

### Part Three, 1919-1924

The years between the end of Stefansson's Canadian Arctic Expedition and 1924, when his proposals for a Canadian claim to Wrangel Island were finally rejected, brought more significant changes and developments than any comparable period. In 1919, there was still no government body with primary responsibility for the North, and very few civil servants were knowledgeable about sovereignty issues. Canada's northern policy remained undefined, and there were no plans for any permanent presence in the archipelago. By 1924, not only were several talented bureaucrats focusing on the Arctic, but annual patrols and northern posts had been established. While effective occupation was the main goal, a version of the sector theory based on solid pragmatic considerations was gaining ground. Furthermore, Canadian policy deliberations had begun to be influenced by diplomatic correspondence with other nations. As a result, Ottawa bureaucrats quickly gained new knowledge about both the theoretical and the practical aspects of international law.

Stefansson's first move after his return was to suggest plans for economic development in the North. In particular, he advocated the domestication of the muskox. This project brought forward information about hunting by people from northwestern Greenland on Ellesmere Island. In the absence of any administrative structure in the NWT, responsibility for enforcing the game laws had been assigned to the Commissioner of Dominion Parks, J.B. Harkin. Harkin immediately decided that the government of Denmark must be warned against such encroachments on Canadian territory (doc. 210). Stefansson took advantage of some obscure statements in the Danish reply to convince Harkin and others that the Danish explorer Knud Rasmussen was intent on invading the archipelago, colonizing it with Greenlanders, and then claiming it for his country on the basis of occupation (docs 215, 216, 217).

The result of the ensuing sovereignty panic would, Stefansson hoped, be another expedition under his own leadership, which could be turned towards the Beaufort Sea and then to Wrangel Island and the unexplored region north of it. Instead, both Stefansson's new expedition and a planned voyage to establish a police post on Ellesmere Island were cancelled by Prime Minister Arthur Meighen's government (doc. 252). When a new prime minister, William Lyon Mackenzie King, was elected, Stefansson tried again. Although King was more interested in the proposition than Meighen had been, once again Stefansson's hopes were frustrated. In the meantime, King's government had agreed to send out the first of the annual Eastern Arctic Patrols in 1922 (doc. 275).

There were many reasons both for Stefansson's failure to carry through his plans and for the length of time that passed before the government came to a final decision. Initially, there was no expert body by which Stefansson's proposals could be considered. Loring Christie, the legal adviser to the Department of External Affairs, was consulted, but he did not have the time or staff resources to take on any major responsibility. The Deputy Minister of the Interior, W.W. Cory,