

Clark

Color green paper grey

OPPPOSITION PARTIES are justified in their disappointment with the green paper on foreign policy unveiled by External Affairs Minister Joe Clark.

Part of the disappointment stems from the high expectations generated by the publicity that preceded it and which the paper failed to justify. A14/F/1

It says nothing new. It offers a rather sad mish-mash of the statements and warnings about Canada's economic future often heard over the last few years from bureaucrats, economists and sundry soothsayers.

Some parts of Clark's paper dealing with the economy, in fact, are remarkably similar to the contents of papers presented last month at a conference sponsored by the Ontario Economic Council.

Another problem lies in Clark's attempt to deal with too many subjects, ranging from economic to defence and international issues. Some of the issues, notably defence, are beyond the mandate of the external affairs minister; others, like bilateral relations with the U.S., have been usurped by the Prime Minister's Office.

There must be some sympathy for Clark, who is obviously sincere and tries hard to shape in his own image an area of federal policy that still bears the deep imprints of a Paul Martin and a Pierre Trudeau. We suspect that the external affairs minister is not served by his department's bureaucracy with the same spontaneity and dedication it exhibited with some of his predecessors.

Add to those drawbacks the wrongs done to Clark by Brian Mulroney and other members of the Tory cabinet, and the man's own trusting naivete, and it is easy to see why Clark occasionally flounders.

Mulroney removed one of the most important underpinnings of Clark's office when he practically appropriated the conduct of relations with Canada's most important ally and trading partner, the United States. It was an embarrassment that Clark, to his credit, bore well.

The PM's action left the conduct of Canada's side of Canadian-U.S. relations in the hands of two rookies, the prime minister and a sadly weakened external affairs minister, a potentially disastrous condition if the Tories decide to get into negotiations with Washington for a bilateral free trade arrangement.

When that time comes, Mulroney may learn that singing When Irish Eyes are Smiling on stage arm-in-arm with U.S. President Ronald Reagan does not make him an expert in bilateral affairs and will do nothing for Canada when the chips are down on the bargaining table.

GOV'T - PER -
FOREIGN POLICY