

Mr. Chairman,

I am grateful for the invitation to speak to you this evening. You have left me free to choose my own subject. I intend to begin by making some general remarks about the Government's foreign policy. Then I should like to present some ideas about the most difficult and important aspect of all in Canada's external relations, that is, our relations with the United States. What I have to say on that subject will form the first extended public introduction to a basic foreign policy document I published yesterday. This document appeared in the form of an article in a special issue of the publication "International Perspectives", under the title "Canada-U.S. Relations: Options for the Future". I commend it to you as a serious analysis of issues important to all Canadians.

This is, as it should be, a time of intense debate over public issues. So far as domestic affairs are concerned, the parties have been slugging it out toe-to-toe for weeks. But in contrast to some previous elections, foreign policy has not been a focus of controversy.

One explanation for this is that the Government's foreign policy has broad support. This is something which naturally gives me great satisfaction. It means that the Government has successfully led the country in new directions in foreign policy, directions in which Canadians generally were ready and willing to go. The change of direction has not involved a violent break with the past; on the contrary it has been a constructive development from the past. And it has been accomplished with a minimum of fuss, so that it takes a bit of looking back to remind ourselves of just how much has changed in the past four years.

The starting point in 1968 was that foreign policy was due for a change. The world was changing; Canada was changing. It was time for a comprehensive look at what these changes amounted to and where we were headed. The Government, and Canadians at large, sensed that many landmarks in the world which had grown up after the Second World War were disappearing. The world of the fifties, of the Cold War, of military alliances was well on the way to a radical transformation. New centres of power and influence were arising. Meanwhile Canada, which had played such a vigorous part in constructing the postwar order, had itself become a different country: stronger, richer, more varied, seeking new forms of national expression. Canadians had looked at themselves during the Centennial Year of 1967 and marvelled at the change.

On another occasion, I tried to summarize the new point of view in these words: "Canada no longer sees itself primarily at the apex of the North Atlantic triangle, but as an Atlantic, a Pacific, an Arctic and above all, an American nation. This is bringing about changes in emphasis in our foreign policy. We are now looking at the world around as through the eyes of an independent North American state rather than as a member of the North Atlantic community. It is not a retreat into isolationism as some observers have suggested, rather it is an opening of new horizons. It is also a considered move towards a more independent position in foreign policy."