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CANADIAN FOREIGN POLICY AND THE THIRD WORLD

A Speech by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Mitchell Sharp, at the University of Toronto, September 18, 1970.

In June I issued, on behalf of the Government, a series of papers called "Foreign Policy for Canadians". It is a simple title, yet in itself it states clearly the Government's purpose in instituting a basic, and broadly-based, review of Canada's international relations, policies and operations. This was to examine Canada's foreign policy in terms of our basic national interests, to reach conclusions as to its effectiveness in terms of Canada's position in the world in 1970, to identify areas where change was required and to indicate new directions for the future.

My subject this evening is "Canadian Foreign Policy and the Third World". I shall get to it, if you bear with me. First, I want to talk about Canadian foreign policy in the wider sense. I shall begin by discussing the foreign policy papers with you, telling you what they are and something of why and how they were written. To some extent they record and report decisions made by the Government. To some extent they give notice of actions the Government intends to take. In these two areas they are a statement of Government policy. To a much greater extent the papers, and particularly the general paper, represent the Government's views - its views about the world as it exists today, its views about Canada's place in that world, its views about Canada's national aims and goals and of how these aims and goals can best be fostered and pursued in their international dimension. When the Government expresses its views, it is seeking the widest possible public discussion, saying, in effect: "Here is how we see it, how do you see it?" If that frail and delicate plant called "participatory democracy" is to flourish and bear fruit, it will only be because the interested public learns how to engage the Government in dialogue about issues and the Government learns how to profit from such a dialogue.

This is not a simple matter. Institutions resist change, and when the institutions have as their declared aim to achieve and maintain political power the resistance is all the greater. I regard this evening as a part of the essential learning process in which we are all engaged.

So is the publication of the foreign policy papers. Their value in the longer term will depend not upon the ammunition they give to the Government's critics and how well that ammunition is used but upon the quality, point and effectiveness of the public discussion they engender.

So now you know, I hope, why the papers were published. How were they written? A prominent Toronto paper told its readers that in the foreign policy papers the Government had forced its position upon the experienced officers in the Department of External Affairs, while a prominent Montreal newspaper said that the obscurantists in the bureaucracy had again succeeded in blurring the clear outlines of the Government's policy. "You pays pays your money and you takes your choice."

Let me describe the process as it really happened. First, background papers were prepared by many agencies and departments of Government. These were then collated and reduced to reports of fairly manageable size. Meetings were held between officials and academics, businessmen and others with special interests and knowledge under the auspices of the Canadian Institute of International Affairs. Perhaps some of you here took part in these meetings. They were a learning process in themselves. The first, on Europe, was perhaps little more than a lesson in how not to do it. The last, on the Pacific, was a lively and rewarding experience for all concerned.

When the papers reached the Cabinet, they represented a distillation of two years' work and experience. They provoked lively discussions in Cabinet committees over a period of weeks; they bounced back and forth from Cabinet committees to officials until the Cabinet could issue them to the public as a clear statement of the Government's views about the foreign policy for Canadians.

I come now to the heart of the matter, to a discussion of what the papers contain and where they take us.

Carrying out the review involved identifying and challenging the assumptions on which Canadian foreign policy has been based. One assumption, however, had to be made, "...that for most Canadians their 'political' well-being can only be assured if Canada continues in being as an independent, democratic and sovereign state". Without this assumption any discussion of a foreign policy for Canadians would be meaningless. Unless we are independent and sovereign, we have no need for a foreign policy. Unless we are democratic there is no point in public discussion.

The paper continues:

"Some Canadians might hold that Canada could have a higher standard of living by giving up its sovereign independence and joining the United States. Others might argue that Canadians would be better off with a lower standard of living but with fewer limiting commitments and a greater degree of freedom of action, both political and economic.

For the majority, the aim appears to be to attain the highest level of prosperity consistent with Canada's political preservation as an independent state. In the light of today's economic interdependence, this seems to be a highly practical and sensible evaluation of national needs".

So much said, the Government defines basic national aims as follows:

- that Canada will continue secure as an independent political entity;
- that Canada and all Canadians will enjoy enlarging prosperity in the widest possible sense;
- that all Canadians will see in the life they have and in the contribution they make to humanity something worthwhile preserving in identity and purpose.

The foreign policy review is based on the premise that foreign policy is the means whereby these national aims are pursued in the international environment. I suggest this is a valid premise. Our foreign policy is not identical with the foreign policy of any other country, even that of our closest friends. Every country has something to preserve and develop that is unique and something to contribute that is valuable and we need have no hesitation in asserting that Canadian foreign policy is directed to the achievement of Canadian objectives, just as the foreign policy of Denmark is directed to the achievement of Danish objectives and that of the Soviet Union to the achievement of Soviet objectives.

This is not a narrow or selfish proposition. It doesn't preclude co-operation with other countries, or alliances, or the promotion of values shared by Canadians, such as non-discrimination or the support of international enterprises. It is simply another way of saying that our foreign policy is based upon our interests and objectives and not upon the interests and objectives of other countries or other peoples.

Foreign policy for Canada as for all other nations is not made in a vacuum; the world does not stand still while Canada shapes and sets in motion its foreign policy. Canada's policy objectives may complement or compete with those of other nations. The aims and goals of other nations impinge upon Canada's freedom of action in the international sphere. We live in a world of dynamic change. Events thousands of miles away or next door can alter international relations. Domestic developments can affect foreign policy planning. Forecasting is perhaps more difficult in this field than in any other. To quote the report:

"The problem is to produce a clear, complete picture from circumstances which are dynamic and ever-changing. It must be held in focus long enough to judge what is really essential to the issue under consideration, to enable the Government

to act on it decisively and effectively. That picture gets its shape from information gathered from a variety of sources - public or official - and sifted and analyzed systematically. The correct focus can only be achieved if all the elements of a particular policy question can be looked at in a conceptual framework which represents the main lines of national policy at home and abroad".

Having made the two more or less obvious points that Canadian foreign policy should be designed to achieve Canadian objectives and that we live in an unpredictable and dangerous world, the foreign policy review then turns to the means at hand of trying to achieve Canadian objectives.

Here, I warn you, we enter upon what is bound to be debatable ground and I offer only one guiding principle, and it is this. Let us, in our foreign policy, as in our private and collective lives, try to "do our thing". We are not a great military power - we do not aspire to be one. We cannot determine the great issues of peace and war. Canada is, however, strategically located. By international standards it is comparatively rich. It is a great trading nation. It occupies an extensive land-mass and has one of the longest coast-lines. We speak two of the principal languages of international discourse. We have a well-established tradition of democracy and social justice. Our people and their forefathers came to Canada from all parts of the world.

As the foreign policy review puts it, "Canada's available resources - money, manpower, ideas and expertise" should "be deployed and used to the best advantage so that Canada's impact on international relations and on world affairs generally will be commensurate with the distinctive contribution Canadians wish to make in the world".

Perhaps one other general comment is in order. The foreign policy review is concerned primarily with the principles of foreign policy rather than with specific issues, although some of the specific issues are discussed as applications of these principles.

You will not, for example, find a discussion of the Middle East crisis or of the Vietnam war, of Cuba, or of events in the Commonwealth Caribbean or of many other urgent matters that engage the daily attention of my officials and myself. These are for the most part particular events abroad to which we have to react.

What you will find in the papers is an attempt to lay down a framework for the consideration of policy, as a guide to our Government and people and to the governments and peoples of other countries in their relationships with us.

In constructing this framework we asked ourselves this question: What does a modern government try to do in promoting the interests of Canadians?

We found that there were six general themes under which activities could be classified:

- fostering economic growth;
- safeguarding sovereignty and independence;
- working for peace and security;
- promoting social justice;
- enhancing the quality of life;
- ensuring a harmonious natural environment.

As you will see, these themes apply both to domestic policy and to foreign policy. For a great trading country like Canada, economic growth cannot be fostered at home without fostering it abroad. Safeguarding sovereignty and independence requires international recognition as well as domestic action. Peace and security are world-wide problems. Social justice cannot be compartmentalized; one cannot be effectively opposed to discrimination abroad and practice it at home. The quality of life is enhanced by contacts with other peoples. Canadians with their vast coast-line and frontier with the United States are aware that pollution of the environment knows no political boundaries.

These six policy themes gave us the framework for policy. But to have let the matter rest at that point would have been equivalent to being in favour of motherhood. We had to attempt to indicate the emphasis among these various themes if we were to give a sense of direction to our future policy.

This was hazardous undertaking because it was open to misinterpretation and, of course, to deliberate distortion.

It goes without saying that each of the categories is of the highest importance. One could argue, and some have, for example, that sovereignty and independence come first, because without them there is no foreign policy for Canadians to bother about. Equally, it could be argued, and it has been argued, that without peace and security we all run the risk of being destroyed in a nuclear holocaust.

I do not quarrel with these arguments, but I should point out that the purpose of our foreign policy review was to set guidelines for Canadian foreign policy, not for the foreign policy of a super-power upon whose decisions the fundamental questions of peace and war so much depend.

We had to decide how best to employ our limited resources to make the greatest contribution to the furtherance of our aims and aspirations. And we came to the conclusion that we had more to contribute in some directions than in others.

Looking at our foreign policy and its effectiveness today, the Government decided that more emphasis than in the past should be placed upon economic growth, social justice and quality of life. This does not and cannot suggest that the other policy themes - harmonious natural environment, peace and security, sovereignty and independence - have been downgraded. This is

simply not possible. All are essential ingredients of national policy and all engage the Government's attention at all times.

Emphasis upon economic growth is not a self-seeking, "fast-buck", philosophy. Canada is a developing country; it is plagued by areas of chronic underdevelopment. These regional disparities must be removed if Canada is to offer a decent and rewarding life to all its citizens. Economic growth is the only answer.

Canada's international development program, which you will be considering as the "teach-in" goes on, comes within the policy theme "economic growth". It is our contribution to the great task facing the developing nations - to accelerate the growth rate of their economies. For Canada, development assistance is not a series of handouts, it is an effort to work in partnership with the developing nations toward the goal of economic growth that is for the greater good of us all.

I think it is true to say that Canada exports more per capita than any other country; certainly we are well in the forefront. Fostering economic growth for Canada means working for the good health of the international trading community; our own economic well-being and that of the developing countries depends upon a buoyant world market. The existence of two super-powers makes the ranking of nations as great powers, middle powers and small powers irrelevant. Canada makes no pretensions to "power" in the absolute sense, but it does intend to have an effective voice in world affairs. To act constructively in the community of nations one must have a power-base of some kind. In this limited sense, Canada must be seen as an economic rather than a military power. Emphasis on economic growth enhances Canada's capacity to play its full part in the councils of the nations.

The policy themes can and do come into conflict and require the Government to make hard choices. An obvious and timely example is the possible conflict between economic growth and harmonious natural environment. I do not need to labour this. The spread of industry brings jobs and wealth. It also can pollute the air, the ground and the water. Canada and every other technologically-advanced nation is facing hard choices in this area today. So, as their economies grow, are the developing countries. I hope we are ready to face the challenge and make the hard decisions.

Canada condemns apartheid without qualification. We give greater support to the views of black Africa states when this matter comes before the United Nations than any other Western country - and this is recognized by them. We have abided by UN resolutions on the sale of arms to South Africa. We give important and growing development assistance to the neighbours of South Africa and Rhodesia. We are extending our diplomatic ties with those countries. Polymer is in process of divesting itself of the small investment it has in South Africa. We strictly observe the United Nations trade embargo on the illegal regime of Rhodesia. We took the lead in expressing our concern to Britain about the resumption of arms sales by that country to South Africa.

It has been suggested that Canada should also cut off or discourage trade with South Africa because it practices apartheid. I suggest to you that this is a debatable proposition. In principle (and with the exception of

sanctions approved by the UN), Canada does not refuse to trade with a nation because it disapproves of its form of government or finds some of the actions of its government repugnant or repulsive. From time to time, we had been urged to do so by Canadians and foreigners who dislike regimes like those in Cuba, China and the Soviet Union, but we did not follow this advice; indeed, we encouraged trade with those countries as a means of promoting contacts between our respective peoples, and I believe the great majority of Canadians approved of the Government's position.

The nub of the matter is the purpose of cutting off trade. What is the intention? To change the policy of the South African Government? If so, the embargo would have to be extensive before it would have much effect and there is no evidence at all that an embargo would be widely supported by the principal trading nations.

Is it to punish the South African Government or the white minority? I am inclined to think that the worst sufferers would be the black majority, who do most of the work in South Africa in producing goods for export.

Or is it to satisfy our own emotional needs to express our repugnance for apartheid? Is so, then I think that emotional satisfaction has to be measured against the considerations I have mentioned. This is not callousness or putting money-making ahead of principle. Our embargo on arms shipments is evidence that Canada does not give priority to money-making. The proposal that Canada should cut off or even discourage trade in peaceful goods with South Africa should be looked at honestly and forthrightly and the decision made in the interest not only of ourselves but of the oppressed for whom we have sympathy and to whom we want to give support.

If trade sanctions imposed unilaterally are a form of punishment not likely to bring about reform, it is perhaps strange that many people who decry punishment as an answer to crime and social misbehaviour within their own societies are so eager to see it imposed internationally, where the possibilities of good results are so much more remote.

I have tried to give you some idea of the basic thinking that went into the general paper. I believe it is a unique document; I know of no other nation that has attempted to articulate the principles behind its foreign policy. I know it is not perfect, but I suggest it merits your thoughtful consideration. This is a free society and you are all welcome to do all you can to push the Government in the direction you want it to go, either in general or with regard to a specific issue.

Is there anything new in the papers? Leaving aside the specific Government decisions they contain, which are obviously new, I think there is. First, we have thought out our foreign policy in a more systematic way than ever before. This is more than an intellectual exercise; it will affect the formulation and operation of specific policies in the future.

For many years, a great many Canadians had seen Canada primarily as an active member of the Commonwealth, the United Nations and NATO and as a close ally and partner of the United States. The foreign policy papers

represent a view of the world much more specifically from a Canadian vantage-point. We have decided that Canada should continue to be active in its alliances and the international groupings of which we are a part, including, and this is something new, the grouping of nations wholly or partly of French expression, la Francophonie. But we continue these associations not because we have had them for years but because the Government is satisfied that they help to foster our national aims and goals.

For a large part of its history Canada's attention has been focused southward upon the United States and eastward upon Europe, more particularly Britain and France. We have seen ourselves as a Northern Atlantic nation. Looking at the world from a Canadian vantage-point, we have come to realize that we are, and to begin to accept our responsibilities as, an American nation, an Arctic nation and a Pacific nation. The paper on Latin America indicates our growing interests in the hemisphere as a whole, including, of course, the Caribbean. The recent Arctic legislation presented in the House of Commons represents our assumption of responsibility for the ecology of the Canadian Arctic not only in our own interest but in the interest of all. The growing importance to Canada of the Pacific nations is dealt with in the paper on the Pacific. And what we are seeing in this geographical dimension is not so much change as enlargement. The widening of our horizons does not lessen the close ties we have with the United States, although it may help us avoid increasing our economic dependence upon the American economy. In Europe our traditional ties with the Western states are being strengthened and new ties forged with the nations to the East. Our traditional relations with India and Pakistan have not been lessened; in Africa, our historic connections with the new states of English expression are being enriched by new relations with new states of French expression. It is difficult to see how some observers, at home and abroad, can suggest that Canada is retreating into isolationism simply because we look at the world, as all countries do, from our own point of view.

One of the more controversial statements in the general paper is on role and influence:

"It is a risky business to postulate or predict any specific role for Canada in a rapidly evolving world situation. It is even riskier - certainly misleading - to base foreign policy on an assumption that Canada can be cast as the 'helpful fixer' in international affairs.

"There is no natural, immutable or permanent role for Canada in today's world, no constant weight of influence. Roles and influence may result from pursuing certain policy objectives - and these 'spin-offs' can be of solid value to international relations - but they should not be made the aims of policy. To be liked and to be regarded as good fellows are not ends in themselves; they are a reflection of but not a substitute for policy."

This part of the paper has been commonly misquoted and taken to mean that Canada is trying to dodge international responsibility and to repudiate the invaluable work it has done in the mediation of disputes and in peacekeeping operations - in which we are still involved in Cyprus, the Middle East and Kashmir. Nothing could be further from the truth. Canada is as ready as ever to act as mediator or to provide peacekeeping forces when called upon to do so, but there must be some real hope that the operation will be effective.

The review has brought home to us many things we already knew but to which we had not given due weight. As people get older they tend to look back and identify a golden age they feel has gone for ever. In the late forties and early fifties, Canada, emerging from the war with its economy strengthened when the economies of most countries had been weakened, enjoyed a brief spell of unusual prominence upon the international stage. Since then, friends and former enemies have rebuilt their economies, the Soviet Union has emerged as a super-power, China has come to have the potential to be a world power. All this is true, but what is even more true is that Canada has grown in strength and independence since those days to an extent not generally realized or accepted, at least by some Canadians. Our brief day of prominence in a world devastated by war may be over, but we are coming of age in the world of today, we taking our place and playing our part in the world as it is.

The paper identifies the central problem facing Canada as "how to live in harmony with, but distinct from, the greatest power on earth". This is the subject of a separate discourse on which I shall not embark tonight. We have not issued a paper on this subject, partly because it permeates the six papers we have issued and partly because other studies are in process, dealing with particular aspects of Canada-United States relations such as energy policy, foreign investment and defence. Our relations with the United States will be a continuing cause for debate for as long as we share the continent, and I feel sure that a part of that debate will take place here tonight. I make only one comment at this stage, and that is to say that I believe it would be very much opposed to the interests of Canadians and the independence of Canada to base our foreign policy on anti-Americanism, express or implied....

There are a number of points I should like to make very briefly. First, Canada's relations with the Third World fit into the conceptual framework contained in the general paper, perhaps under all the policy headings, particularly economic growth, social justice and quality of life.

Canada's aid and trade policies toward the developing countries are designed to aid in their economic growth, which is one of our priorities since only economic growth can enable these countries to free their peoples from the bondage of life at or under the subsistence level and enable them to realize their potential and make their contribution to the enrichment of the human community. As we work at home to bring a full measure of social justice to our own indigenous populations, which is another of our priorities, so our aid and trade policies contribute to the spread of a greater measure of social justice in the countries of Africa and Asia. When we turn to the

quality of life, we find that we are the gainers, as more and more of our people are exposed to the ancient civilizations and profound philosophies of the countries of Africa and Asia, as more and more students and immigrants from these countries make their contribution to our national life, our own life and our own society are enriched.

Canada's development program in the past, starting with the Colombo Plan in 1950, has reflected our long-time associations in the Commonwealth. From ex-colonies in Asia and Africa our development program has spread to the former British possessions in the Caribbean. The renaissance of French Canada has extended our aid program to the former French colonies of Africa. As the Government has announced in the foreign policy papers, more of our effort and resources are to be directed toward the Pacific countries and toward Latin America. This will mean stepped-up aid and investment in the Pacific. In Latin America, where we have had a modest development program of a multilateral kind for some years, we are contemplating extended aid to the countries we can best help.

In all our relations with the countries of the Third World, development assistance is the largest single element. This is as it should be; Canada has no political ambitions in the Third World, save to contribute what we can to strengthen their economies, to help them bring an increasing measure of social justice to their peoples and to share with them man's great task - to enhance the quality of life on earth.

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