

question of what constituted effective occupation in the polar regions, arguing persuasively that the standard used in the temperate zone could not be applied in the Arctic. This memo secured White's position as one of Finnie's most valued advisers and, as it turned out, provided the framework for Canada's new Arctic policy.

In April 1925, Finnie was gratified by the interest shown in Arctic sovereignty by the new Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, O.D. Skelton. The Minister of the Interior, Charles Stewart (fig. 23), was also in favour of new initiatives and asked that a clear statement of Canadian policy should be drawn up. To carry out this request, Finnie suggested the formation of an interdepartmental committee, which was later named the Northern Advisory Board (NAB). The Board met for the first time on 24 April (doc. 353). The main topic discussed was the possible threat posed by MacMillan's expedition, to which an aviation unit from the United States Navy had been added, giving the venture a quasi-official status. As a result, James White adapted the arguments he had made in his Sverdrup Islands memo to meet the new case. His second surviving articulation of the sector theory (doc. 365) stated that Canada had a claim to the entire archipelago on the basis of contiguity, but it also affirmed the importance of actual occupation. White emphasized that the Canadian posts so far established were strategically placed in order to assert control over all the islands (and, of course, he expected that additional posts would follow in the near future).

The 1925 sector claim, then, was not intended as a substitute for occupation; rather, it outlined the area to which the ongoing process of Canadian occupation would ultimately extend. This view was endorsed by Skelton and Finnie, by the NAB, by Prime Minister King acting in his capacity as Secretary of State for External Affairs, and finally by Council (docs 366n, 371). Then a despatch based on White's memo was sent to the British Embassy in Washington, which was asked to make representations to the State Department about the MacMillan expedition (doc. 377). At the same time, Parliament passed legislation that would require foreign explorers and scientists to apply for permits, and the RCMP were instructed to enforce the game laws if they encountered MacMillan in the North (docs 385, 386).

Although the United States did not explicitly acknowledge Canadian sovereignty in 1925, and indeed delayed doing so for many years, internal American documents show that the State Department never advocated a rival US claim to any of the Canadian islands. Rather, because officials in Washington applied the same standard for occupation in the polar regions as elsewhere, they were unsure whether the Canadian presence was sufficient to warrant full recognition. However, they repeatedly acknowledged that Canada was doing more in the Arctic than any other nation.³² (And, according to its own high standard for effective occupation, the United States could make no claim to any land within the

³² See documents in NACP, RG 59, Decimal files 1910-1929, box 7156, file 800.014.