

tutions as well as Wilfrid Laurier University. The goal is to familiarize Canadians with the business, legal, political and cultural dimensions of operating in Asia Pacific countries. The initial focus is basic language training and acquainting the mainly private sector participants with the practicalities of doing business in the region. Ottawa's contribution comprises an endowment of \$800,000 plus \$800,000 in operating grants spread over five years. An additional \$3.2 million in private, provincial and university funding is expected.

OTTAWA — The recent bankruptcy of one of the country's most innovative high-technology companies, Leigh Instruments Limited of suburban Kanata, has annoyed Supply and Services Minister Paul Dick, whose department is the purchasing arm of the federal government. Unsecured creditors are owed more than \$100 million now that the Ottawa-area company has collapsed due to huge cost overruns on a number of defence projects and the aftermath of a foreign takeover that wiped out healthy cash reserves and saddled it with crippling debt. Leigh had approximately \$19 million in cash reserves when it was taken over by Plessey Company PLC of Britain, but the new owner took the reserve fund and substituted a bank line of credit. Plessey subsequently was taken over by General Electric Company PLC of Britain and Siemens AG of West Germany and it appears that this nullified Plessey's commitments to the federal government to secure regulatory approval for the Leigh takeover. Mr. Dick wants to determine whether GEC and Siemens are legally bound by those commitments. "I am extremely disappointed that Leigh's new owners ... didn't, in my view, have the decency to provide the managerial, technical and financial assistance Leigh needs," he says. "They have failed to show any regard for their obligations to their employees in Canada and the communities in which they live."

YELLOWKNIFE — Ministers from the Arctic countries plan a meeting in Finland in 1991 to discuss ways of protecting the region's fragile environment. This is the main recommendation of officials from Canada, the Soviet Union, the

United States, Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Iceland after a six-day meeting. "Canada puts a very high priority on environmental protection in the Arctic and on developing closer relations with our circumpolar neighbours", External Affairs Minister Joe Clark explains. The officials have laid the foundation for a comprehensive strategy the ministers plan to discuss when they meet on a date yet to be determined. Canada's main contribution to the regime is a proposed agreement that would commit polar nations to preserve plant and animal life. Welcomed by the other participants, the proposal was bolstered by the newly-published results of a comprehensive study of the threat posed by organic contaminants to the Arctic food chain. "We are determined to resolve this and other environmental problems through an overall circumpolar strategy that combines environmental responsibility with sustained economic growth for the Arctic and its peoples," Mr. Clark says.

OTTAWA — *The Paris Club: An inside view* is a comprehensive look at the forum that reschedules credits issued, guaranteed or insured by creditor governments. Commissioned by the North-South Institute, it was carried out by David Sevigny, current an adviser to the Canadian Executive Director at the World Bank. Among other things, it takes readers through a hypothetical debt rescheduling exercise. Official bilateral loans currently account for some \$270 billion (U.S.) of a total of \$1.3 trillion of Third World debt. The study costs \$12 from the institute at Suite 200, 55 Murray Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1N 5M3.

CALGARY — Agreements that will initiate a \$9 million petroleum sector assistance program in Senegal and The Gambia have been signed by Petro-Canada International Assistance Corporation The federal agency, a subsidiary of the Crown petroleum corporation, is contracting with a Canadian supplier to conduct an onshore seismic survey in the two countries and the project, with an initial budget of \$7 million, has just got under way. The remaining \$2 million is for the provision of technical personnel, consultants and contractors for a

variety of onshore activities and training for personnel from Petrosen, the Senegalese national oil company, and the Gambian Ministry of Economic Planning and Industrial Development.

OTTAWA — In the aftermath of his latest meeting with American President George Bush, Prime Minister Mulroney has been sounding confident that negotiations on an Acid Rain Accord with the United States might begin within the next few months. However, much of this tentative agenda depends on the progress of Mr. Bush's Clean Air Act Re-authorization bill through Congress.

KANANASKIS — The defence ministers from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization countries, meeting in this southwestern Alberta resort community, have agreed to maintain a mixed inventory of nuclear and conventional weapons in their European inventory. The decision was criticized by, among others, the foreign affairs critic for the New Democratic Party, Manitoba MP Bill Blaikie, who says Canada should urge its NATO allies to scrap all nuclear weapons in Europe. National Defence Minister Bill McKnight's rejoinder was that it is impossible to "dis-invent" nuclear technology. "As the deterrent of a defensive alliance, we have to maintain the mix that has been successful in maintaining peace in Europe for 45 years," Mr. McKnight said.

OTTAWA — Recent revelations that Canadian immigration officials have resorted to sedating potentially violent deportees have drawn a barrage of condemnation from human rights groups and the medical profession, but the government defends the limited practice as absolutely necessary. Employment and Immigration Minister Barbara McDougall confirmed the policy, saying that it had "gone on for years" and was done only in extreme cases. "A medical attendant travels with the person and they're met by a medical person at the other end," she told reporters. "Under the terms of all our international agreements having to do with airlines, we have to make sure that people's behaviour on an aircraft is appropriate and that there's no danger to other passengers."

Australia Takes a Sobering Look at Canada's Crisis

EDITOR'S NOTE: The inference to be drawn from International Perspectives' sub-title, Canada and the world, is that the perspective is outward-looking. Not necessarily. Considerable foreign attention has been focused on Canada's current constitutional crisis, the centrepiece of which is the 1987 Meech Lake Accord — named for the Quebec refuge where it was negotiated — that must be ratified by Ottawa and the provinces by its third anniversary on June 23. Because of the continued uncertainty, the federal government is faced with reassuring the international investment community about Canada's economic stability. Finance Minister Michael Wilson, for example, went to New York earlier this month with a firm prediction that the Accord would be ratified. "Investors are naturally concerned", he acknowledged to his Wall Street audience, adding that previous constitutional differences had been settled eventually. "While there are challenging issues still to be resolved, I believe that the Meech Lake Accord will be ratified." In Ottawa, meanwhile, Prime Minister Mulroney said that all of the provincial premiers were beginning to realize that the Accord could not be permitted to die. "Clearly people are starting to understand the genuine significance of what would happen to the country and they're beginning to act accordingly", he said. Against this backdrop, the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade — in a publication backgrounder that does not necessarily reflect the final government position — looks at the "Canadian Constitutional Impasse." Following is that report with minimal editing for style:

In 1982, Quebec, alone of the 10 provinces in the Canadian federation, chose not to approve the constitution repatriated from the United Kingdom. Among other effects, this has prevented the province since then from playing any formal part in moves to amend the constitution.

The Meech Lake Accord... sets out to recognize Quebec's cultural uniqueness by formally recognizing Quebec's status as a "distinct society" within Canada in exchange for Quebec's approval of the Constitution. ... Two provinces, Manitoba and New Brunswick, have so far declined to ratify the Accord, demanding amendments as a condition of their approval. A third, Newfoundland, has announced, following a change of government, that it intends to rescind the earlier approval of its legislature.

The Accord has become a major political preoccupation in Canada, highlighting the country's linguistic-cultural duality. The controversy over the "distinct society" clause has led to a resurgence in the rhetoric of Quebec separatism.

Last month the New Brunswick Premier, Frank McKenna, with the support of the federal government, proposed a companion resolution to the Meech Lake Accord setting out the concerns of the provinces. ... Initial reactions to the proposal from other provinces have not been encouraging, despite the efforts of the Prime Minister, Brian Mulroney, to promote the initiative in a televised address to the nation on March 22.

The McKenna initiative is the only one currently on the books offering any possibility of movement on the constitutional impasse and the likelihood of success

is quickly evaporating. There are a number of impediments to an early resolution of the dispute:

- The Mulroney government's total identification with the Accord reduces its capacity to pursue a more conciliatory stance in its handling of the issue.
- Quebec is locked in by its own rhetoric to a position of unequivocal support for the Accord. Any possible willingness by the Quebec government to contemplate amendment to Meech Lake would be seen in Quebec as a sign of weakness and perhaps be more damaging politically than to allow the Accord to fail.
- In Manitoba, anti-Quebec and anti-federal government feelings serve to reinforce the Manitoba government's opposition to the Accord.
- Newfoundland has strengthened its opposition to the Accord with a motion passed by the provincial legislature on April 6 rescinding the province's signature of the Accord by the previous Newfoundland government.
- A lack of public support for the Accord is evidenced in recent national opinion polls that show Meech Lake has the support of only 24% of Canadians.

The first obvious result of this impasse is the increasingly divisive public debate. ... In English-speaking Canada, the Accord is seen to symbolize unreasonable demands by a Francophone community unconcerned by considerations of national unity. Francophones, on the other hand, feel that opposition to the Accord symbolizes their rejection by English Canada.

The Meech Lake debate has also opened up new arguments about the nature of the Canadian federation. Ratifi-

cation of Meech Lake would substantially augment the powers of the provinces vis-a-vis the federal government. For example, it would give the provinces a say in the federal government appointments to the Senate and the Supreme Court, although the final decision remains with the federal government.

The Accord also gives the province the right to federal government compensation where provinces choose not to participate in national shared-cost programmes such as health care, provided that the province concerned carries on a programme that is compatible with national objectives.

Some observers have argued that approval of the Accord is a greater long-term threat to Canadian unity than its possible demise. Former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, for example, maintains that what Canada needs is a strong central government to hold the federation together. According to Mr. Trudeau, it is one's rights as a individual citizen that count, not one's communal rights as a French- or English-Canadian.

The McKenna proposals, on which the federal government has pinned its hopes for a compromise, appear unlikely to provide a resolution of the dispute before the 23 June deadline. It is becoming clear that the government in Ottawa will very soon have to face the choice of whether to persist with efforts to ratify Meech Lake or seek to minimize the political fallout from the Accord's failure.

While some press reports have been overly alarmist in foreshadowing the demise of the Canadian federation, it is important to see the Meech Lake saga against an historical background of more than 200 years of adjustments in the accommodation between the two principal linguistic communities in Canada. While differences will persist, the centripetal forces behind the country together also remain and need to be taken into account in any discussion of Canada's national unity.