

□ INTERVIEW □

We are privileged to present Derek Burney, Associate Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs (DMC) since 1985. Mr. Burney was pleased to answer Liaison's questions for the benefit of members of our Foreign Service community.

Sylvie Gauvin: *What do you feel the role of External Affairs should be? Is it an anachronism, as Mr. Trudeau once said?*

Derek Burney: I think the role of the Department very simply is to promote and protect Canadian interests in the international theatre, with particular emphasis on the political dimension, the diplomatic dimension and the commercial aspect, but recognizing as well the very vital consular and other services that the Department provides abroad.

Far from being an anachronism, the role of the Department is broader today than it was during the time of Mr. Trudeau, in large part because we are now both a department of external affairs and a department of trade combined. That gives us enormous weight and responsibility.

Our analytical role is in a number of ways more important than our reporting role. I make a big distinction between memoranda to our Ministers that provide an account of what has happened as opposed to those that tell why it has happened and what it means for Canada. The *New York Times* will tell you, or anybody else, what is happening, too often giving a distinctly American perspective. In that sense, our role is the very vital one of determining how the Canadian government can shape events, how we can bring influence to bear on events on

the international stage, and how we can defend and promote Canadian interests, whether they are political, or commercial, or immigration or aid, or whatever.

And that's where the art of a foreign service, I think, comes into play. We cannot be simply blotters, soaking up information around the world. We have to know what to do with that informa-

“...our role is the very vital one of determining how the Canadian government can shape events, how we can bring influence to bear on events on the international stage...”

tion, make sure it registers at the right moment, on the right issue, with the right people. In that sense, we are more relevant today than perhaps at any other time. The success of the country — economically, socially, politically — is very much more dependent now on our position in the world.

S. G.: *Do you feel that Canada can play a useful role on the world scene? What kind of role?*

D. B.: There is no doubt that we have a useful role to play in the international scene. You have to be very careful with examples, because by mentioning some you tend to exclude others, but let me try.

In the security and arms control field we play an effective role as a member of NATO. Our concern about arms control extends from our security role in NATO, as does our ability to influence positions of the NATO alliance and positions of the superpower that is at the head of that alliance in terms of its negotiations with the Soviet Union.

Canada's role in international economic development is again of the highest calibre. I think that we are not only recognized as playing a major role in the dollar sense, but we are also seen as playing a role without political motivation. When we are giving assistance, whether it is in Africa, or in Asia, or in Latin America and the Caribbean, we are not perceived as doing it in order to achieve a political end. We are seen as doing it because we genuinely believe that through economic development you get social justice and you get a better, more peaceful world.

S. G.: *And politically, how can Canada play a role on the international scene? I mean with Europe, with the United States and even with the two superpowers. Do you think that Canada's is a special or highly significant role?*

D. B.: Well, we shouldn't exaggerate our significance but, for example, the fact that we are one of seven members of the Economic Summit gives us an unusual capacity for influence with the major European countries, with the