

Canada/CARICOM meeting

Canadian officials met with representatives of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) on November 21 and 22 for the first meeting of the Joint Trade and Economic Committee.

The committee, established under the Canada/CARICOM Trade and Economic Co-operation Agreement signed earlier this year, will review progress under the agreement and consult on economic matters of mutual concern. At this first meeting in Ottawa, committee members examined opportunities for increased co-operation and established guidelines for the future work of the committee.

The economic co-operation agreement calls for two-way trade to be facilitated and for financial and technical co-operation to support Caribbean regional programs. The agreement also outlines measures for strengthening the economic capability of CARICOM such as transfer of technology, research, investment studies and industrial investment.

Member countries of the CARICOM are: Jamaica, Guyana, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, Grenada, Dominica, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Antigua, St. Kitts-Nevis-Anguilla, and territories of Belize and Montserrat.

Discussions with the EC

The first official delegation of the newly-elected European Parliament met with Canadian members of Parliament, November 26-30, to discuss a range of issues.

The European parliamentary delegation, composed of 18 members led by Sir John Stewart-Clark, met with Prime Minister Joe Clark and federal Cabinet ministers. The meetings were designed to acquaint the European delegation with Canadian political, economic and social life.

Following the meetings, the European parliamentarians met with other Canadian members of Parliament to discuss recent developments in Canada and Europe (such as elections) and forthcoming events (such as the second enlargement of the European Community and the European Parliament's future activities). More specifically, the two delegations discussed the implementation of the EC-Canada Framework Agreement for Commercial and Economic Co-operation, exchanged views on bilateral questions and examined

the difficulties affecting the export of products such as cheese, footwear and alcoholic beverages.

The two groups also discussed fisheries and the renegotiation of the EC-Canada fisheries agreement, which will expire December 31, 1979, as well as the organization of fishing in the North Atlantic and problems of salmon fishing.

The extension or renegotiation of the EC-Canada bilateral nuclear agreement was also examined, along with multilateral problems such as energy and the fate of Indochinese refugees.

Situation in Iran

In reply to questions in the House of Commons, November 21, on the situation in Iran, Prime Minister Joe Clark stated that Canada had taken "every available opportunity to make known to the officials of Iran our deep objection to the abrogation of international practice that has been evidenced in their country, and has made known to the United States our willingness to be of assistance in any practical way we can to aid citizens of the United States in their very difficult circumstances in Iran".

In addition, the Prime Minister continued, Canada had been working actively with representatives of other countries both in Iran and elsewhere. "In Iran, in particular, we have willingly assumed a role of some leadership in bringing together representatives of other countries in Iran," said Mr. Clark. This was made necessary, he explained, because the dean of the diplomatic corps there had not been prepared to bring together other nations. "Canada has moved into that position," said the Prime Minister.

"We are also continuing actively to explore every other instrument available to use whether through the United Nations, the Commonwealth or any other association that Canada has with other nations, to find effective means through which our views and the views of the...world can be brought to bear upon the authorities of Iran to bring an end to a situation which we consider unacceptable and wish to have terminated as quickly as possible," stated Mr. Clark.

The Canadian Government was prepared "to consider and pursue any initiative which would be useful in ensuring that there is respect for international standards and international law in the

Iranian situation".

In answer to a question regarding the possibility of removing Canadian personnel from Iran, the Prime Minister replied that Canada could play an effective role in Iran only if personnel were present. "It is our judgment that, for the time being at least, it is in the interest of securing respect for international law and seeking to secure some resolution of the problem in Iran that representatives of our country remain there."

Joint Commonwealth statement

A few days later, the Secretary of State for External Affairs Flora MacDonald, announced on November 27 that as the result of a Canadian initiative, a meeting of Commonwealth representatives was held in London to discuss the situation in Iran. The following is the statement issued by High Commissioners of Commonwealth countries, speaking for the Commonwealth:

"Conscious of the Commonwealth's responsibilities to the world community, Commonwealth representatives discussed the grave situation that has arisen following the seizure of the American Embassy and some of its personnel in Tehran.

"It was their general belief that whatever the nature of the dispute between sovereign states, the taking and holding hostage of diplomatic personnel and the violation of diplomatic premises could not be justified. Such events, wherever they occur, were in violation of international law and jeopardized the fabric of international relations.

"In this context it was the wish of the overwhelming majority of Commonwealth representatives to appeal to the Government of Iran to procure the release of all the hostages and expressed the hope that the parties would resolve their differences by peaceful means within the framework of international law. They expressed their full support for the efforts of the United Nations Secretary-General towards this end."

Commons passes motions

The House of Commons in Ottawa passed two motions on November 28, one in support of the Canadian initiative adopted by Commonwealth representatives in London and the second affirming Canadian allegiance to the rule of international law and condemning the Iranian Government for its attitude towards the holding of hostages at the U.S. embassy.