

Editorials

Clark on track in Middle East

Canadians have been telling a parliamentary committee on international affairs that they want Canada to resume the role of honest broker in foreign policy. External Affairs Minister Joe Clark must have been listening; he looked and sounded very much the honest broker during his 10-day trip through the Middle East that ended Sunday in Israel.

Canada's main foreign policy goal in the Middle East, as indeed most of the world's, is peace between Israel and her Arab neighbors. In Jordan and Israel, Clark emphasized that peace can only be achieved through negotiations. He also uttered some home truths that bear repeating.

In Amman, he forthrightly told the Palestine Liberation Organization, whose name is synonymous with terrorism in many parts of the world, to reject violence and acknowledge formally that Israel has a right to exist. "This is a natural condition to successful negotiations," he said.

Clark was equally forthright in Jerusalem when he underlined Canadian policy that the Palestinians should have a homeland in Israeli-occupied territory on the west bank of the Jordan river and in the Gaza strip.

To both sides, he offered Canada's good offices to further any peace negotiations that might be undertaken, however unlikely that may seem now.

Last fall, in a conciliatory speech at the United Nations, Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres said: "Let us argue, but not fight. Let us arm ourselves with reason. Let us not reason with arms." At that time, the world had some hope that new peace talks might be imminent. These hopes were heightened when the United States delayed \$1.9 billion worth of arms sales to Jordan as a way of encouraging King Hussein to negotiate. But they were dashed by continued and ever escalating acts of terrorism by the PLO and other Palestinian terrorist groups, ongoing warfare between Israel and Lebanon, an uneasy political alliance between the Labor and Likud parties currently governing Israel, and disagreements between Hussein and PLO leader Yasser Arafat.

Canada, of course, can't force Israel and her Arab neighbors to the peace table. Joe Clark isn't coming home with an Arab-Israeli peace treaty. No one expected that. But by all accounts, he comes home with increased goodwill for Canada among the governments and the people of Israel, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. Which seems to be just what Canadians expect of their foreign ministers.