

The work of the committee was divided into two phases. Our first task began on the day Parliament adjourned for the summer, June 28, 1985. Parliament had requested that we present an interim report by August 23 on two specific issues: whether to enter intensive discussions on comprehensive new trade arrangements with the United States and whether to accept the invitation of the United States to join in the research phase of the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI). That part of the committee's work, undertaken during the summer and clearly with no time to lose, was duly completed by the date assigned—this despite a veritable flood of material requiring immediate consideration: almost 700 individuals and organizations filed written briefs, while well over 300 witnesses appeared at the public hearings held in Halifax, Ottawa, Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver, Calgary and Winnipeg.

In the autumn we began the second phase and the central part of our work—the broad review of Canada's international relations. Although our primary goal was the elaboration of a framework within which Canadian external policy should operate, we decided we should also be on the lookout for specific and concrete proposals for action that we could recommend.

In October advertisements were placed in 157 newspapers, both dailies and weeklies, in every part of Canada. They described the work program of the committee and invited submissions from Canadians by November 29. The submissions were a valuable source of information and ideas, and we continued to receive them even as we were drafting this report. By May 7, 1986 we had received communications from 287 organizations and 245 individuals. Every submission was read and its recommendations considered. Annex A, which appears at the end of Chapter 1, contains an analysis of the subject matter and geographical origin of these submissions.

While the public were preparing their submissions during the autumn, the committee organized a series of panel discussions with recognized experts on a variety of topics. The subjects we chose ranged from the influence of the media on foreign policy perceptions, through arms control issues and international debt problems, to Canadian foreign policy in the Arctic. This was the first time a Canadian parliamentary committee had systematically used this technique. In fact, we found it so effective as a means of highlighting differing perspectives and bringing out the options faced by Canada, that we decided to continue the practice when the committee travelled across Canada during the winter months. In each city where we held hearings, in addition to hearing witnesses invited from among those who had responded to our advertisements, we also arranged a panel discussion on a topic with special relevance to the region. For example, in Halifax we had a panel on ocean management issues, while in Edmonton the discussion was on international energy perspectives.

In January, the committee began to travel across the country. Every second week until the end of April we visited successively each province and territory. In addition to the panels, we heard briefs from organizations and individuals selected from among those who had made written submissions. The committee also left time at the end of each day's hearings for brief statements by concerned citizens who came to our meetings and wanted to be heard. In all, during the six months of our public meetings, we organized 30 panel discussions and heard 161 briefs from organizations or individuals and 131 short statements.

In an effort to encourage maximum public involvement, considerable attention was also paid to the news media before and during our visit to each community. Press conferences were organized and interviews arranged for members of the committee, and members of the media were encouraged to take time with the various witnesses who gave us their views.