

## It's time to review relations with PLO

When in Amman last week, External Affairs Minister Joe Clark declined to recognize the Palestine Liberation Organization, saying, "I don't think a dramatic change in regard to the PLO would be helpful in these circumstances." Basically he's right.

Yet Clark acknowledged that the PLO and Palestinians are key factors in any lasting peace plan.

The question of the degree of Canada's involvement with the PLO is a different and important one. It should be under constant review.

Our government's traditional policy is not to recognize the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. The emphasis is on "sole." Undoubtedly the PLO does represent many Palestinians whether or not they are members of it.

Up to this point, Canada's policy is sound. And it flows from it that we don't "recognize" the PLO as a state or its representative here as an ambassador of a state with accompanying diplomatic privileges and immunities.

Right now we demand a fair and equitable solution that recognizes the rights of Pales-

tinians to a homeland and those of Israel to its security and independence within recognized borders.

Until the PLO recognizes Israel's right to exist, it in turn will not be recognized by many governments, including Canada's. And its absolute renunciation of terrorism is also a must.

But that still leaves room for manoeuvre. For some time now Canadian diplomats have been in contact with PLO personnel in various places. But they are all below the rank of ambassador. The practice doesn't constitute recognition any more than does the useful presence in Ottawa of a PLO office.

It does, though, make good sense and perhaps the time has come to expand it and raise its level. The rank of the contacts surely doesn't involve recognition in any conceivable way. Recognition must be a conscious thing.

Occasional ambassadorial talks with PLO people could be very useful in many ways, including putting more pressure on that besieged organization to mend its ways and alter its policies.

Recognition? No. More contacts? Yes — at all levels.

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