

NORTH-ATLANTIC ISSUES FROM A NEW ANGLE: THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT VISITS ST. JOHN'S

The XIth interparliamentary meeting between delegations from the European and Canadian Parliaments took place in St. John's, Newfoundland in the second week of May. The 14-member Canadian delegation was led by Miss Aideen Nicholson, M.P., Chairman of the Canada-European Parliamentary Association of the Canadian Parliament. Sir James Scott-Hopkins (United Kingdom) led the European Parliament's delegation of 17 who represented the major political groups in the Community. Mr. Wilhelm Helms (Germany) was the European delegation's first vice-chairman and Mr. Derek Enright (United Kingdom) acted as second vice-chairman.

These discussions are held annually. They take place alternately in Europe and in Canada, usually in cities other than the seats of the two parliaments. This year St. John's, Newfoundland, was selected as the site since the city is celebrating its 400th anniversary. St. John's is also the constituency of one of the executive members of the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association, the Hon. James McGrath.

The meeting consisted of five working sessions covering a wide range of bilateral and international issues. Among the former were the Canada-EC Fisheries Agreement, trends in Canada/EC trade, specific trade issues, particularly access for Canadian newsprint exports to the Community and Canadian import actions on footwear, the Arctic Pilot Project for natural gas, and the workings of the EC-Canada Framework Agreement. Discussions of international questions included the nuclear arms debate, the dangers of multilateral trade protectionism and the problem of acid rain common to both North America and Europe. The implications of Greenland's withdrawal from the EC was also examined.

There was recognition by both delegations of the need for a return to the spirit behind the bilateral fisheries agreement in order to resolve the current problems of quota allocation and product access. The fisheries issue was also raised by the Hon. Pierre DeBané, the federal Minister of Fisheries and Oceans who hosted a luncheon for the group, as was Canada's position on Community sealskin import restrictions. Mr. DeBané conveyed the concerns of Canada's government and industry about the way in which the Community has managed the bilateral fisheries regime. He appealed to the Euro-MPs to see to it that the EC honours its treaty obligations and international law on both the fisheries and the seal products questions. It was agreed to examine the possibility of establishing small working groups of parliamentarians to study these and other specific bilateral problems.

On the multilateral side, despite some divergent approaches on security and disarmament, the two delegations reached overall agreement on the significance of public concern on both sides of the Atlantic at the dangers of nuclear war and on the urgent need for a successful outcome to the current INF talks in Geneva. They also accepted the necessity of improving the existing trade arrangements, which, though based firmly on the principles of an open trading environment, were frequently subject to restrictive practices.

The delegations are expected to meet in the European Community for the 12th annual exchange during the course of 1984.