



# STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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## THE NATIONAL INTEREST

Speech by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Paul Martin, at the Graduation Ceremony, Osgoode Hall, Toronto, March 25, 1966.

My remarks ... are directed primarily to the graduates but I hope that they will be seen to have a wider implication.

I would stress to you who are entering upon your careers the importance of discussing, defining and then acting to promote the national interest, either in world or in domestic affairs. We should hold before us the ideal for a democratic society proposed by Pericles to the citizens of Athens, 2,500 years ago: "Here each individual is interested not only in his own affairs but in the affairs of state as well. Even those who are mostly occupied with their own business are extremely well informed on general politics -- this is a peculiarity of ours. We do not say that a man who takes no interest in politics is a man who minds his own business. We say that he has no business here at all."

I am sometimes asked, as the Secretary of State for External Affairs, what foreign policy and diplomacy are all about. I am not entirely surprised by the questions. Canadians live in an immense country in which only the familiar border with the United States provides any reminder of national differences. They may feel that "foreign affairs" is a subject for countries overseas or for a federal capital to think about.

Trade, war, immigration and travel are familiar enough manifestations of external interests and problems, but the listing of activities leads to more fundamental questions. What, in the national interest, do we want in our relations with the rest of the world? Foreign policy is the definition of what we want. Diplomacy concerns itself with how we are to attain our objectives. Dominating both is the rigorous and unending examination of all the factors, all the advantages and disadvantages which are relevant to the final decision on the most important question: "In a country with as many diverse interests and viewpoints as Canada, in a world as complex as the contemporary one, wherein lies the national interest?"