

STATEMENT DISCOURS

SECRETARY
OF STATE
FOR EXTERNAL
AFFAIRS.

SECRÉTAIRE
D'ÉTAT AUX
AFFAIRES
EXTÉRIEURES.



86/77

Statement in the House of Commons
by the Right Honourable Joe Clark,
Secretary of State for External
Affairs, on the occasion of the
Tabling of the Government's
Response to the Report of the
Special Joint Parliamentary
Committee on Canada's
International Relations

OTTAWA

December 4, 1986.

Mr. Speaker,

This morning I tabled a statement on Canada's international relations, responding to the report presented in June by a Special Joint Committee of this House and the other place. That caps an unprecedented exercise in participatory democracy in the development of Canadian foreign policy.

Members of the Joint Committee held hearings across this country, from St. John's to Vancouver to Yellowknife. Thousands of Canadians made their views known, either directly or through organizations, on issues as diverse as arms control, export development and human rights in South Africa. The Committee produced a practical and sensible report, achieved by consensus and unanimous in its conclusions.

The response tabled today has two parts. First is a general statement of government policy in the seven main policy areas that the Special Joint Committee addressed. Second is a detailed response to all the recommendations made by the Committee. These number 121. The statement as a whole provides a picture of the government's foreign policy. It underlines our commitment to the constructive, internationalist approach that we have been pursuing from the moment we came into office.

The government accepts the great majority of the Committee's 121 recommendations, and has already carried out some of them.

There are a few recommendations we are unable to accept, sometimes because we believe the remedy suggested is not the best available, sometimes for financial reasons. In each instance we propose a different or less costly alternative.

Mr. Speaker. Through the Committee Canadians expressed deep concern about the need for progress in arms control. The government fully shares this concern. We welcome the Committee's support for the six arms control and disarmament objectives enunciated by the Prime Minister in October 1985.

With our allies we are working to build on the possibilities for progress identified at Reykjavik. Our common goal is to create a safer, more peaceful world, notably through radical reductions in nuclear arms. Canada is also using its influence to try to prevent the loosening of existing restraints on the arms race in space and on earth. We are playing an active role in multilateral forums. This year and last the UN General Assembly unanimously approved Canadian-

sponsored resolutions on the importance of verification to arms control agreements. We contributed to the recently concluded Stockholm Conference, which reached agreements on confidence-building measures that will reduce the risk of accidental war in Europe.

The government agrees with the Committee that Canada has an important contribution to make in the area of peacekeeping. We have added the Sinai to the areas where Canada is helping to keep the peace. Canada is also attempting to play a moderating role in the resolution of regional conflicts. We are strongly supporting the Contadora process in Central America while opposing intervention by third parties. In the Middle East we are giving strong support to efforts to negotiate a peaceful settlement of the Arab/Israeli dispute.

The Committee urged that Canada work in concert with the international community to combat terrorism. We are doing that. The International Civil Aviation Organization recently accepted a Canadian proposal that should lead to significant improvements in airport security around the world. Meanwhile, we are strengthening our domestic defences against terrorism, so that what we do ourselves supports our efforts to persuade others to act.

Mr. Speaker, The Committee attached especially high priority to making the Canadian economy more competitive internationally. The launching of the new round of multilateral trade negotiations and the bilateral negotiations with the United States hold out the prospect of improving access to our most important markets. The National Trade Strategy, in which we have enjoyed the full cooperation of the provinces and the private sector, is producing substantial results. We are at the same time meeting the Committee's recommendations aimed at exploiting the potential of the dynamic Asia-Pacific market. New trade offices, for example, have been opened in Bombay, Shanghai, Osaka and Auckland.

We have paid close attention to the vital role of small and medium-sized businesses in developing our international trade. We will consult with them to see how our export development and export financing services can be further improved to meet their needs.

The government is also doing everything possible to meet the Committee's recommendations in the area of aid and development. We have set out some broad directions in the statement tabled today. We are maintaining real growth in aid

and development funding despite cutbacks in many other areas. We are ensuring that our aid programs focus primarily on the poor of the world. The critical role of women in development will receive greater recognition. The proportion of aid we disburse through non-governmental organizations is already higher than for any other major donor. Canadian youth will be given the opportunity for greater involvement. We also intend to give greater attention to human resource development in our aid programs and to the potential of the private sector in developing countries.

The government shares the Committee's belief that foreign students constitute an important asset for Canada as well as for developing countries. We intend to increase substantially the number of CIDA scholarships. We are seeking to develop in cooperation with the provinces a national strategy to make it easier for foreign students to study in Canada.

The government today affirms what so many Canadians told the Committee: that the international promotion of human rights should be a fundamental and integral part of our foreign policy. The government has already changed the export control regulations so that they take greater account of human rights considerations. Henceforth officers in the Department of External Affairs will receive appropriate training if they are being posted to countries whose governments seriously violate human rights. So will officers at headquarters on geographic or other desks responsible for important aspects of relations with those countries.

The Committee made an important recommendation in favour of establishment of an institution to respond to the needs of developing countries seeking to strengthen their democratic institutions and domestic human rights. We agree. We are now identifying distinguished Canadians to advise the government on the form and mandate this institution should have.

The Committee attached great importance to the northern dimension of Canadian foreign policy. The government is determined to act vigorously in exercising control of our north. We have affirmed that Canadian sovereignty extends to all the waters of the Arctic archipelago and announced regulations establishing baselines around the perimeter of the archipelago. We are committed to construct an arctic class icebreaker.

Our Northern foreign policy will have four dominant themes:

- affirming Canadian sovereignty;
- modernizing Canada's northern defences;
- preparing for commercial use of the Northwest Passage; and
- promoting cooperation with other northern nations.

The government fully shares the Committee's conviction that Canada can and should play a significant role in multilateral institutions. We are working hard to strengthen the UN by promoting necessary reforms and providing a high level of support. We are now the fourth largest contributor to the UN System, and play an active, effective role.

Canada has an especially important role to play in the Commonwealth and La Francophonie. Next year the heads of government of both organizations will meet in Canada - La Francophonie in Quebec City in September and the Commonwealth in Vancouver in October. Part of Canada's distinctive identity is rooted in our membership in those two international families, and we intend to make the most of those advantages.

Mr. Speaker, growing interdependence, "the relentless internationalization of the national agenda", is a major theme of the Committee's report. Like the Committee, the government sees constructive internationalism as the only appropriate response to interdependence. A retreat into insularity would be a tragic mistake. No country can turn back the clock. Interdependence is challenging, yes, but it holds out great opportunities for furthering international peace and prosperity. Just as individuals can accomplish far more working together, so can nations.

At the same time we must find room for realism, perspective and humility. Canada is not a superpower and our national experience has been extraordinarily peaceful and prosperous compared to that of most of mankind. Internationalism calls for a great deal of understanding and perseverance, and a lot of plain, hard work.

Few countries are better placed than Canada to make a significant contribution to international order and development. Few other countries have such close ties to so much of the world - ties of history, family, culture, trade. We see constructive internationalism as confidently building on Canada's strengths and traditions. It is and will remain the fundamental foreign policy orientation of the government.