



communiqué

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CANADIANS' FOREIGN POLICY ATTITUDES

The Department of External Affairs announced today that it was making available the results of a public opinion survey it had commissioned on Canadians' foreign policy attitudes. The Department stated that the survey was a contribution to continuing dialogue with Canadians on the conduct of Canada's international relations, an objective stated in Canada's International Relations, the Response of the Government of Canada to the Report of the Special Joint Committee on Canada's International Relations (Hockin-Simard Committee).

Carried out by The Longwoods Research Group Ltd. of Toronto in April, the poll covers major areas of Canada's external relations including South Africa and apartheid, aid policy, Central America, East-West relations and arms control, sovereignty, trade and Canada-USA relations. A summary of the principal findings in these areas is attached together with a note on methodology.

SUMMARY OF
PUBLIC OPINION POLL ON CANADIANS'
FOREIGN POLICY ATTITUDES
(April, 1987)

Overall Priorities and Effectiveness

--When asked to state in their own words the issue of greatest personal concern, 46% of Canadians mentioned issues broadly related to war and peace; poverty and hunger at 21% was second.

--Canadians were asked to rate a number of specified issues for the priority they attached to them, the priority they believed Canada actually attaches to them and Canada's effectiveness on them. The key findings were:

-Canadians believe international peace, Canada's independence and control over its own affairs, acid rain arms control and Canada-U.S. relations in that order should be of highest priority. They see Canada attaching the highest priority to Canada-USA relations, acid rain, Canada's independence and control over its own affairs, international peace and Third World poverty and hunger;

-Canadians see Canada's greatest effectiveness over the past few years in the areas of Canada-USA relations, Third World poverty and hunger, Canada's independence and control over its own affairs, international peace, and international cooperation in the U.N. and other multilateral organizations.

South Africa and Apartheid

--Forty-four per cent said that they were aware of "measures" taken by Canada to persuade South Africa to dismantle apartheid.

--Fifty-eight per cent preferred "limited sanctions like those already imposed by Canada" (26% opted for "total sanctions")

--Forty-five per cent said Canada is doing "enough" to oppose apartheid, 37% said Canada should "do more", 15% said Canada should "do nothing".

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Aid Policy

- Fifty-two per cent believe Canada spends about the right amount on aid, roughly a quarter believes the amount is too much, another quarter that the amount is too little.
- Eighty per cent say the primary reason for aid is to relieve suffering.
- There is little consensus on specific issues, such as tied aid, aid to human rights violators, and aid vs trade.

Central America and Nicaragua

- Sixty-six per cent of Canadians feel little informed about this region compared with 70% saying they are informed about world affairs generally.
- When asked about the different ways Canada could deal with the problems in Central America, a majority believed Canada should have some (arms-length) involvement, for instance, by actively supporting the efforts Central American countries to find a peaceful solution themselves (86%) or increasing economic assistance (60%).
- Sixty-three per cent see poverty and injustice as causing tensions in the region, 22% fault the USSR and Cuba, 13% the USA.
- Sixty per cent say that they are not concerned about the situation in Nicaragua.
- Of those who were concerned about Nicaragua, 39% selected human rights abuses as a specific concern, followed by refugee flows to Canada (34%), the possibility of USA military intervention (28%) and expansion of Soviet and Cuban interference (26%).
- Fifty-one per cent believe that Canada does not approve United States support for the Contras; 30% believe Canada does.

East-West Relations and Arms Control

- Almost 50% believe there has been no change in East-West relations in the last year, but those (48%) who did perceive a change saw an improvement. Fifty per cent credited both the United States and the Soviet Union.

- Fifty-four per cent see the USSR under Gorbachev as a freer society.

- About 50% chose "lack of trust between East and West" as the cause of tensions.

- Three-quarters said the main concern of both the USSR and USA is "increasing its power and influence in the world".

- Canadians gave highest importance to arms control and human rights in Canada's relations with the USSR.

- Just over 50% believe the existence of nuclear weapons makes war more likely and 59% said current practices and new developments in nuclear weaponry made war more likely.

- Seventy-one per cent believe progress will be made towards arms control agreements in the future.

Canada-USA Relations

- Seventy-two per cent rate Canada-USA relations as "good" or better.

- Fifty-four per cent saw no change in relations over the past year; 25% saw a worsening; 19% improvement. Reasons related to trade were given by 60% of those who saw worsened relations.

- Sixty-seven per cent say Canada should pursue independent policies even if this leads to certain problems in its relations with the USA.

- Seventy per cent see the general foreign policies of Canada and the United States as similar and explained this as a result of similar history and geography (76%), following a world leader (68%), and fear of the consequences of disagreeing (63%).

--Seventy-four per cent do not think Canada pushes its own point of view strongly enough in its dealings with the United States.

Sovereignty

--Fifty-six per cent are aware of the phrase "Canadian sovereignty" and almost all can define it, focussing on the ideas of independence and control. Sixty per cent of these respondents also perceived threats to sovereignty (about one-third of all Canadians); 56% perceived the threats as emanating from the United States (about 19% of all Canadians).

--The United States is perceived by 58% to threaten Canada's "legal right" to the Canadian Arctic; 37% select the USSR.

Trade

--Canadians over-estimate the per cent of Canadian workers dependent on exports for employment and under-estimate the proportion of Canadian exports going to the United States.

--Fifty-seven per cent of Canadians feel informed about the free trade discussions; 43% do not.

--Sixty-six per cent support a free trade agreement, 32% are opposed.

Note on Methodology

Poll conducted by: The Longwoods Research Group Ltd.
Toronto, Ontario

Respondents: Residents of Canada 18 years of age
and older.

Procedure: In-home, personal interviews

Sample size and composition: National random sample of 1,011
qualified respondents

Timing: Interviewing was conducted
April 04-27 1987

Margin of Error: Plus or minus 3.1 percentage points 95
times out of 100