

Environment

Acid Rain

Canada's appointed envoy on acid rain, William Davis, met for discussions in mid-June with his US counterpart, Drew Lewis. The envoys, addressed by both federal and provincial environment ministers and representatives of the private sector, also met with Prime Minister Brian Mulroney. While no specific recommendations were made following the consultations, Mr. Davis stated that the meetings had resulted in his "greater appreciation of the complexity" of the issue as perceived by the US government (*Globe and Mail*, June 14). Progress had been made, he added, in that both envoys had gained an understanding of "respective problems." Despite the attempt to address the "substance of political and economic considerations," the meeting was criticized by environmentalists, including former Environment Minister Charles Caccia, for failing to achieve any concrete results — just as the appointments themselves had been earlier criticized as a mere "stalling" tactic (see "International Canada" for February and March 1985). However, the envoys stated that "firm recommendations," rather than a review, would be contained in their projected spring report. The Canadian meeting was followed by another in Washington later in the month, when Mr. Davis and Mr. Lewis held discussions with both Congressional members and officials of the US administration. The second, lower profile meeting was described by Mr. Lewis as an opportunity for "fact-finding," an effort to gauge the mood of Congress on the acid rain issue (*The Citizen*, June 20).

In early July, Canada signed a 21-nation agreement to further reduce sulphur dioxide emissions (the agreement stemming from the original 30 percent club of nations). However, the two largest international producers of sulphur dioxide — the US and the United Kingdom — refused to sign. Canada's Environment Minister Suzanne Blais-Grenier defended the US refusal. The Minister, while noting that Canada did not necessarily agree with the US position (which held that reductions already made had been significant), stated that the percentages outlined by the US had been "convincing" (*Globe and Mail*, *The Citizen*, July 9). Ms. Blais-Grenier called the international agreement a "first step" toward acid rain reductions.

Immigration

Plaut Report

A report commissioned by the Employment and Immigration department from W. Gunther Plaut, *Refugee Determination in Canada*, was tabled June 17 by the Minister. Flora MacDonald stated that the report, a study of in-country refugee claims, would form the basis for an anticipated "major overhaul of legislation" affecting such determination. In his report, Rabbi Plaut dealt with both political and practical problems, and issued a number of recommendations along with options for a new system. The

report advocated the creation of a Refugee Board determining claims to refugee status (along with a new category of extensively-trained refugee official). Other recommendations toward a liberalization included the right of immigrants, regardless of status, to make a claim to Convention refugee status at port of entry or from within Canada. This would, in effect, eliminate the initial screening process. As well, the current backlog of refugee claimants (resulting from the April Supreme Court decision that refugee claimants be granted oral hearings) might be eliminated through a decision to halt deportations, as a "transitional arrangement," to those countries experiencing civil disorder, racial tension or violence. Otherwise, stated Mr. Plaut, a "massive injection of additional funds" for increased personnel would be required to process the backlog (Report and statement released by Employment and Immigration, June 17, *Globe and Mail*, June 18).

Following the release of the report, Ms. MacDonald announced a short consultation period to ascertain public opinion on the issue of refugee determination. The Minister stressed that her department intended to introduce new measures to streamline the process by fall 1985. In her call for a representative cross section of informed opinion, Ms. MacDonald noted that two main areas had become the focus of attention; one, an "unequivocal support" for the report's principle that refugee claimants be dealt with "promptly, fairly and humanely," and two, a concern with regard to abuses of the system by those whose claims proved unfounded (letter from the Minister's Office, July 22).

Terrorism

Counter-measures

Following two incidents in June of possible international air-terrorism, both with Canadian departure points, the government announced increased protective measures to be taken against terrorist activity in Canada. When an Air India 747 was downed in the north Atlantic and baggage on a CP Air flight landing in Tokyo (en route to India) exploded, External Affairs Minister Joe Clark stated in a scrum that added security would be instituted on international flights from Canada. Mr. Clark added that Canada recognized that the sudden burst of terrorist activity might become "contagious" (External Affairs transcript, June 23). Mr. Clark's comments on increased protection were echoed by Transport Minister Don Mazankowski June 24, who outlined precautions to be taken: a screening of all checked baggage on international flights leaving or coming into Canada, the deployment of additional screening equipment, and a request for a 24-hour delay for cargo. While these measures could cause "inconvenience and delay," said Mr. Mazankowski, Canadians were appreciative of the need (CTV [External Affairs transcript], June 25). Canada had already, in response to an earlier TWA hijacking in Athens and hostage-taking in Beirut, announced its intention to pursue proposals for the improvement of air security (passengers, aircraft and airport) within ICAO (External Affairs communiqué, June 20).