as a "fireproof house"; that they could call Europe disdainfully a "continent which could not run itself"; that they could give their attention only to imperial and North American relations.

The change in public attitudes and knowledge since 1945 has been dramatic.

There are many reasons: First of all we learned hard lessons in the Second World War about interdependence in a rapidly changing world. We see the shortsightedness of trying to avoid realities and responsibilities. Second, having secured our status as an independent country in the inter-war period, we have been able, in the past 20 years, to develop an independent foreign policy