

The "Informal Consultations"

For the time being at least, these Consultations are by far our most useful platform for promoting our specific objectives -- our "last best hope", so to speak. Our current chairmanship, combined with the somewhat more positive attitude the USA is beginning to take to this forum, should provide a good opportunity to make progress on the harmonisation of policies, even though leading members, particularly the EC participants, insist on its purely consultative and information-exchange role. Besides discussions in progress on getting at "root causes" (discussed below in Section XV), meetings are scheduled on removals and on national status determination procedures and their reform before the full ministerial-level annual meeting in Toronto in June. We must exploit our chairmanship to the full, and devote a good deal of diplomatic effort to it in the next few months and beyond. But given the scepticism of some of the leading Europeans, and increasing Eurocentric tendencies in general, we cannot be sure how long it will serve us as an effective tool in the advancement of our international strategy. Further Community integration may sharply reduce their interest in joint action with us. The priority is now.

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Notes to Section XIV

1. See Note 2 to Section XI.

2. It may, however, become desirable to show our bona fides and general sympathy for the refugees' plight by accepting limited numbers of Palestinian expellees from Kuwait who are sponsored by close relatives in Canada and who are not admissible to any country in the area, particularly if other countries such as the USA take comparable action. The argument that has been advanced that such action could reflect adversely on Canada's role would not stand up as long as Canada showed no disposition whatever towards open-ended admission of Palestinians.

3. Academic institutions in the three countries are already beginning to study the implications of labour mobility within the NAFTA area, assuming rightly or wrongly that this may come in ten years or so.

4. The decision was described to non-members as "practical steps towards harmonization of policy and regulations"; the Community also mentioned the need, "in line with common humanitarian traditions, . . . to continue to offer refuge . . ." The Maastricht documents included a declaration that the European Council would have the "aim of adopting, by the beginning of 1993, common action to harmonize aspects of them (Member States' asylum