

MPs take flight at recess

Sunday, November 9, 1997 page: B3

From The Ottawa Citizen - FINAL EDITION

Canadian diplomacy takes on wings to warmer climes next week, coinciding with the one-week parliamentary recess.

Prime Minister Jean Chretien heads to Hanoi to attend the 49-country Francophonie Summit, accompanied by International Co-operation Minister Diane Marleau, who is also Minister Responsible for the Francophonie, and her predecessor Don Boudria, M.P., who laid much of the groundwork for the summit. In Hanoi, the federal delegation will encounter Quebec Premier Lucien Bouchard and his delegation.

Secretary of State for Latin America and Africa, David Kilgour, is visiting Peru and Colombia, expecting to enhance Canadian political and economic links with the two Latin American nations. Peru's Ambassador Hernan Couturier, who will accompany Mr. Kilgour, hopes the visit will help develop strong links in the energy sector between the two countries, which already enjoy excellent relations in a wide variety of fields.

Colombia's Foreign Affairs Minister, Maria Emma Mejia, recently visited Canada to discuss bilateral relations and Peru's Foreign Affairs Minister, Eduardo Ferrero, who last month postponed a visit because of ill-health will be in Ottawa in December for the signing of the land-mines treaty.

Foreign Affairs Minister, Lloyd Axworthy is embarking on an ambitious one-week journey, visiting as many countries as there are days in a week. He will travel to Egypt, Israel, West Bank and Gaza, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and attend the fourth meeting in Doha, Qatar of the Middle East and North African Economic Association.

At a meeting last week with some 60 members of Ottawa's diplomatic corps, Bloc Quebecois leader Gilles Duceppe, released a 40-page book titled Quebec...on the road to nationhood. "This document is designed as an additional tool to pave the way to international recognition of our future country," according to Mr. Duceppe.

The staff of the Canadian and Cuban parliaments have established relations which are "complimentary to the open and respectful relations that exist between the two governments and peoples," Ernesto Suarez, Secretary of the Cuban National Assembly, stated at the end of a week-long parliamentary exchange program.

The Cubans also met with Canadian Human Rights Commissioner Michelle Falardeau-Ramsay and attended a luncheon hosted by Senator Jacques Hebert, chair of the Canada-Cuba Parliamentary Group.

House of Commons Speaker Gilbert Parent initiated the parliamentary exchange program during two visits to Cuba, and plans a third to further enhance the program. Mr. Robert Marleau, the clerk of the House of Commons, is expecting a larger group of more than 20 Cuban parliamentarians to visit Ottawa in January to learn about Canada's parliamentary system.

Aline Chretien got a taste last week of what she sampled last January in Indonesia while accompanying her husband on a Team Canada visit. This occasion was the launch of *From the Ambassador's Table*, a book of favourite recipes of Margaret Dickenson, wife of the former Canadian Ambassador to Indonesia, Lawrence T. Dickenson.

Guests sampled recipes from seaweed chrysanthemums to ginned dates and apricot curry mayonnaise, prepared by National Arts Centre executive chef Kurt Waldelle. Among the guests were Senator Mira Spivak, Ukraine's Ambassador Volodymyr Furkalo (perhaps in recognition of Margaret Dickenson's Ukrainian heritage and inclusion of some Ukrainian recipes in the book), High Commissioners Dr. Farouk Rana (Pakistan) and Ananda Goonasekera (Sri Lanka), Chief of Protocol Alain Dudoit, and three Ottawa sisters well-known in the food industry -- Jean Pigott, Grete Hale and Gay Cook.

Revenue Canada's International Relations Division recently hosted a three-person delegation from Kenya Revenue Authority led by Levi Wendo, Kenya's Commissioner of Income Tax.

- Bhupinder S. Liddar

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