

development, remote sensing and telecommunications policies.

Ms. Ghent pointed out a number of advantages for Canada: "Since 1979, the Canadian space industry has won almost forty million dollars in contracts to supply equipment for the agency. Having its foot in the door has also helped Canada establish credibility as a hi-tech country." In addition, Canada will be privy to lucrative contracts for the development and manufacture of space hardware.

Discussions on permanent membership will begin in 1986 (*The Citizen*, November 4 and press releases).

MIDDLE EAST

External Affairs Minister Visits Middle East

In late October, External Affairs Minister Allan MacEachen made a ten-day trip to the Middle East beginning on October 19 with Damascus, which no Canadian Minister had ever visited. Mr. MacEachen's tour attracted little press or parliamentary attention at the time as it was overshadowed by the Grenada invasion and the launching of the Prime Minister's peace initiative. (See related stories.)

After talks with Lebanese President Amin Gemayel, opposition Druse leader Walid Jamblatt and Syrian President Hafez al-Assad, Mr. MacEachen told Egyptian reporters in Cairo that "peace does not seem to be an early prospect." He predicted that the reconciliation talks which were due to begin the following week in Geneva would be difficult as Lebanese reconciliation was linked "to outside factors, such as agreement between the Lebanese government and Syria, which is demanding the repudiation of last spring's Lebanese-Israeli troop withdrawal agreement."

Mr. MacEachen also told an Egyptian reporter that peace depended on the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Lebanon (*The Citizen*, October 22).

Mr. MacEachen's statements in Syria became an issue in the House of Commons when Conservative defence critic Harvie Andre (Calgary Centre) quoted Mr. MacEachen as having said, during a press interview in Damascus that "Syria, like Canada, wants Lebanon to be sovereign and independent." Mr. Andre then asked, "Is it the view of the Government that that is why Syria, along with 5,000 Soviet troops, is occupying the Beka'a Valley in eastern Lebanon? Is it the view of the Government that Syria is playing a useful role and that the Syrians are there in eastern Lebanon because they want Lebanon to be sovereign and independent?" (*Hansard*, October 26).

International Trade Minister Gerald Regan replied that the statements of the Secretary of State of External Affairs "when accurately read" were "consistent with the policy which the Canadian Government has taken."

Mr. Andre then stated that Mr. MacEachen had been quoted as saying that Canada had "authorized the establishment of official contacts with the PLO and that the PLO had a role to play in the peace negotiations." He wanted to know when Canada had recognized the PLO and which faction it had recognized. Prime Minister Trudeau answered that "we have not recognized the PLO."

According to Duart Farquharson of Southam News, who accompanied the External Affairs Minister on his Middle East trip, while the Minister "broke no new policy ground

... he laid down Canadian positions without equivocation" (*The Citizen*, November 1).

Mr. MacEachen's forthrightness infuriated the Israelis. Mr. Farquharson said. The Israelis were unhappy with reports from Syria to the effect that Canada did not believe that Syria to be an obstacle to peace in the Middle East unless MacEachen defended himself during a Jerusalem press conference: "I made no comment one way or another on Damascus as to whether Syria was an obstacle to peace."

In Jerusalem, the Minister reiterated the Canadian policy that "Israel shouldn't have invaded Lebanon and should withdraw unilaterally now. . . . Israeli settlement of the West Bank should be stopped and negotiations launched for a Palestinian homeland, which might include a Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza."

At the end of his trip, according to Mr. Farquharson, MacEachen said that the biggest surprise had been his visit with the Syrian President and his top officials. The Minister "spoke of the enthusiasm of the Syrian reception, the tough efficiency of the regime, and the confidence and ambition of Assad to take over the Arab leadership."

When he returned to the House, Mr. MacEachen had to face questioning from Members of his own party. November 14, Jim Peterson (Lib., Willowdale) asked the Minister to assure the House and concerned Canadians that "recent events demonstrate that higher level contacts by Canada with the PLO are out of the question; second, that the simultaneous withdrawal from Lebanon of all foreign forces, including PLO and Syrian, and not just Israel is a precondition for peace in Lebanon, and third, that countries in the Middle East recognize Israel's right to exist as a sovereign and independent nation".

After reminding Members that the definitive statement on Middle East policy had been made before the Senate Committee on February 17, Mr. MacEachen said that Canadian government officials had had contact from time to time with PLO representatives and "I was considering the possibility of upgrading those contacts" but any such upgrading "would depend upon the circumstances and the requirements." He added that "with the struggle which is currently going on within the PLO . . . the time is not quite propitious to give implementation to that particular policy question."

In addition to Mr. Peterson, Roland de Corneille (Lib., Eglinton-Lawrence) had made known his discontent with the statements attributed to the External Affairs Minister during his Middle East visit. In a Member's Statement on November 3, he said that he was opposed to "Canada giving any appearance of shoring up the sagging fortunes of these terrorists [PLO]. Instead, perhaps our Government should review its policy on the PLO and, based on recent contacts with Syria, should on humanitarian grounds call on Syria to stop immediately the slaughter it is perpetrating in Tripoli."

On November 17, Mr. MacEachen met with members of the Canada-Israel Committee. The Toronto press took particular interest in the meeting and the *Globe* entitled its lead "Liberals Move to Calm Jewish Community Fear over Middle East Policy." At the same time, Jim Peterson put out a press release claiming that: it was inappropriate for Canada to have high-level contacts with the PLO; Israel and its neighbors must recognize its right to exist; Israel should