



Statements and Speeches

SS 83/12

TWO MIDDLE POWERS FACING THE EIGHTIES

Speech by the Honourable Charles Lapointe, Minister of State for External Relations, to the Nigerian Institute for International Affairs, Lagos, March 30, 1983.

... I want to consider with you the role which countries such as Nigeria and Canada may play in the world of the Eighties.

There are, of course, many differences between us. With four times Canada's population — living on one-tenth of its area — Nigeria faces a set of demographic and other problems radically different from those confronting our widely scattered population. We tend to use energy to heat our homes and you use it to cool them.

Despite these differences, Canada and Nigeria may, in some sense, be seen as middle powers — countries which are not members of the super-power club but which have an important place in international relations because of the influence they exert and because of their active involvement in regional and global affairs. It may be worth examining the responsibilities which face countries such as this, and the hopes they may entertain for the future.

And hope is important in these difficult times. I was, indeed, heartened by the optimism displayed on a truck (or lorry) which was recently seen in Lagos. It evidently proclaimed to all the world that "No situation is permanent". I even refused to be downcast when I was told the next one said "No telephone to Heaven".

While it may be bold of me to include Nigeria, as well as Canada, in these reflections, there are probably enough parallels in our situation as middle powers to draw some common conclusions. A privileged forum such as this does, in any event, encourages some broader reflections which go beyond our official consultations.

Nigeria and Canada are no strangers to one another. Personnel connections and private institutional links were the first to be forged, primarily by teachers, students and advisers. During the past two decades, co-operation between our two governments, private commercial activity, educational exchanges and a variety of development projects have added new dimensions to our friendship. We have lived through a number of historical events together, and in that process we have come to know and understand each other better.

One experience common to Nigeria and Canada is that of bringing many different people together in a political structure based on consent.

Nigeria and Canada are both large and diverse federations. We are plural societies in which regional,
