

17649
81



CANADA

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION

DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 69/1

CANADA'S RELATIONS WITH EUROPE

Introductory remarks by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Mitchell Sharp, at the Opening of a Seminar on Relations with Europe in Hull, Quebec, January 3, 1969.

I welcome the opportunity which your chairman has provided to say something about the importance the Government attaches to the discussions about Canadian relations with Europe which you are starting today. We are grateful to academic participants for their willingness to come here at this time. We are grateful also to the Canadian Institute of International Affairs, in particular, and to other organizations for the part they have played in making arrangements for this meeting.

When the Government decided, shortly after the last election, to undertake a review of foreign policy, we did so because of the conviction that profound changes have been taking place in Canada and in the world around us in recent years. We want to be sure that our foreign policy is appropriate to the situation in which we find ourselves today and that it serves effectively Canada's current interests, objectives and priorities.

Having taken a decision to review our foreign policy, we had to settle on a method of approach. Foreign policy is, in fact, not a single entity but a collection of policies designed to deal with various aspects of our relations with the rest of the world. We lump these together under the convenient title of "foreign policy", although there is not likely to be any single set of policy decisions which will cover all the situations we encounter in this increasingly complex world. When we set out to review our foreign policy, therefore, we had to break the subject down by some means. We might have started by looking at our own country to determine what kind of people we are, what are our interests and needs, what are our strengths and weaknesses and, consequently, what role we are best suited to play in world affairs. Alternatively, we could begin by looking at the world around us to determine what kind of situation we are living in, what changes are taking place or ought to take place, and what kind of world we should like to see. One cannot separate these two approaches. They are both essential components of any foreign policy. We have chosen to concentrate first on the world in which we find ourselves, rather than begin by an attempt at national self-examination which could prove to be an artificial exercise if it were not related to the actual state of the world.

One of the first steps we took in breaking down the broad subject of foreign policy into areas for intensive study was to set up a Special Task Force on Canada's Relations with Europe. Obviously, there are few parts of the

world in which change has been so noticeable in recent years as in Europe; there are few areas where Canada's existing relations are so diverse and extensive; there are few areas where Canadian foreign policy has been so much a subject for debate.

We have the additional reason for assigning first priority to Europe that, at the same time, the Government is undertaking a review of defence policy. A very large and important part of Canada's defence efforts is directed towards Europe in pursuance of the commitments we have made as a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. It was, therefore, important that, at the same time as we were reviewing our defence policy, we should review our relations with Europe in the political, economic and other fields which are inevitably intermingled with our defence commitments.

The Special Task Force on Europe is made up of senior officials representing those government departments with special interest in our relations with Europe. It is under the joint chairmanship of Mr. Robert Ford, our Ambassador to the U.S.S.R., and Mr. Paul Tremblay, our Ambassador to Belgium. External Affairs supplies the secretariat and the Task Force will report through me to the Prime Minister and the Government. The officials here today are members of the Task Force and senior officers of External Affairs directly concerned with our relations with Europe.

The Task Force began its work last summer and since then has compiled, probably for the first time, a comprehensive inventory of our past and present relations with the countries of Eastern and Western Europe (including Britain) and with European organizations. In the process of collating this material, certain major issues have emerged, and it is with a view to having these issues discussed that this seminar has been organized. The Task Force and the Government will then have the benefit of your views when they proceed to draw conclusions from the review of European policy.

It is to inform and stimulate this discussion that a background paper and a series of five discussion papers were prepared on the official side and circulated in time for you to reflect on them before coming here. I wish to emphasize that they were not designed to express official positions or to suggest conclusions or to prejudge your discussions in any way, but only to focus discussion on the issues that appear to the Task Force to be among the most important. They do not exclude your raising other issues or suggesting other approaches.

In this spirit, it may be helpful if I say a word about our objectives and interests in Europe, which are closely related to the topics figuring on your agenda. To begin with, there are two basic Canadian problems which are interrelated and which have important external aspects: the problem of national unity and the problem of national identity. The first involves the reflection in our foreign policy of the bilingual nature of Canada, and has particular reference to our relations with France. The second involves the difficulty a country in Canada's position encounters in creating and projecting a distinctive way of life. This difficulty has been aggravated by the considerable increase in our relations with the United States since the last World War and by the relative increase in the power and influence in world affairs of that country during this period. It is a question whether Canada should seek to develop its interests in other parts of the world, and particularly in Europe, as a counterweight to the increasing influence of the United States.

We have a security interest in Europe, and here our objective is to do our share to maintain peace or contain conflicts which could lead to a global war. This objective has implications for the role we play in East-West relations and for our relations with the countries of Eastern Europe. It also has implications for our defence relations with Western Europe and our future role in NATO. What these implications are is, of course, a matter for discussion at this seminar.

We also have economic objectives which might be described as seeking to obtain the most favourable impact of activities in Europe on the Canadian economy. One-fifth of Canada's export trade is carried on with European countries, including Britain. Europe is, therefore, after the United States, our most important export market.

Finally, there is an interest in Europe which relates to the international role which Canada plays in the maintenance of a free and stable society based on the rule of law. In the pursuit of this objective, Canada participates in international organizations, aid programmes and peacekeeping operations. We also engage in cultural and information programmes for the purpose of encouraging human relations between countries. These give an external dimension to our culture and provide a basis of mutual understanding which tends to support our foreign policy initiatives.

I expect that participants in this seminar, as well as other interested individuals throughout the country, might ask when there will be discussions about aspects of our foreign policy other than relations with Europe and whether, on the governmental side, there is an interest in continuing such exchanges beyond the present period of major review of policy. We have, indeed, been considering such possibilities in other areas of the review, and we intend, with the advice of interested non-governmental organizations, to involve specialists in other fields in discussions of other sectors of policy.

In the near future we hope to convene a meeting similar to this one to discuss Canadian relations with Latin America. Mr. George Ignatieff, who has been Canada's Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York, is returning to Ottawa shortly to start the process of examining Canada's role in the United Nations. After the preparatory work has advanced sufficiently far under his direction, we shall seek to consult knowledgeable persons outside the Government on that aspect of our foreign policy.

The development of closer relations on a permanent basis between those who teach and do research about international affairs and those who advise and carry out the decisions of government in this same field is something to which I attribute considerable importance. Foreign policy must, in a very real sense, be constantly under review. We cannot regulate the world by our own decisions. One review of policy cannot provide all the solutions in advance to problems of the Canadian response to unpredictable situations.

Several of you from universities will be aware of the informal consultations which officers of the Department of External Affairs have carried out with individual faculty members in the past year about the means of developing closer relations. These are parallel, of course, to initiatives which I know other agencies of the Government represented here today have taken to develop contacts with the academic community.

From those consultations engaged in by my own Department, and from examination within the Department of the reasons which, from our own standpoint, make closer relations desirable, we have drawn some conclusions. We should like to continue the type of exchange which this present seminar represents. There is an increasingly varied range of discussion about international affairs sponsored by universities, learned societies and organizations such as the Canadian Institute of International Affairs. The Department of External Affairs derives benefit now from having officers attend a number of such meetings at the invitation of the sponsors. If sponsors of such meetings wish, from time to time, to arrange discussions, more or less under the conditions characterizing this present seminar, involving officials and those with similar interests from the universities and elsewhere, we shall be glad to consider co-operative arrangements within the limits of our own resources.

I have examined other means of developing exchanges in what I hope could be a mutually-profitable manner. I should like to have some officers from the Department of External Affairs freed from normal operational responsibilities at home or abroad to spend a year examining, in a more reflective way, the best ways of achieving Canadian objectives in areas in which they already have knowledge and experience. I think that a "sabbatical" year of this type would be a good deal more profitable if the officer concerned were to leave Ottawa and live on a university campus. The resources for formal research there, added to the opportunity for continuing discussions with faculty members and informal involvement in university life with a different environment of thought, would certainly stimulate the examination in depth of Canadian objectives and techniques which I should like to encourage. At the same time, through such exchanges an experienced foreign service officer can make his contribution to a better understanding of world affairs and Canadian involvement in them.

I believe also that, to enable the Department of External Affairs to keep up with a steadily-increasing volume of study and with changing methods of research in international relations and area studies, it would be desirable to have academic specialists speak to groups in the Department and perhaps to add their contribution to the training and orientation given new foreign service officers before they undertake their first assignments abroad.

We have been examining other projects, but this is not the occasion for a general review of relations between the Department of External Affairs and the universities. I wanted primarily to ensure that you would see this seminar not as an isolated occurrence involving a relatively small number of individuals discussing a complex subject in a couple of days but as part of a process. With the continuing friendly co-operation of the organizations we have recently consulted and others, we hope to ensure that, over a period of time, we shall develop those wide and varied contacts on which real communication about matters of common interest depends.

The proceedings of this seminar are not to be made public. I would ask your permission, however, Mr. Chairman, to bring these introductory comments to public attention.

I hope too that the academic participants in this seminar will, in due course, write about their experience here as a means of fostering wider discussion. The deliberations taking place over this weekend are not secret. It is true that,

to make the seminar as frank and fruitful as possible, it is being operated under the rules of the Canadian Institute of International Affairs, which preclude attribution of opinions to specific individuals. With this stipulation, it is the Government's hope that these informal discussions will lead to a more pointed and better-informed dialogue in the country as a whole. I also expect that the Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence will have a series of meetings at which interested and qualified private individuals and groups will be invited to state their views and reply to questions. It may well be that some of you will wish to state publicly then the views you will be expressing more privately here.

I hope that this will be an open seminar. It would be unfortunate, I think, if officials here felt that they had to take a defensive position and our academic friends felt it incumbent upon themselves to be on the attack. Useful discussion calls for frankness, for sharp interchanges and lively debate. All of these there will be but not always, I hope, from predetermined positions.

I look forward to meeting you again tomorrow evening and hope that your discussions go well.

S/C