

REPORT FROM THE HILL



Eyes on the North

■ Several government initiatives designed to address concerns about northern sovereignty and security made news during the winter. On 11 January External Affairs Minister Joe Clark and US Secretary of State George Shultz signed an Arctic Cooperation Agreement binding the United States to seek Canadian consent before sending Coast Guard ice-breakers through the Northwest Passage – waters Canada claims as its own. Other government or privately-owned vessels would not need permission to travel through the passage. It appeared to be the best that Canada could do, given American refusal to recognize Canadian sovereignty in the area even if given unlimited access for their warships and submarines.

As Southam News analyst Jonathan Manthorpe noted, the US perspective is that of a superpower with a large navy that uses the full leeway of international law to travel the seaways of the world. To accede to Canada's claim would create a precedent that would put their navy's rights of passage through other more strategic straits at risk.

Opposition spokesmen were quick to compare the limited agreement to Mr. Clark's statement in the Commons on 10 September 1985 that "any cooperation with the United States or with other Arctic nations shall only be on the basis of full respect for Canada's sovereignty." Liberal MP Lloyd Axworthy characterized the government as "the mouse that roared." On the other hand, columnist William Johnson argued in the *Montreal Gazette* that the agreement strengthened Canada's claim

to the Arctic waters while *Maclean's* quoted international legal scholar Gerald Morris who said that if Canada took its claim to the International Court of Justice members might inquire, "Why would the United States agree to ask permission for ice-breakers to use these waters unless they conceded there was substantial validity to the Canadian case?"

Early in February, Defence Minister Perrin Beatty announced plans to locate a permanent military base at Nanisivik, at the north-western end of Baffin Island. Currently the site of a lead and zinc mine which will close when the ore runs out by 1993, Nanisivik would be used to train soldiers and test equipment for Arctic warfare. The base is contingent upon the results of a study of the environmental and cultural impact upon Inuit and wildlife. The Minister also announced that the Canadian Rangers, a part-time paramilitary force of about 700 men, mainly Inuit, will be given better equipment and expanded to a force of 1,000.

Mikhail Gorbachev's Murmansk speech of 1 October, in which he called for an Arctic zone of peace, continued to interest and trouble Canada and its northern neighbours in Scandinavia. Both press and politicians remained skeptical, balancing the Soviet "charm offensive," as a *Toronto Star* article called it, with the reality of the USSR's Kola Peninsula bristling with weaponry. The Soviet proposal caused Jocelyn Coulon to remark in the 20 February *Le Devoir* that while "the Soviets are hardly in a position to preach" about disarmament in the Arctic, combined with a larger treaty of co-operation covering the region, the idea was promising. The *Calgary Herald* warned in a 31 January editorial that, while the Soviet proposals warranted further investigation, the "buildup of capabilities to put

muscle into Canadian sovereignty" – such as nuclear-powered submarines and forward basing of interceptors – were overdue and must not be compromised.

Liberals Meet on Foreign Policy

■ Liberal Leader John Turner took issue with this viewpoint in a speech in Vancouver on 7 February before his party's foreign policy conference which had as its theme, "Building the Canadian Nation: Sovereignty and Foreign Policy in the 1990s." Turner called for an international treaty to "halt the militarization of the Arctic" and reiterated his opposition to the nuclear submarine purchase and to the testing of cruise missiles on Canadian territory. He proposed that Canada again seek a seat on the UN Security Council (something the government is actively pursuing) and that the financial commitment to the development of new technologies for monitoring and verification of arms control agreements be substantially increased.

At the same time, Turner reaffirmed his party's commitment to NATO and NORAD, while rejecting the NDP "view that we in Canada should be neutralist in our commitments, isolationist in our policies, and anti-American in our rhetoric," as well the "Conservative view that we must blindly follow the dictates of the largest member of the Alliance."

House Committee in the Middle East

■ In mid-February, members of the House Standing Committee on External Affairs and International Trade visited Jordan, Egypt and Israel on a fact-finding mission for External Affairs Minister Joe Clark. In a meeting with Prime Minister Shamir of Israel, the delegation members voiced Canada's opposition to the building of civilian settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, of the need to convene an international peace con-

ference on the Middle East, and of Canada's support for the basic principle of exchanging land for peace.

On 17 February the Committee Chairman, William Winegard, Conservative MP for Guelph, was quoted by the *Globe and Mail* on the subject of the Prime Minister's observation in December that the Israelis were showing restraint in handling Palestinian disturbances in the occupied territories. Winegard said, "When the Prime Minister made those remarks, none of us realized how serious the situation was. We are learning now that it's not just isolated disturbances. The occupation is leading to real distress."

Short Notes from the Hill

■ Senator Henry Hicks of Nova Scotia was elected Chairman of the Senate Special Committee on National Defence in December replacing Paul Lafond. A former minister of education and Premier of Nova Scotia, Hicks was president of Dalhousie University for seventeen years. The Senate Committee is continuing its study of Canada's land forces.

■ Defence Minister Beatty announced on 9 December that the proposed Emergencies Act, which had received second reading in the Commons on 18 November would be amended to strengthen the protection of human rights. This would include guarantees that its implementation could be appealed to the courts and that it could not be used to put down a strike.

■ The NDP's international affairs committee reviewed the party's policy of withdrawal from NATO at a meeting on 29 and 30 January and decided on further study before making recommendations to the NDP federal council. The council will have the final say on the approach to be adopted prior to the next election. □

- GREGORY WIRICK