

I THE BASIS FOR INVOLVEMENT

A. Awareness and Understanding

7. Canada's involvement in Pacific affairs pre-dated Confederation and increased throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. "Until recently, however," as one of this Committee's witnesses has written, "the Pacific region did not hold a prominent place in the consciousness of Canadians." General interest in Pacific affairs, Dr. Kavic has stressed, was uneven, superficial and dealt too often in stereotypes. As he says, "The natural consequence of these attitudes was the presumption that Canada had no direct interest or stake in the Pacific, and the perpetuation of an increasingly obsolete image of the area that was a compound of ignorance, prejudice and misinformation."

8. In recent years there has been improvement, but the deficiencies in Canadian understanding of the Pacific cannot be remedied overnight, or by half measures. It must be recognized that Pacific Asia is the least familiar to Canadians of all the world's great zones of civilization. Even simple communication is more difficult. European languages are little used today in many of the Pacific countries. The unfamiliar and difficult languages of the region have deterred most Canadian students even when facilities were available. Furthermore, Western perceptions of the "Far East", which have always been shrouded in ignorance and myths, have failed to keep pace with the tremendous changes in progress, particularly in contemporary China and Japan. Canada, moreover has fallen behind most other developed countries of the Pacific (and a number of the less-developed) in generating a regional consciousness and in acquiring the necessary knowledge and expertise in Pacific affairs.

9. Even in business relationships, where Canadian ties are now most extensive, this lack of background familiarity represents a real and continuing problem. Mr. Robert Bonner outlined its dimensions in his testimony:

. . . when you seek to do business with Japan or when you seek to do business in Malaysia or the countries of Oceania, there is an immediate cultural lack of familiarity which represents a very real and practical psychological barrier against the otherwise commonplace task of doing business. In other words, you have to spend a lot of time finding your way in

In other words, the approach to the Pacific is not to be viewed as being other than a complicated question of culture, of language and of unfamiliar history and institutions, and it would be unwise to overlook these facts as an obstacle to easy penetration of the Pacific excluding the western hemisphere countries of the Pacific and excluding, of course, Australia and New Zealand. (p. 3:6)

10. It is clear that a large-scale and concerted national effort to improve Canadian understanding of the Pacific region will be a vital pre-requisite to broader and more fruitful Canadian involvement. In this effort, federal authorities can provide encouragement and example, but full participation will be required from