

REPORT FROM THE HILL *By Gregory Wirick*



■ Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence

On February 14, SCEAND tabled its final report, dealing with Canada-US defence cooperation and the May 1986 renewal of the North American Aerospace Defence (NORAD) agreement. SCEAND recommended that the NORAD agreement be renewed for an additional five-year term (expiring in 1991). It suggested that the government, "consider inviting the United States to issue at the time of the renewal a joint declaration reaffirming both countries' commitment to deterrence and strategic stability, as well as their support for the integrity of the ABM Treaty and a negotiation process leading to verifiable reductions of armaments."

This recommendation seemed to be in response to the numerous calls by disarmament groups and other witnesses to reinstate the so-called "ABM clause" that had been a feature of the NORAD agreement between 1968 and 1981 when it was removed. That clause stated that the agreement would "not involve in any way a Canadian commitment to participate in an active ballistic missile defence." The Committee concluded, however, that it did not accept any link between NORAD and ballistic missile defence, stressing that NORAD's mission was limited to airspace surveillance, air defense and ballistic missile warning.

This latest round of SCEAND hearings has not been smooth going. In December, US defence analyst William Arkin produced a list of titles of US-Canadian defence agreements that included eight titles deleted from the list given to Committee members. Although knowledge of the titles may not have made any real difference to SCEAND's deliberations, the deletions allowed the opposition to declare that pertinent information was being withheld from a responsible committee of the House of Commons. Their case was strengthened by the subsequent revelation that the eight titles had not been removed from the list provided to the same committee five years earlier during its 1980 review of NORAD.

Both the Liberals and the New Democrats were unhappy with the official SCEAND report and released unofficial 'minority reports' of their own. The NDP recommended: re-introduction of the clause precluding Canada's involvement in ballistic missile defence (BMD); a two-year, not a five-year, renewal of the NORAD Agreement; an end to the 'two hats' arrangement which made the Commander of NORAD also the Commander of the US Unified Space Command; and, full parliamentary consideration of any Agreement *before* it is signed. The Liberals supported the five-year renewal but recommended reinsertion of the BMD clause in order to show Canada's continued opposition to any participation in an active ballistic missile defence plan.

In the same report, SCEAND also called for a major re-equipment of Canada's maritime forces in the Pacific (and to a lesser extent in the Atlantic) and suggested the government consider negotiating with the US a

joint arrangement for the defence of the Arctic Ocean (such as underwater and other systems to detect submarines). In addition, it urged that the government launch "without delay" a Canadian space program to improve "the surveillance of our internal airspace, our land mass, and the oceans bounding Canada; our search and rescue capabilities; our communications and navigation systems; and to complement the surveillance, warning and communications capabilities of NORAD." This program would be "coordinated with other Canadian space initiatives under the general supervision of a Canadian Space Agency."

■ Joint Committee

The Special Joint Committee of the Senate and the House on Canada's International Relations continues its examination of the government's green paper on Canadian foreign policy. In the fall the Committee published six foreign policy themes in various newspapers and invited the public to submit their views by November 29, 1985. Based on these submissions, a series of hearings was arranged, beginning in Charlottetown on January 20 and continuing in Ottawa, Halifax, St. John's, Edmonton, Saskatoon, London, Toronto, Fredericton, Montreal, Quebec City, Vancouver, Whitehorse, Winnipeg, and Yellowknife. In each city, panels addressing specific topics were followed by testimony from those who had submitted briefs in the fall; there was, in addition, an opportunity for comments from the interested public. The Joint Committee's report is expected to be released by the end of May.

■ Reforms

The House of Commons passed in February a reform package which could fundamentally alter the way parliament works. Whereas in the past committee agendas chiefly reflected the government's concerns, future committees will be able to choose their own references, independent of government approval. Specifically, committees have now been empowered to review and report on:

- a) the statute law relating to the department assigned to them;
- b) the program and policy objectives of the department and its effectiveness in the implementation of same;
- c) the immediate, medium and long-term expenditure plans and the effectiveness of implementation of same by the department;
- d) an analysis of the relative success of the department, as measured by the results obtained as compared with its stated objectives; and
- e) other matters, relating to the mandate, management, organization or operation of the department, as the committee deems fit.

Among the other provisions of the parliamentary reforms, which came into effect on February 24, was the division of the Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence (SCEAND) into two separate standing committees of between 7 and 15 members each: one on external affairs and international trade and the other on national defence. It is expected that, with the increased reach of these committees, committee chairmen will enjoy more influence than in the past.