

REPORT FROM THE HILL



The Post-Gulf War World

■ The Gulf War moved to a speedy conclusion. Within six weeks of the opening of offensive military operations by the multinational coalition arrayed against Iraq, US President George Bush ordered their suspension on 27 February, declaring Kuwait liberated and Iraq's army defeated. On 3 March, Iraq accepted the UN Security Council resolution setting conditions for a permanent ceasefire.

The House of Commons adjourned on 22 January, following the vote in favour of the government's motion to support the United Nations "in ending the aggression by Iraq." It returned on 25 February, but in the meantime a specially-struck joint committee of the House Standing Committees on External Affairs and National Defence met regularly to hear from relevant Ministers and officials on the conduct of the war. Secretary of State for External Affairs Joe Clark appeared on 29 January and again on 6, 13, 21 and 22 February, while National Defence Minister Bill McKnight appeared on 31 January and on 12 and 20 February.

On 12 February, the government's proposal for a UN-sponsored global summit on "Instruments of War and Weapons of Mass Destruction" was passed to the UN Secretary-General. It was also discussed at some length the following day during Mr. Clark's appearance before the House joint committee.

On 6 March, Joe Clark tabled in the Commons and at the UN, Canada's first annual report on exports of military goods, fulfilling a commitment the Minister had made in a speech to the UN

General Assembly in September 1990, in which he emphasized the importance of making arms transfers and procurement as transparent as possible.

Mr. Clark visited Jordan, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Iran, Kuwait and the United States in the immediate aftermath of the war, reporting to the House on his trip on 15 March. He also briefed the House External Affairs Committee about the trip on 21 March. Mr. Clark viewed the Israeli-Palestinian issue as central to peace and security in the region and stressed that the next six to twelve months would be "a critical time in determining whether the war with Iraq will go down in history as the key that opened a whole new era in the Middle East."

Mr. Clark also briefed the House Defence Committee on 20 March on the government's arms trade proposals. There he admitted that officials had some reservations about the Canadian proposal for a world summit and described the reactions of other major powers on the UN Security Council as "skeptical." However, the Minister described Liberal External Affairs critic Lloyd Axworthy as "far too gloomy and far too alarmist" when the latter depicted a "re-igniting of the arms race in the Middle East."

Rule Changes in Parliament

■ Parliament adjourned 12 April after passing a bill which amended the House rules by limiting MP's speeches to fifteen minutes (instead of twenty), cutting forty days from the Commons calendar and increasing the parliamentary work week by five hours. In addition, the bill restructured Commons committees by dividing the twenty Standing Committees into five envelopes: management (three committees); human resources (nine, including Employment and Immigration as well as Aboriginal Affairs); natural re-

sources (four, including Environment); economic (five, including External Affairs and International Trade); and departmental (five, including National Defence and Veterans Affairs). Each envelope will contain two Legislative Committees which can be asked by the government to review legislation.

The House was called back in third session with a Speech from the Throne on 13 May.

Cabinet Changes

■ On 21 April, the Prime Minister announced a major shuffle of his cabinet. Among the more significant changes were the following: Joe Clark, Secretary of State for External Affairs since 1984, became Minister responsible for Constitutional Affairs and President of the Privy Council; Toronto area MP Barbara McDougall, took over External Affairs, leaving her previous portfolio of Employment and Immigration to Bernard Valcourt of New Brunswick; Michael Wilson left Finance to become Minister of Industry, Science and Technology, as well as Minister of International Trade; Jean Charest returned to the cabinet as Minister of the Environment; and Marcel Masse, long time Communications Minister, took over as Minister of National Defence.

Committee Reports

■ On 21 March, the House External Affairs Committee presented its seventh report, which it adopted from its Sub-Committee on International Debt chaired by Walter McLean. The report, *Unanswered Questions/Uncertain Hopes*, appeared in Issue 105 of the regular proceedings of the Committee. Its subdued appearance belied a forthright rebuke to the government's November 1990 response to the Sub-Committee's earlier June 1990 report, *Securing Our Global Future* - "the response is dispiriting in its approach, especially in what it has evaded or managed not to say ... the Com-

mittee's recommendations are mostly rejected without any alternative initiatives being proposed in their place." It called on the government to bring forward bold and creative proposals on debt relief measures for lesser developed countries, "similar in political energy" to the Prime Minister's involvement in the Children's Summit and his proposal for a world summit on the arms trade.

■ On 25 March, the House of Commons Environment Committee under the leadership of its chairperson, David MacDonald, presented its third report to the House on global warming. Entitled *Out of Balance: The Risks of Irreversible Climate Change*, the report made some twenty-five recommendations, intended to change Canadians' views about "life as usual" which the report characterized as "much less efficient, more wasteful and more expensive than it need have been...." Among the recommendations: i) that immediate action be taken by Canada to reduce substantially the rate of greenhouse gas emissions, such that a twenty percent reduction in human-sourced carbon dioxide emissions by the year 2005 (compared to the 1988 level of emissions) would be the government's minimum interim objective; ii) that Canadian energy policy-making has, as its most immediate focus, the more efficient and conserving use of energy; iii) that the government use environmental considerations as a filter for its foreign aid and trade initiatives; iv) that the Auditor-General, working with the Departments of Environment and Finance, establish an environmental audit function to assure that all federal departments and agencies have implemented environmental assessment processes, and to monitor the effectiveness of environmental programmes. □

- GREGORY WIRICK