

Multilateral Relations

ASEAN

Visit of External Affairs Minister

External Affairs Minister Joe Clark attended the annual ASEAN (Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Brunei) Post-Ministerial Conference for foreign ministers in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, July 11-13. Representing Canada as one of ASEAN's "Dialogue" partners (in addition to Australia, the EEC, Japan, New Zealand and the US), Mr. Clark stressed the importance of Canada's relationship with ASEAN. While discussions centred on regional economic and political issues (including international efforts at curtailing drug trafficking, terrorism and achieving a resolution to the situation in Cambodia), broader aspects of the international economic situation were also covered (*The Citizen*, July 4). The Minister placed his emphasis on the strengthening of commercial links between Canada and ASEAN and on the expansion of two-way trade — with the possible development of joint ventures (External Affairs communiqué, June 18). In addition to holding meetings with his ASEAN counterparts, Mr. Clark met with other "Dialogue" officials, including US Secretary of State George Shultz, with whom he discussed international terrorism, environmental protection and growing US protectionist trends (CBC Radio, July 11).

Following the conference, Mr. Clark proceeded to both Thailand (July 15-18) and Indonesia (July 18-22) for further discussions. Statements released by the Minister in all three nations reflected the growing Canadian interest in establishing a "comprehensive relationship" with ASEAN which would go beyond economics and trade to include development, culture and education. Mr. Clark mentioned in particular the establishment of Canada's Asia Pacific Foundation in 1984 as a step in that direction. As well, Canada would remain actively involved in development assistance and the resettlement of refugees from the region, operating "in full consultation" with ASEAN. While visiting refugee camps in Thailand, the Minister reiterated Canada's intention to continue its relief efforts for displaced Indochinese (*Globe and Mail*, July 18). Mr. Clark also issued a call for ASEAN to join Canada in strengthening the agencies of the United Nations as the "focal point" for "blending the interests" of the international community (External Affairs statements, July 13, 16, 19).

Central America

Visit of External Relations Minister

In a further instance of Canadian support for the Contadora initiative, External Relations Minister Monique Vézina paid an official visit to Central America in early June, visiting Costa Rica, El Salvador and Nicaragua from June 2 to 9 (External Affairs communiqué, May 17). When questioned in the Commons May 21 prior to her departure by Pauline Jewett (NDP, New Westminster-Coquitlam) on receiving representations from NGO experts on the region, Ms. Vézina responded that arrangements had been made both for "preliminary meetings" and for later discussions with "political authorities, non-governmental organizations and voluntary groups working on our behalf in the international development area." The Minister made an attempt to ascertain the present situation and current needs in terms of Canadian involvement and assistance. However, Canada's "neutralist" role, she added, had been emphasized during all meetings. Ms. Vézina discussed development aid, human rights issues and various regional peace initiatives. As well as touring various Canadian aid projects, the Minister discussed with her Central American counterparts the prospects for a durable settlement of regional conflict.

Arriving in Costa Rica in the midst of a border controversy between that country and Nicaragua, Ms. Vézina was faced immediately with the task confronting the Contadora group. Meeting with Costa Rican officials, including Foreign Minister Carlos Gutierrez, Ms. Vézina proceeded to announce Canadian credits to Costa Rica (to the figure of \$14 million). While thanking Canada for the funding, Mr. Gutierrez called upon Canada to remain supportive of Contadora, since their were "no alternatives." In El Salvador, Ms. Vézina formally acknowledged Canada's intention to resume direct, government-to-government aid (suspended in 1981 because of suspected "gross and systematic" human rights abuses). However, mention was made of the utilization of a local development fund for distribution, since doubts remained with regard to Salvadoran improvements in the administration of justice (*The Citizen*, June 1, *Le Devoir*, June 4). In Nicaragua, the Minister met with President Ortega while also holding sessions with Roman Catholic Church representatives and anti-Sandinista opposition leaders. Canada also pressed