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# STATEMENT DISCOURS

SECRETARY  
OF STATE  
FOR EXTERNAL  
AFFAIRS.

SECRÉTAIRE  
D'ÉTAT AUX  
AFFAIRES  
EXTÉRIEURES.



NOTES FOR A SPEECH BY THE  
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR  
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS,  
FLORA MACDONALD,  
TO THE MEN'S CANADIAN CLUB,  
VANCOUVER, B.C.  
SEPTEMBER 13, 1979, AT 12:15

Thank you, Mr. chairman,

It is not just to the Government of Canada that external affairs are important, however. They are important to everyone because they affect the daily lives of all Canadians. If, as John Donne said, "No man is an island", then no individual citizen is immune to what is happening in the world around him. And I am not referring only to the major global events such as wars and the price of Arabian oil. Each one of us here is directly affected in hundreds of ways, every day of our lives.

Most of you got to work today in a car that was either made in Canada - or at least partly in Canada - under the terms of the auto-pact we have with the U.S.A., or was imported from overseas under the terms of trade agreements we have with the country that made it. I got here by plane, and made it safely because of a traffic control system that is the result of careful international cooperation and agreement. The frequency of the radio station you listened to on the way to the office was assigned under an international agreement. You have a Japanese television? a suit of English worsted wool? a yen for French wine or for a holiday in Hawaii or Mexico? You may be in the shipping, lumber, mining, financial or publishing business. You may want to make a telephone call to a friend in Seattle or write a letter to a relative in Europe. Well, you can't have those things, and you can't do those things without being involved in external affairs. It's not a question of saying "I've never bothered to make a study of Canadian foreign policy". That's not the point. The point is that, like it or not, it matters to you, and unless you have the mental energy output of a salt-water clam you have opinions that concern our country's foreign policy.

I say this from direct personal experience. Ever since I've been a Member of Parliament I have had a weekly open-line show on radio in Kingston. It is one of the best ways of keeping in touch that I know. It has been fascinating to notice how the show has changed since I became Secretary of State for External Affairs. It used to be that hardly any questions or comments were about foreign policy matters. These days, however, we spend most of our time talking about these issues. The knowledge and interest were there already - people just needed to be reminded.

It is the Government's job, and specifically my job, to use the resources that are voted to us by Parliament to further the interests of Canadians as far as relations with foreign countries are concerned. We often hear that Canada has a non-partisan foreign policy - the issues are perceived by both the Government and Opposition in pretty much the same terms. I suppose that this is because we all have a relatively similar idea of what Canadians want in terms of relations with other countries - what they want to get in the way of benefits, and what they want to give in the way of assistance as members of the international community. We have differences, of course, but we also have much common ground.

It is not the Government's intention, however, to follow blindly in the course that has been charted by previous governments over the years. We have both an opportunity and a responsibility to review the direction of our foreign policy to satisfy ourselves that we are in fact serving the best interests of Canadians.

I shall come back to that point in a moment, but before I do I want to mention another important consideration that must be kept in mind in developing and putting into effect our foreign policy. And that is that Canada has now become a major actor on the international stage. We are no longer just a junior partner in the British Empire or a pioneer society living under the shadow and influence of our American neighbours.

By almost any yard stick, Canada ranks with the world's leading countries. Ours is one of the world's largest economies and we are a great trading nation. In a world composed of some 150 independent states, our Gross National Product ranks ninth in the world, and seventh in the free world. Our trade is 5% of all the world's trade. It is natural, therefore, that Canada should be a member of the Group of Seven industrialized countries and that we sat as equal partners at the Tokyo Summit. Our physical size and strategic location give us special importance, and influence, in the security of the West. We have the eighth largest aid program in the world and in certain regions, like Africa below the Sahara, it rivals in size that of the United States. Our British and French heritage give us special links with the Commonwealth and la Francophonie, both of which are important in improving understanding between industrialized and developing countries. Certainly, my recent trip to Cameroon, Zambia and Tanzania proved to me the high regard in which Canada is held, and the very useful role we can play in that part of the world. It was very appropriate that Canada should be one of the five Western powers from the Security Council trying to find a solution to the Namibian crisis, and that Canada should have served as one of two co-chairmen of the recent north-south meetings on international development in Paris. We also play a leading role in the resolution of such complex questions as the Law of the Sea and the control of nuclear proliferation.

Changes in the world may be opening greater possibilities for Canada to practice an imaginative and influential foreign policy than at any time since the immediate post-war period. Then our influence derived from our economic and military strength -- as well as the strength I mention all this because I want to emphasize that what we as a country do internationally will affect not only ourselves, but to a lesser extent many millions of others.

All this is a very great responsibility - one that I have no intention of shirking. But in one sense I want to share that responsibility with you more than has ever been done before. As a Minister of the Government of Canada I have many dedicated, highly trained and intelligent advisors. They bring me the fruits of their experience, their study and their diligence. What they cannot bring me is an accurate and broad understanding of what the people of Canada are thinking.

If we are to reexamine our foreign policy, and I'm determined to do that, and if we are dedicated as a government to be more open and more sensitive to the thinking of the citizens, we'll be asking you to help us decide where Canada should be going on the international front.

To a certain extent the Government itself can help to facilitate public participation in this process. And if anyone thinks we are not serious in this intent, let me give you a concrete example of what we have already done on one important issue -- Vietnamese Boat People.

Very early in my term of office I realized that the refugee situation in South-East Asia demanded two different kinds of action. The first was on the political front. It was simply intolerable to the new government - as I am sure it was to the people of Canada - that the government of Viet Nam was pursuing a deliberate policy to expel hundreds of thousands of its own citizens. You will remember that for years - all through their war with the United States - Canada kept up good relations with the Government in Hanoi. We did not take sides in that conflict. Our moderate position was well recognized and appreciated by Hanoi.

But in light of the policy of violation of human rights that has been recently followed by Viet Nam we have cut off our aid programs to that country. I personally have spoken to representatives of that government in Ottawa and abroad emphasizing that the goodwill between our peoples is seriously jeopardized by their actions. At the Geneva conference on the refugee situation I called on all other governments to exert whatever pressure they could to deter the Vietnamese from their inhumane course. And although I wouldn't for a moment claim all the credit, Canada's representations along with those of several other countries resulted in at least a temporary change in Viet Nam's policies. The flow of boat people was stopped. Illegal departures have been checked. Making that kind of appeal in that kind of forum is something that only the government could do - though we could not have taken so strong a stand if we weren't certain of support for it among the Canadian people.

The second kind of action that was called for was to provide a humanitarian response to the plight of these tragically uprooted people. They desperately need new homes. The countries to which they flee are overwhelmed by the problems that have been created, and can not be expected to continue to give shelter to the refugees if they are not certain that other countries will open their doors for long-term resettlement. Countries like Canada have to provide a relief-valve if we want to prevent hundreds of thousands more people from dying. There was absolutely no choice about Canada having to accept refugees for resettlement. At least there was no choice if we are going to be able to live with our consciences - and to me that means no choice.

But there was a choice as to how we were to do this. One way - the way apparently preferred by the new leader of the opposition - would have been for the government to just arbitrarily pick a figure and say we will bring in this number and look after them. But we knew that the distress of these refugees had touched the hearts of Canadians. We knew that thousands of people from coast to coast had already been looking for a way in which they, as private citizens, could help. Because we knew this, and because we really mean it when we say we want greater public participation in public affairs, we designed the program as we did. The government is sponsoring one refugee for each refugee sponsored privately. Not only does this give an opportunity for Canadians to satisfy their need to help directly in a tragic situation, but it also allows the Canadian people to determine the total number of refugees who will come here.

That is a program of partnership between the people and the government. Now Mr. Trudeau has called that a cop-out, and I suppose that he has some difficulty believing in the wisdom and generosity of the Canadian people after what they did on May 22nd. The NDP have heaped their well practiced scorn on the program too. But to me this is the opposite of copping-out. It is a bringing in, a bringing in of the people of this country to a partnership with their government in a matter of high public policy.

We intend to continue as we have begun.

Human rights and humanitarian issues get a lot of public attention, but they occupy a fraction of the time of the Department of External Affairs. Bread and butter issues are our meat and potatoes

Something we believe the government must do is support the efforts of Canadian businessmen in their efforts to expand foreign trade. One of the vital elements of any selling program is information. Information about who has what, who needs what, how needs can be filled. Now of course the Government has numerous sources of information - much of the work of our embassies abroad is to collect facts that will be of commercial use to Canada. But I am by no means convinced that we are

always getting the right kind of information, or that we are tapping all the right sources. I'm also not convinced that we put the information we do get to as good use as we might.

Here again, we are asking advice and help from the people concerned. As you know later this year we are convening a National Economic Conference as the first step in coming to grips with the Canadian economy. In the years gone by, when an economic conference was called it was the federal government sitting down with the provinces, and they mainly talked about who should do what and to whom. But this conference will have representatives of business and labour, the people who really make the economy run. What a revolutionary idea - well it may be to some, but to us its just plain common sense.

Information will, of course, play a large role in the whole process. One of the things I hope to learn from the conference is the ways in which my department can be of more use - both in getting the information businessmen need, and in helping them overseas.

One aspect of foreign policy both the Prime Minister and I are particularly interested in is our relationship with the countries of the Pacific rim - including the western United States. We are convinced that we have only touched the surface of the trade potential that this part of the world has to offer.

As you have probably heard the Prime Minister has announced that he has asked Pat Carney here in Vancouver to develop suggestions for getting greater input from the private sector into the public policy process dealing with trade in the Pacific rim. She will be examining ways to bring together everyone involved to find out what they have learned that can be of use in promoting trade. We have lots of knowledge already - our exporters have been doing business in this region for years and years. But to date we have no way of passing on this information to others, no way of learning from the mistakes that some of our people may have made, or from the successes that businessmen from other countries may have had.

We don't yet know just what the mechanics will be - that's why we've hired Pat. But we are convinced that it will be the beginning of a process that will bring a new partnership of the public and private sectors to an area of opportunity that is so important to everyone here.

There are other areas, too, where we shall be making greater provision for a role for the public to be involved in public policy. We intend to reactivate the Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Policy and National Defence. They will be conducting investigations into a variety of topics, and the public hearings they will hold will give everyone who is interested a chance to be heard and to contribute to the government's thinking.

We have already proved that we are sincerely interested in working closely with the provinces wherever the two levels of government have interests in the same field. And today every provincial government recognizes the importance to it of overseas trade. Many provinces, like British Columbia, have had posts abroad for years. I firmly believe that, as elected representatives of the people, those governments too must be allowed to participate in the policy matters that come under my jurisdiction.

So the federal government is now sincerely looking for, and finding ways of getting more public input. But there are initiatives that you as private citizens can take too. You shouldn't wait for the government to make an opportunity available.

For example, does the speaking program of the Club give adequate weight to Canada's international involvements? Are you showing the interest you might - and might benefit from - such as trade for China-Canada and Japan-Canada, or the Canadian Association for Latin America? Are you doing all you can to communicate your views?

And speaking of communicating your views, I cannot stress too strongly the importance of writing to your Member of Parliament. The mail is the single most effective way MP's - including Ministers - have of knowing what people think. Without our mail we would be operating in the dark. Write to us. A politician is supposed to have what is known as political instinct. But we aren't mind-readers. And I promise you that as soon as we get the Post Office working properly you'll be getting replies right back.

May I leave you with this thought. The next time you notice the government doing something on which you have a strong view, ask yourself: "How can I influence that decision?" There are lots of ways you can participate. I want you to because it will make my job all that much easier. But I don't say this just because I would welcome more help. I say it because I really believe that that is the way we can get the kind of government we really want.

Thank-you.