When he returned to the prime ministership after the general elections of February 1980, Pierre Elliott Trudeau indicated that he would be significantly reaffirming his commitment to the North-South dialogue, that often amorphous process of trying to grapple with the inequalities in the balance of economic power between the industrialised North and the developing states of the South. To this end, Trudeau embarked on a protracted eighteen-month programme of personal diplomacy that included efforts to secure acceptance of global negotiations by the United States government; to create an energy affiliate of the World Bank; and to secure agreement from some key leaders of the Group of 77 for a change in their negotiating tactics. Trudeau’s statecraft took him on a number of foreign trips and saw him play an active part in three summit meetings in 1981.

At the same time as it was becoming apparent that the Trudeau government intended to recast its foreign policy to place a greater emphasis on North-South issues, the North-South Institute in Ottawa released its “final report card” on the Canadian government’s international development assistance policies for the years 1975 to 1980. The Institute’s verdict was hardly complimentary. Of the twenty-one specific development assistance commitments made by the Trudeau government in its 1975 white paper, *Strategy for International Development, 1975-1980*, it was deemed to have failed on nine of these, and to have received grades of “unsatisfactory” on four more.1

Of particular concern to the Institute was that in the five years after 1975, the level of official development assistance (ODA) had been allowed to decline significantly, despite the reaffirmation in the white paper of the government’s intention to reach the target of 0.7 per cent of GNP officially endorsed by the United Nations. By 1980, Canadian ODA allocations represented 0.45 per cent of GNP, down from a high in 1978 of 0.52 per cent. Indeed, by the end of the 1970s, the govern-
ment was almost as far from the 0.7 per cent target as it had been in 1970, when the allocation represented 0.41 of Canada’s GNP.

Similarly, despite promises regarding “non-aid” aspects of relations between Canada and the developing world, the North-South analysis concluded that steps to promote trade with less developed countries (LDCs) had been “very minor.” Promises to lower the high proportion of ODA tied to the purchase of Canadian goods and services; to concentrate resources more efficiently; to create a permanent development assistance planning capacity; to increase emergency relief allocations—all were broken by the same government that was announcing a reaffirmation of its commitment to help lessen the disparity between rich and poor.

To note that the behaviour of political leaders often differs from their professed sentiments is a commonplace observation. To explain the existence of that gap between declared intentions and actual policy outcomes is, however, somewhat more difficult. The purpose of this brief paper is to offer a way of assessing the gap between Trudeau’s diplomacy in 1980-1981 and the actual outcomes of Canada’s development assistance policies.

Gaps between rhetoric and reality are usually explained in terms of purposeful insincerity, “the homage paid by vice to virtue,” as the Duc de la Rochefoucauld put it over three centuries ago. The distance between the often lofty sentiments of the prime minister and the actual performance of the Canadian government on development assistance has been explained in much the same vein. Nadia Azar, for example, pointing to Canada’s not inconsiderable expenditures on arms—and not inconsiderable revenues gained from arms sales—decries what she calls Trudeau’s “crocodile tears” about the plight of the Third and Fourth Worlds’ poor, dismissing the prime minister’s posturing on the North-South dialogue as “une très grande hypocrisie.” Hypocrisy is likewise the theme of Harley Dickinson’s examination of Canada’s development assistance policies: he attributes the “rift that exists between stated policy and practical tactics” to be “deliberately constructed misrepresentation” by government officials. Hypocrisy is in fact the most obvious way to account for this observed distance, and we will return to assess this at the end of the section.

One of the more facile explanations for the gap between the behaviour of the Canadian government and Trudeau’s personal expressions of concern is that offered by Robert Carty and Virginia Smith. In their recent critique of Canada’s development assistance policies, they attribute Trudeau’s North-South initiatives of 1980-81 to a simple
desire for self-gratification and self-indulgence. For example, the prime minister's travels were characterised as mere "excursions," during which Trudeau supposedly "went out of his way to arrange stopovers in Third World countries where he could enhance his image as a pundit of North-South relationships."They do not bother to inform their readers that the destinations of his divers "excursions" were in fact Third World states; nor do they bother to suggest why Trudeau might be interested in enhancing his image in such a fashion. Instead, noting the coincidence of Trudeau's renewed interest in North-South issues and the release of the Brandt report, Carty and Smith are content to write the prime minister's initiatives off as opportunism: "Trudeau, always quick to spot a trend, leaped on the bandwagon already crowded by ... other distinguished world 'elders' ...." Such an *ad hominem* perspective may satisfy a fixated Trudeauphobe, but hardly provides a credible basis for understanding the evolution of a set of purposive behaviour over an eighteen-month period.

A more widely proposed perspective on the gap between performance and stated objectives is the bureaucratic politics explanation. According to this perspective, the Canadian government's policy performance is the inevitable outgrowth of the essential bureaucratic weakness of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) vis-à-vis other departments of government which participate in the development assistance policy making process. Trying to explain the distance between Trudeau's obvious personal commitment to development assistance and the weak performance of the Canadian government, Harald von Riekhoff noted in 1978 that:

> The prominence of the Departments of Finance, and of Industry, Trade and Commerce in international development negotiations provides a partial explanation of this discrepancy between declared intention and performance, for these departments have been least effective in adopting the global ethic for which Trudeau has called.

Both Clyde Sanger and Thomas Bruneau and his colleagues have developed similar organizational perspectives in their work on Canadian development assistance, attributing outcomes in large measure to the persistent weakness of CIDA against what Sanger characterises as the "heavy elder brothers," Finance and Industry, Trade and Commerce.

Linda Freeman comes to comparable conclusions about the effect and importance of the bureaucratic balance of power on policy outcomes, although her perspective, unlike the liberal-pluralistic orientations of students like von Riekhoff, Sanger and Bruneau, is informed by Poulantzas's view of the state. Professor Freeman argues that we can
best understand bureaucratic interaction on development assistance policy as the struggles between bureaucratic representatives of different fractions of the dominant class. She attributes the evolution of a more consciously self-interested development assistance policy in the 1970s to the dominance of Industry, Trade and Commerce and the Treasury Board Secretariat, "the seat of power within the Canadian government," over weaker agencies of the state, like CIDA.9

The view that we can understand the performance of the Canadian government by reference to the interactions of the various bureaus involved in the making of development assistance policy is one that is compelling—but only at a certain level of analysis. In other words, the evolution of certain specific policy directions or the making of specific policy decisions may be directly affected by CIDA's relative weakness, or by opposition from the more powerful bureaus, such as Finance or External Affairs.

But as a number of critiques of the bureaucratic politics perspective have argued, to focus on the bureaucracy and bureaucratic interactions alone is to ignore the impact of the political leadership.10 A bureaucratic balance of power—such as that observed by most students of Ottawa's development policies—does not occur by serendipity, or in a political vacuum. While that balance may be affected by the very existence of numerous bureaus, each with some functional autonomy, each with parochial objectives, and each with domestic clients of differing economic and political importance, any persistent weakness of one agency of the state vis-à-vis other bureaus will more likely be the product either of conscious decisions of the political leadership, or of that leadership's indifference. The major problem with the bureaucratic politics approach to Canada's development assistance policies is that it assigns the cabinet a position of political insignificance and impotence over outcomes that stretches credulity. Not only does it suggest that cabinet ministers play almost no part in shaping the political environment in which bureaus operate, but, as importantly, it can also be used to relieve the political leadership of responsibility for policy outcomes.

In the case of the observed bureaucratic weakness of CIDA vis-à-vis other departments, which, it is claimed, has led to the poorish Canadian performance on development assistance issues, it could be argued that the political leadership must bear responsibility—for either purposely creating, or remaining indifferent to, the conditions under which the bureau responsible for proposing and implementing Canada's development assistance policies operates.

First, although it has approved two white papers—in 1970 and 1975—cabinet has not in the past decade set out Canada's develop-
ment assistance objectives in a way that resolves the fundamental ambiguities between competing sets of goals in the areas of aid levels, trade promotion and domestic industrial development. There are, of course, political reasons for leaving development assistance policies in a state of firm ambiguity. It has proved safer to leave the shading a dull grey rather than to provide the starker contrasts of black and white. To specify priorities clearly would leave in little doubt the government's intentions—one way or the other. Hard political (and economic) decisions would expose cabinet to domestic criticism from one quarter or another, and indeed to the possibility of electoral retribution—a factor consistently underplayed or ignored by those who employ a class analysis.11

One could point to the analogy of the issue of an industrial strategy for Canada in this respect: throughout the 1970s, the Liberal government was unwilling to fashion a comprehensive programme for industrial development and impose that programme by fiat; instead, it preferred the slower, more ambiguous route of a consultative process that involved more compromise, and, ultimately, a greater dilution of goals and objectives as the process advanced.12 Whether one prefers outcomes achieved in one way or the other will depend on one's political perspective; the focus here, however, is on the consequences of the cabinet's ambiguity. And the consequences of choosing not to resolve ambiguities in development assistance policy include denying CIDA a cardinal bureaucratic resource: clear political direction from the apex of the political system.

Second, compounding and related to this lack of unambiguous direction, a Trudeau cabinet has never included a minister solely responsible for development issues. The secretary of state for external affairs (SSEA) has always been given responsibility for both CIDA and development assistance policies, as well, of course, as being responsible for External Affairs and some broader conception of Canadian foreign policy. Trudeau's divers SSEAs have, by all accounts, managed to cope reasonably well with what at times is by its very nature a schizophrenic responsibility, but it would appear that while the SSEA is forced to wear two hats, in a conflict, the External Affairs hat has proved to be the larger of the two, submerging development assistance concerns to the larger interests of foreign policy as conceived by the Department of External Affairs. That the agency does not have a minister at the cabinet table, pressing the interests of development assistance and the organizational and budgetary interests of CIDA itself, creates a profound liability for both CIDA and Canada's development assistance policies. Of course, having a separate minister for development assistance does not automatically change
either the balance of power at the bureaucratic level or the government’s development assistance policies. The Progressive Conservative government of Joe Clark, which appointed Senator Martial Asselin from the Senate as minister responsible for CIDA (albeit under the authority of the SSEA), demonstrates that. Rather, it can be seen as a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for providing CIDA with greater power bureaucratically by giving it what other departments have: a separate voice in cabinet.

Finally, that aspect of Canada’s development assistance policy that is the symbolic barometer of aid performance—the percentage of the nation’s GNP devoted to official development assistance—is the direct result of decisions of cabinet. It is true that the estimates, when they are submitted to the ministers, may, for example, provide for outlays of 0.43 per cent of GNP, and such a figure may well be the result of the configurations of power among the bureaucratic actors involved in the budgetary process. But cabinet ministers, including the prime minister himself, are under no obligation to accept recommendations on estimates. To lay responsibility for spending decisions at the door of the bureaucracy is to ignore both the empirical and the normative implications of the existence of ministerial authority.

If indeed we see a political leadership which has been indifferent to the relative lack of bureaucratic power—or indeed has consciously endorsed such a lack—on CIDA’s part; if indeed the political leadership has refused to exercise its prerogatives in the allocation of values and resources in the development assistance issue area, then we are left—with the question with which we began: why is the man who has devoted so much personal attention to the larger issues of global injustice and human deprivation seemingly unwilling to exercise his influence, authority and power to reshape Canada’s performance in the development assistance area to fit his own conception of how the rich nations of the North should be responding to the condition of the poor states of the South?

Trudeau’s own public explanation, when confronted by critics in the House of Commons who accuse him, as Pauline Jewett did, of “talking a good line,” but doing very little,13 is the economic one. After 1975, he told the House in January 1981, “there was a particular series of economic difficulties which beset Canada ... and we fell victim to those. I can only express regret that we did not find more room in the budget....”14 Given that budgets of national governments do not materialize out of thin air, but are the results of conscious and often hard-nosed trade-offs made by the political leadership, does Trudeau’s expression of regret not ring rather hollow, particularly as he himself has acknowledged that “global confidence in the UN may be eroding
the prime minister has stated that he does not see the necessity of explaining the implications of the North-South issue to the Canadian public in order to boost domestic interest: as he told reporters during his January 1981 tour to western Africa, Brazil and Mexico, in his view either the problem facing the international system "is evident, or it's not."21 Certainly, neither Trudeau nor the government has engaged in any concerted effort to raise the consciousness of the Canadian public, particularly at a general (and even symbolic) level. This was a specific criticism levelled at the government by both the North-South Institute's 1980 "report card" and the Parliamentary Task Force on North-South Relations. The Task Force recommended that one per cent of Canada's ODA be allocated "to encourage the involvement and awareness of Canadians in North-South concerns;" the North-South Institute claimed that the government had done "little or nothing" to implement its 1975 promise to "ensure that relevant information on all dimensions of international development is made available to the public," and assigned the information programme a grade of F.22

II

In contrast to the explanation for the gap between performance and declared intentions that focus on either bureaucratic factors, or imputed slights to the character or intelligence of the prime minister, my purpose here is to offer another way of assessing Trudeau's diplomatic initiatives in the months before Cancun. On the one hand, I would agree that when Trudeau's diplomacy and his lofty sentiments are explicitly linked to Canadian development assistance behaviour, we are confronted with a gap between rhetoric and reality that strongly suggests that the prime minister is engaged in Azar's "très grande hypocrisie," even though why Trudeau should spend so much energy pursuing such hypocrisy is not at all clear. On the other hand, if Trudeau's behaviour and the government's policies are just as explicitly decoupled, the prime minister's diplomacy becomes more understandable without having to invoke a charge of hypocrisy.

It might be proposed that Trudeau's initiatives of 1980-81 were never designed to reflect the intentions or objectives of the Canadian government as a whole, and therefore make little sense if they are analyzed as though that was the intention. Instead, it might be suggested that Trudeau had other objectives in mind, and that, as a consequence, it was fundamentally unimportant to the achievement of those goals if the policies of the government which he heads did not correspond, either in sentiment or in actual policy outcomes, to the line he was taking internationally.
If we take Michael Tucker’s notion of Canada as a “mentor state” in a somewhat different vein than that intended by Tucker, we can make some sense of the observed gap between Trudeau’s sentiments and the government’s behaviour. To do so depends on a willingness to alter somewhat a fundamental assumption about the behaviour of national leaders that had its genesis in a Westphalian past and has its roots firmly in the contemporary system of sovereign nation-states: that assumption is that a national leader’s behaviour, including his (or her) pronouncements, must always be interpreted within the context of his position—in other words, interpreted within the context of the nation-state he leads, and within the context of that state’s interests. It might be suggested that there is a difference between a leader making policy pronouncements on behalf of his state (in which case we may justifiably expect some correspondence between that rhetoric and the subsequent behaviour of the state), and a political leader using his position as a head of government to advance interests that are not necessarily on behalf of the nation-state, but are intended to serve a larger, non-national or supranational, interest. In this latter case, by contrast, we need not assume that the behaviour of the leader—since it is presumed to transcend the bounds of some notion of the national interest—must be in harmony with the behaviour of the government as a whole. If indeed we can accept such disaggregation and the possibility of such transcendence, then it is entirely consistent to have a set of governmental policy outcomes designed to protect or advance some defined national (or, if one prefers, some defined class) interest (and most studies of Canada’s aid record argue compellingly that parochial interests are well served by Ottawa’s policies) on the one hand, and to have another set of outcomes—such as the personal diplomacy of the head of that government—that are entirely incommensurate with the behaviour of the rest of the state apparatus.

If we view the prime minister’s initiatives from this perspective, then Trudeau’s calls for a “revolution in international morality,” his unqualified support for Global Negotiations (and if the upper-case variety were not possible, his support for global negotiations in the lower case), his attempts to rally support for the North-South cause at the Ottawa economic summit, the Commonwealth meetings in Melbourne and at Cancun, do not require commensurate behaviour by the rest of the government.

If indeed Trudeau’s purpose was to take “initiatives on behalf of the world community,” as Tucker would have it, if his purpose was to achieve some progress in the North-South dialogue, then it might be argued that of necessity he had to divorce himself from the imperatives and constraints imposed on any national leader by the short-term and
parochial interests of the domestic environment. His own exasperation and impatience at the demands of the domestic Canadian environment and domestic politics can be seen in his angry dismissal of Joe Clark's criticisms of his foreign travels as "parochial"; in his remarks to journalists after his trip to Latin America that "we are so preoccupied with our own navel in Canada and obsessed with our own problems... that we don't do much about [North-South issues]"; and his refusal to entertain suggestions that he try to educate the Canadian public about North-South problems on the grounds that either the Canadian public sees the problem or it doesn't. Given the immediacy of Trudeau's objectives, it was not possible to bring the Canadian government's behaviour into line fast enough—nor did Trudeau seem to desire this.

It is evident, however, that the prime minister was able to effect some minimal changes in his government's behaviour over these eighteen months: a public reaffirmation of Ottawa's intention to reach the 0.7 per cent target by 1990; a pledge to commit 0.15 per cent of GNP to the poorest LDCs; a $28.8 million 5-year programme for food production enhancement; a $1 billion commitment to energy development, which included an allocation of $250 million to establish Petrocan International. The appointment of Marcel Massé as president of CIDA led to indications of a reorientation in CIDA's programmes from large projects to "people-oriented" programmes. A compromise fashioned by Canadian diplomats was reported to have broken a deadlock at the UN Conference on Least Developed Countries in Paris in September 1981. In all, the conclusion of one observer was that Trudeau's initiatives had managed to "gear up" the bureaucracy. In retrospect, it is clear that while there remains a sizable gap between rhetoric and performance, Trudeau's diplomatic initiatives in 1980-81 were not met by a total lack of change in the behaviour of the rest of the government.

But it might be argued that since Trudeau's objective in these initiatives was to alter the behaviour of other states and the perceptions of other leaders, it was fundamentally unimportant whether the behaviour of the Canadian government as a whole matched the sentiments expressed by the prime minister in international settings. Trudeau no doubt recognizes that Canada, because of its dependent economic position, because of its limited economic capacities, because of fundamental similarities to states of both North and South, can do little unilaterally to address in any meaningful way the challenges posed by the redistributive demands inherent in the calls for a New International Economic Order, regardless of how generously the Canadian government structures its development assistance policies.
The focus has perforce to be on other actors. One major key to breaking new ground in the North-South dialogue was—and remains—the position of the United States government, for the United States alone among the OECD countries has both the economic and the diplomatic capability to contribute to the transformation of the global economic order; thus, much of Trudeau's diplomacy, particularly his repeated calls for support for global negotiations, was directed at Washington. Another major focus, however, was the problem of the negotiating tactics of the Group of 77. Characterized by Canada's secretary of state for external affairs, Mark MacGuigan, as "confrontational," the posture of the Group of 77 had led to a comparable negotiating position by the OECD countries. The North had, as a consequence, taken the unusual step of voting as a bloc at UNIDO III (third general conference of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization) in New Delhi in February 1980. Trudeau's trips to Algeria, Nigeria, Brazil and Mexico were part of a broader effort to persuade these leading members of the Group of 77 to moderate their negotiating stance. An example of his public persuasion, obviously addressed to both sides, can be seen in one of his major addresses to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Melbourne in October 1981:

We need a spirit of determination; willingness to compromise; ability to see beyond the short term, and readiness to abandon stereotyped attitudes and confrontational approaches. I would even go so far as to say that we need a new international morality.

Timing was an important element in Trudeau's personal diplomacy. First, 1981 was a pivotal year: the North-South summit suggested by Brandt had been agreed to, and was due to be held in June (later postponed until October); the Canadian government would be hosting the annual economic summit; and the biennial Commonwealth Heads of Government was to be held in Australia. It was, further, pivotal for Trudeau himself in two ways. First, since Canada was hosting the most important of these summits, the prime minister was in a position, or so it was hoped, to influence the agenda and direction of those discussions. Similarly, the CHOGM in Melbourne would be chaired by the Australian prime minister, Malcolm Fraser, whose own personal commitment to the North-South dialogue was likely to be reflected in the CHOGM's more informal agenda; and finally, the Cancun summit, following as it did the failure of efforts to inaugurate a round of global negotiations in New York early in 1981, was seen as critical to the process of keeping the dialogue going—however slowly.
Second, there was a more personal element in Trudeau's timing. While it is indeed possible that, like Mackenzie King, Trudeau may retain the prime ministership into his dotage, it seemed more likely in 1980 that his recall from retirement would last no longer than the 32nd Parliament. If Trudeau did want to complement his domestic pursuit of a patriated constitution by an achievement of more global dimensions, then it was necessary to undertake such an endeavour while he still retained office. As the experiences of Willy Brandt, Edward Heath and Olof Palme have shown, however much respect world "elders" may command from the international community, they remain always former statesmen, lacking the formal position necessary to influence global politics in those fora reserved for current leaders of states.

Finally, the results of the presidential elections in the United States in November 1980 provided an additional impetus for diplomatic initiative. For the first months of the Reagan presidency did not augur well for the North-South dialogue—marked as that first half-year was by a recommitment to a Weltanschauung that gave primacy to East-West rivalry over North-South issues; by the precipitous announcement that Washington was none too happy with key provisions of the UN Law of the Sea draft agreement and would be reviewing the United States position; by rumours of a dramatic reorientation of United States bilateral assistance programmes; by Reagan's own widely publicised views on the importance of private enterprise and the free movement of goods and capital to the development of the South; and finally, by the Reagan administration's firm refusal to endorse the United Nations call for Global Negotiations. Thus, the prospect that the 1981 summits—and the larger dialogue itself—would be seriously affected by the change of attitude that accompanied the change of government in Washington was no doubt an added factor prompting the often frenetic pace of Trudeau's diplomacy in the first nine months of 1981.

As Cancun and its aftermath made clear, of course, Trudeau was largely unsuccessful in his efforts to move the United States government on the issue of global negotiations or on the more general issue of the importance of the North-South dialogue. He was unable to secure acceptance by the other states at the economic summit of the primacy of divisions between North and South. And when he was thrust into the co-chairmanship of the Cancun summit by the illness of the Austrian Chancellor, Bruno Kreisky, he proved unable to shift the United States delegation led by President Reagan from its refusal to endorse global negotiations. Trudeau's verdict on the outcome of Cancun was laconic: "It is not a solid step forward." And with that, the prime minister ended this phase of his active North-South diplomacy.
This brief essay has argued that one can best understand Trudeau’s diplomatic initiatives in 1980 and 1981 on North-South issues as representing an outgrowth of a personal commitment by an individual who was able to use his position as the head of the Canadian government to advance interests that were defined in global, rather than national, terms. Even though Trudeau did manage to effect no insignificant changes in Canadian development assistance policies during this period, Canadian behaviour on development issues—particularly in the matter of the allocation of resources—remains far short of the “revolution in international morality” called for by the prime minister. Such a gap, I have suggested, might suggest that Trudeau’s initiatives can be written off, as Azar does, as mere hypocrisy, but only if Trudeau’s diplomacy is explicitly linked to the Canadian government’s behaviour.

If, on the other hand, one explicitly decouples Trudeau’s behaviour from the policy outcomes of the Canadian government as a whole, if one instead sees the prime minister’s initiatives as a personal transcendence of the very nation-state he leads, the behaviour of the rest of the government becomes irrelevant to an understanding of the prime minister’s own initiatives.

NOTES

6. Carty and Smith, Perpetuating Poverty, p. 3.

11. In developing their analyses of the Canadian political process, neither Carty and Smith, nor Freeman, nor Dickinson attribute any importance to elections or electoral imperatives.


17. See Carty and Smith, p. 178; Dickinson, “Canadian foreign aid,” pp. 147-48 for this kind of analytical perspective.

18. In both January and August 1981, Clark commented on the need for Trudeau to be in Canada to deal with the domestic crisis in the economy; see, for example, *Globe and Mail*, 12 August 1981, for Trudeau’s reaction.


20. See, for example, Department of External Affairs, *Perspectives on World Affairs and Foreign Policy Issues: A Research Report for External Affairs Canada* (Ottawa: Supply and Services, 1980), pp. 20-21, 24-25, for data indicating the low importance attached to development assistance and to relations with Third World countries relative to other concerns.


22. North-South Institute, In the Canadian Interest?, p. 18.


25. Tucker, *Canadian Foreign Policy*, p. 10. To the US Congress, Trudeau quoted with obvious approbation Paine’s “My country is the world, and my religion is to do good.” *Remarks by the Prime Minister*, p. 7.


