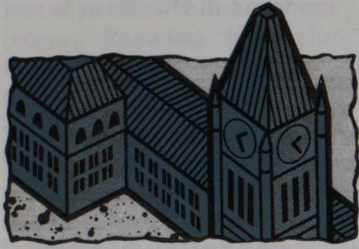


REPORT FROM THE HILL



Defence Policy

■ The New Democratic Party's defence policy, first unveiled on 31 July, came under attack from some unusual sources early in September. During a visit to Canada, French premier Jacques Chirac called the NDP's proposal to withdraw from NATO utopian and unrealistic. His critique was followed by that of British Foreign Secretary Sir Geoffrey Howe who told reporters on 8 September after a meeting with External Affairs Minister Joe Clark that pulling Canadian troops out of Europe would severely weaken NATO.

In the matter of the government's Defence White Paper, the Cabinet was expected to approve a more detailed capital defence budget in October. However, delay in the decision led to increasing speculation in the press about struggles within Cabinet to set priorities. There were also continuing reports that the US administration opposed the submarine plan – rumours fueled by a 29 October, *Globe and Mail* article by Charles Bennett, a Florida congressman and chairman of the Seapower Subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee. One of the two subs the government is considering is a British design that is subject to US restrictions on the transfer of nuclear technology. Bennett wrote that Congress might have qualms about such a transfer, particularly if the submarines are to be used to keep US ships out of what Washington regards as international waters. His view was echoed by the US Naval Attache in Ottawa speaking to defence contractors on 18 November, although the US embassy labelled those remarks as

“a personal view.” (See *Defence Notes* for more on this topic.)

South African Policy

■ From 13 to 17 October Canada hosted the Commonwealth heads of government conference in Vancouver. No major surprises were in store since British Prime Minister Thatcher's opposition to stronger sanctions against South Africa was well known. Unanimity was achieved regarding increased economic aid to the six front-line states bordering that country. A related idea to provide non-lethal military assistance to bordering states – first aired publicly in September by Canada's High Commissioner to Britain, Roy McMurtry, who chaired a Commonwealth Committee on Southern Africa – did not gain favour at this time. The conference also struck a committee of foreign ministers to provide “impetus and guidance.” That committee, which is chaired by Joe Clark but which does not include the British Foreign Secretary, is scheduled to meet in February in Lusaka, Zambia to study ways to police economic sanctions already imposed.

Clark had told the House on 9 September that, while the government was prepared to sever economic and diplomatic relations with South Africa, to do so would end any Canadian influence on ending *apartheid*. The time was not considered right for such drastic action. This approach was implicitly rejected by Liberal Leader John Turner who called, on 10 September, for Canada to end relations for the year's end unless “clear progress” had been made in dismantling *apartheid*.

Cruise Missile Testing

■ On 1 October Liberal leader John Turner called for an end to cruise-missile testing in Canada, an issue that had split his caucus in March when four members broke ranks with Turner by voting in favour of a NDP resolution calling for an immediate halt to the

tests. In the House he described the “concrete results in the negotiations between the two super-powers” on intermediate nuclear forces as the reason for his change. Mr. Clark responded that the government did not accept “a policy that could destroy the unity of NATO” and “be a threat to what we have accomplished so far in reducing levels of nuclear arms.”

Central America

■ A possible Canadian role in an eventual Central American peace settlement preoccupied both politicians and the media in the wake of the 7 August signing by five Central American countries of the plan named for Costa Rican President Oscar Arias. In his address to the UN General Assembly on 22 September, Clark described the root problem in Central America as “poverty not ideology” and the real need as “development assistance not military activity.” He commented that “intervention by outside powers will only aggravate the tensions.” Yet he did not call directly for an end to US support for the Contra rebels against the Nicaraguan regime.

Clark's visit to Central America 21-29 November had its share of controversy, most notably his comment that Canada might be willing to accept Contras as refugees if such action would help support a larger regional peace settlement. This prompted a question in the House from NDP MP Dan Heap and an assurance from Monique Landry, Minister for External Relations, that, in the event Canada decided to admit Contras, the Commons would be told beforehand of measures the government would take to prevent Contra war criminals from entering the country. Mr. Clark was also questioned by Canadian aid workers in Nicaragua about the level of Canadian assistance (which has amounted to \$40.9 million since 1982) and about an earlier announcement that Canadian aid to

Guatemala would be resumed after a suspension in 1981 because of widespread human rights abuses.

On 2 December upon his return from Central America Mr. Clark spoke at length in the House on his impressions and expressed his desire to have a parliamentary committee investigate further Canada's future role in the peace process.

Short Notes From the Hill

■ On 16 September twenty-three nations plus the European Community signed at Montreal a global agreement to control the chlorofluorocarbon (CFC) pollution (chemicals used in refrigeration, dry-cleaning, plastic foam and building insulation) that is destroying the earth's ozone layer. A number of countries, including Canada, will have to pass laws enabling them to put the pact into force.

■ Bill Blaikie was appointed the NDP's external affairs critic in the House in mid-September replacing Pauline Jewett who was shifted to federal-provincial relations and constitutional affairs while retaining responsibility for arms control and disarmament.

■ On 3 November Senator Paul Lafond resigned, for reasons of ill health, as chairman of the Senate Special Committee on National Defence which he had presided over since its inception in 1980.

■ The proposed Emergencies Act – Bill C-77 – received second reading on 18 November and was referred to committee for fine-tuning. It would replace the 1914 War Measures Act under which the federal cabinet has unchecked powers to suspend civil liberties in time of real or apprehended insurrection. Under the new law the government would be able to respond selectively to four classes of emergency: public welfare crises such as floods or other natural disasters; public order threats caused by terrorist acts; international emergencies falling short of war; and war itself. □

- GREGORY WIRICK