

STATEMENT DISCOURS

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NOTES FOR AN APPEARANCE BY
THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS, THE
HONOURABLE MITCHELL SHARP,
AT THE STANDING COMMITTEE
ON EXTERNAL AFFAIRS AND
NATIONAL DEFENCE,
OTTAWA, MAY 19, 1971.

The purpose of my being here this afternoon is to answer, or try to answer, any questions you may have arising out of the estimates of my Department. What I have to say by way of introduction will, therefore, be very brief.

When I appeared at the Committee to discuss the estimates last year, the Department was facing a very difficult budget situation. We had to close certain missions, recruitment of officers had stopped, staffs at our missions abroad were being cut back. Criticism of the Department was coming from all directions, the very role, function and future of the Department were under questioning. In the face of these adversities, morale in the Department was suffering.

From that low point we have made tremendous progress. Two missions, to the People's Republic of China and the Vatican, have been opened. In the current year we will be opening a mission in Algeria. The opening of a mission in Zambia in which I know this Committee is particularly interested, is under study; and plans are advancing for the opening of a permanent observer mission to the O.A.S. in Washington. Opening missions is not an end in itself, or in itself significant evidence of progress, but in all these cases the aim is the furtherance of essential Canadian objectives and interests.

We are again hiring officers. Many of our missions overseas continue to be understaffed with their resources stretched to the limit. The reorganization of the Department and the moves toward greater integration of the whole foreign service will, through time, ease this problem. I understand that Mr. Ritchie reported fully to the Committee on these organizational changes.

Morale in the Department is now, I believe, much improved. The publication of the foreign policy papers last June has given the Department a clear mandate from the Government and a new sense of direction. This, in turn, has given the Department's officers a sense of accomplishment and the feeling that once again they have an opportunity to serve their country. "Foreign Policy for Canadians" has had a mixed reception from the interested public -- anything else would have been a miracle. It has stimulated dialogue between the Department and its friends and critics from which both sides have benefitted. Your Committee, in its hearings on the general paper, has made an important contribution to this dialogue.

In preparing for my appearance this afternoon, I have been reflecting on the way in which the policy guidance provided by the foreign policy papers is being given effect. I would like to give you some brief highlights which will make clear that the foreign policy papers are not a theoretical exercise but a present reality in our work.

Latin America

The papers stated the Government's intention to seek permanent observer status with the O.A.S. This decision was conveyed to the Organization at its General Assembly in Washington last year and stated in more detail by the Parliamentary Secretary at the General Assembly in San José last month. The Assembly passed a resolution to establish the status of permanent observership as a basis of association with the activities of the O.A.S. The Permanent Council is working out the details of timing and modalities and, as I suggested, we are studying the establishment of a mission in Washington.

International Development

As forecast in the papers, the funds available to C.I.D.A. have been increased by 17%. Some progress has been made with aid untying, and the percentage of assistance flowing through multilateral channels will reach the forecast figure of 25%. The International Development and Research Centre has been set up under Mr. Pearson and Dr. Hopper and is now operational.

Europe

A common criticism of the papers was that they seemed to presage a de-emphasis of Europe among Canada's foreign policy pre-occupations. I always found this difficult to understand since it is not what the papers said. In fact, as anticipated, our relations with Europe have been strengthened and intensified in the past year. Their importance has never been more clearly seen. Throughout the year in Canada and on several occasions in Europe, I and other ministers have been engaged in a series of discussions with European leaders of the greatest significance for our relations with that part of the world.

Relations with Eastern Europe have not been neglected. The Prime Minister's visit to the Soviet Union is dramatic evidence of our determination to broaden and deepen our relations with the nations of Eastern Europe, in terms of trade, scientific and technological exchange and cultural exchange.

The Pacific

The opening of our mission in Peking is the most notable event in this area. The papers suggested that Canada might "make a contribution toward bringing China into a more constructive relationship with the world community", a process in which we have been able to take the first step. Canada has made clear its view that Peking should take the China seat at the United Nations.

There has been an important series of ministerial visits back and forth between Canada and Australia and New Zealand. The Prime Minister has visited these countries, and also India, Ceylon, Japan, Singapore and Indonesia.

The papers suggested that Canada should seek non-regional membership in E.C.A.F.E. This we are postponing until after some questions of a constitutional and organizational nature within E.C.A.F.E. have been resolved by the membership. This is an example of the constraints placed upon freedom of action internationally with which the general paper deals.

United Nations

The foreign policy papers pledge Canada's continuing support for the United Nations as it strives to fulfil its two great functions -- to keep the peace and to improve the conditions of life on earth. Much of the work of the Organization is on-going in character and not less important for this reason. But the United Nations is striking out in new directions as new, or newly-realized, international problems come to the fore. Of particular interest to Canada, with its long shoreline and technologically-advanced society, is the world-wide move towards the control of pollution, the protection of the environment and the enhancement of the quality of life.

The United Nations is responding by the holding of a major conference on the human environment in Stockholm next year, with Maurice Strong as Secretary-General. U.N.E.S.C.O. is in the process of launching an international undertaking of scientific co-operation among member states, to be known as the Man and the Biosphere Project.

Other international bodies to which Canada belongs are active in the field. N.A.T.O. has its Committee on the Challenges of Modern Society. The O.E.C.D. has recently established an Environment Committee to deal with questions of air and water management, pollution by automobiles, industrial pollution and the environmental problems of urban society, among others.

The Economic Commission for Europe is now holding a conference on problems relating to the environment in Prague. Canada is represented. It also plans a seminar on air and water pollution arising in the iron and steel industry in Leningrad in August.

On June 10th I will lead the Canadian delegation to the second ministerial meeting of the I.J.C. on Great Lakes Pollution. The delegation will include representatives of the interested provinces. It is hoped that, at this meeting, agreement can be reached on quality standards for Great Lakes water and that arrangements can be made to enable the I.J.C.

to exercise increased responsibilities for the maintenance of these standards.

The sudden multiplication of activities related to the quality of life has not caught the Department unprepared. The Scientific Relations and Environmental Problems Division was established in 1970, re-organized this year as the Bureau of Economic and Scientific Affairs. In addition to co-ordinating Canada's contributions to the various international initiatives I have described, the scientific affairs arm of the Bureau is responsible for the establishment of bilateral exchanges such as the scientific and Technological Agreement reached with the Soviet Union last fall. In addition, this Bureau has the day-to-day management of all of Canada's specific national interests in the allied fields of science in general and protection of the environment in particular.

Returning for a moment to the United Nations, the foreign policy papers state that in the 1970s Canada should give a high priority to work on arms control and disarmament. In this field Canada made an important contribution to the recently concluded Seabed Arms Control Treaty and is continuing its efforts towards progress in the search for a comprehensive nuclear test ban and the outlawing of chemical and biological weapons in warfare. In N.A.T.O. we are working with our allies for mutual balanced force reductions in Europe and, as a group, consulting with the United States on the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks.

The papers discuss the need for Canada to project abroad its distinctive bilingual and multicultural nature. Progress is being made, in the normalization of our relations with France, in increased development assistance to Francophone countries of Africa, Asia and the Caribbean. L'Agence de coopération culturelle et technique has been successfully founded and its first formal conference will be held in Canada this fall. This makes clear that Canada has been successful in its effort to be accepted internationally as being equally a French-speaking and an English-speaking country.

Recently I visited five of the developing countries of Africa, both Anglophone and Francophone. I believe that you will now be turning your attention to African problems and I look forward to discussing these with you next month.

All of these activities, and all of Canada's activities, must be seen against the background of our complex and intricate relations with the United States. The general paper identifies Canada's central problem as being "how to live in harmony with, but distinct from the greatest power on earth". It also identifies the United States as our closest

friend and ally. This is familiar ground. I will not cover it again, except to say that while we must accept, live with and be grateful for our interdependence with our North American neighbour, we must constantly be watchful to protect that essential independence of thought and action that is basic to our continued national existence.

These brief comments only touch the surface of the work that has been done in the Department to implement the foreign policy papers. Much more lies ahead. I am satisfied that a strengthened and renewed Department will fulfil its renewed mandate confidently and effectively.