

REPORT FROM THE HILL *By Gregory Wirick*



■ At the end of August the Deputy Prime Minister, Don Mazankowski, caught the opposition parties off guard by announcing that Parliament would prorogue until October 1st. Parliament had been expected to reconvene in the second week of September.

Prorogation upset the plans of many parliamentary committees since it automatically ended their work and even the composition of the committees themselves until Parliament reassembles in October and has a chance to reconstitute them. There is also the possibility that the government will choose new membership for certain committees when it selects a new group of parliamentary secretaries, expected early in October. In any case, prorogation means that the bulk of committee work is stalled until mid- or even late October.

But the extra time will give the government a breathing space in which to try and devise a fool-proof strategy to maintain control of the political agenda, which in the past has appeared beyond them. Central to this plan is a Speech from the Throne that will sketch in broad outline what the government intends to do in the remaining two years of its term.

It will be intriguing to watch for foreign or defence policy initiatives in the Throne Speech that may be based on the report of the Special Joint Committee on Canada's International Relations (also known as the Hockin-

Simard committee after its two co-chairmen) which was tabled in Parliament on 26 June.

The 196-page report, consisting of 11 chapters on different aspects of Canadian foreign policy and 130 recommendations, represented the culmination of an 11-month investigation by the 20-person committee made up of 12 Conservatives, 5 Liberals and 3 New Democrats.

It was the first comprehensive foreign policy review since the Trudeau government's 1970 effort, *Foreign Policy for Canadians*. Furthermore, it was the first such review ever conducted by a parliamentary committee, reflecting the Conservative government's desire to open up some of the traditionally elite functions of government policy-making to greater public scrutiny (hence the coast-to-coast hearings).

Among the more newsworthy recommendations were the following:

- a more independent security policy for Canada, with greater reliance on Canadian sources of information and analysis;
- an intensification of Canadian efforts, both multilaterally and bilaterally, to win acceptance for the comprehensive set of arms control measures already enunciated by the government, namely:
 1. A mutually agreed and verifiable radical reduction of nuclear forces and associated measures to enhance strategic stability. The latter should include, in particular, reaffirmation of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, interpreted strictly as prohibiting all but basic research on defensive systems.
 2. The maintenance and strengthening of the nuclear non-proliferation régime.
 3. The negotiation of a global ban on chemical weapons.
 4. The achievement of a comprehensive test ban treaty that will be mutually verifiable.

5. The prevention of an arms race in outer space.

6. Agreement on confidence-building measures sufficient to permit the reduction of conventional military forces in Europe and elsewhere;

- an immediate study of long-term defence requirements to discover how much additional expenditure would be necessary to complete the task of re-equipping the armed forces over the next ten years;

- the development of a coherent arctic policy, an essential element of which must be a northern dimension for Canadian foreign policy;

- the possibility of equipping the Canadian navy with diesel-electric submarines to provide more adequate surveillance of the Northwest Passage;

- to seek, in cooperation with other arctic or nordic nations, the demilitarization of the arctic through pressure on both superpowers;

- far greater emphasis on human rights concerns – “the international promotion of human rights is a fundamental and integral part of Canadian foreign policy”;

- endorsement of a previous committee's recommendation that Canadian development assistance be reduced, terminated or not commenced in cases where gross and systematic violations of human rights make it impossible to promote the central objective of helping the poor;

- the government should consider making significantly greater use of reserve forces for UN peacekeeping service;

- Canada should move immediately to impose full economic sanctions against South Africa and seek their widest possible adoption by other countries;

- Canada should explore the possibility of a new financial arrangement for the United Nations whereby no single nation would contribute more than an amount set so as to ensure that the organization is not unduly dependent on any one member.

The committee was forthright about security policy stating that “a priority for the government . . . should be to elaborate a Canadian perspective on strategic, arms control and disarmament issues.” They suggested a four-part approach consisting of: 1) recruiting and developing the kind of analytical expertise on which a more active Canadian role must be based; 2) the government must formulate its own judgements on these issues; 3) with this background the government could be more effective in pressing its views with other governments and in international forums; 4) the government should engage the public in a continuing dialogue on security policy.

Secretary of State for External Affairs Joe Clark welcomed the committee's report, calling it “a very valuable perspective”, and promised an official cabinet response when Parliament resumed in the fall. Press commentary was favourable with laudatory editorials appearing in the *Toronto Star*, the *Winnipeg Free Press* and the *Ottawa Citizen*. The Canadian Centre for Arms Control and Disarmament, which had been critical of the earlier report of the Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence, *NORAD 1986*, also welcomed the Joint Committee's suggestions, particularly those pointing to a greater emphasis on a Canadian perspective in security policy.