

in the polar regions. Because Cory did not specialize in international law, his ignorance of a major milestone in legal thinking on the polar regions is not altogether surprising. His report certainly over-stated the possible objections to Canada's title, but it also demonstrated an eagerness to resume a more active northern policy that probably reflected Gibson's own attitude. Indeed, in a climate of stringent financial limits, the suggestion of possible continued threats to Canadian sovereignty may well have been a strategy to gain increased funding.

If this was the case, the strategy failed, and there were no major new initiatives during the 1930s. According to Gibson himself, the responsibility did not belong to him or to his subordinates. In 1943, when Gibson was coming under criticism from younger bureaucrats, he wrote to Hugh Keenleyside (who had replaced Skelton as the External Affairs representative on the NWTC):

I think you will agree that within the limits of the appropriations available a pretty workmanlike job of administration has been done ... The difficulty is that the depression enforced years of most rigid economy. Repeated attempts have been made to get a larger vote so that many of the difficulties could be met in a more adequate manner, but our vote has been kept within the limits of minimum requirements of year to year administration.³⁹

Gibson does appear to have done at least a "workmanlike job" on sovereignty matters. He was always alert to any reports of infringements of Canadian laws by foreigners, and in 1934, while he was Acting Commissioner, the practice of having Canadian representatives on foreign expeditions was inaugurated (docs 533-535). But without clear guidance on legal matters from External Affairs, the thinking of many bureaucrats in the northern administration became muddled. For example, David McKeand, who commanded the Eastern Arctic Patrols from 1932 to 1945, proved dangerously susceptible to the idea that re-settling Inuit from Baffin Island in the high Arctic could give a much-needed boost to Canada's title (see doc 545).

Fortunately, McKeand's ideas had no practical consequences at the time, although they were to be revived by his successors. Instead, the members of the RCMP were still the main upholders of Canadian sovereignty. Even with a reduced number of posts, the police continued to make long overland patrols that included the high Arctic, and their "floating detachment," the *St. Roch*, sailed the waters of the western Arctic every year, beginning in 1928. Thanks to the police efforts, the ongoing Eastern Arctic Patrols, and Gibson's low-key but steady administration, Canada was in a good position with regard to sovereignty at the beginning of the Second World War. But with White, Finnie, Craig and others either dead or retired, and Skelton increasingly preoccupied with the situation in Europe, the advances made between 1922 and 1930 were in danger of being forgotten not only by the public, but by Canada's own bureaucracy.

³⁹ Gibson to Keenleyside, 19 April 1943, LAC, RG 25, vol. 3198, file 5220-40.