

*U.S.S.R.-Canada Protocol*

al disputes and misunderstandings. Despite the suggestions of the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) that we have lacked in our efforts to promote international understanding, Canada's record is one of the finest in the world. I am sure the hon. member is aware of that fact. There are countless issues where Canadian initiatives have conferred a benefit on the entire world. Those who advance their narrow criticism of the recent agreement between the U.S.S.R. and Canada should remember that Canadian initiatives to keep the seabed free from nuclear weapons, to reduce armaments in the world and to protect the world's environment have involved extensive consultations with those whose political ideologies we cannot support.

Projected to its extreme limit, the argument advanced by certain hon. members would have us only conduct our external relations with politically acceptable governments. Such a policy would be foolish in the extreme and it would be foolhardy. Here we are, one of the world's largest nations with one of the world's longest coastlines, bounded on the north by our unique Arctic and beyond that the Soviet Union. Our geography makes mandatory relations with both the United States and the U.S.S.R. in a number of critical areas. In a war we could be another Belgium, the no man's land where nuclear warheads land. No wonder Canada is so active at the Geneva disarmament talks; no wonder Canada is a leader of the small nations in efforts to bring about disarmament—because there are now nuclear warheads capable of dropping a million tons of t.n.t. or its equivalent should a war be conducted overhead.

In the fight to protect the world's environment, together with our two vast neighbours we could be a key to protecting the biosphere of the earth. So we have this agreement, we have this accord because we have a great interest in all efforts, unilateral, bilateral and multilateral, to protect that real estate which we share with our two giant neighbours, the United States and Russia. Yet some of those in the opposition continue to look into the glass darkly and tell us that we have no business attempting to construct a better and more efficient way to discuss with our neighbours a range of problems common to us. Common sense Canadians know where their best interest lies—not in a narrow, introverted chauvinism but in a healthy, positive approach to our international relations.

The House has been assured that this agreement is not a treaty but a means whereby we can conduct normal diplomatic relations on a more regular, systematic basis. It is, in a sense, a protocol to eliminate, paradoxically, the need for even more protocol, an arrangement to render unnecessary the construction of new and totally separate arrangements for issues which arise between our two governments. If similar arrangements can be achieved with other nations of special importance to Canada, then we should proceed to establish these similar arrangements as well.

The opposition has questioned the benefits which are expected to flow from this arrangement, and some of the points have been reviewed. Discussions will take place

[Mr. Perrault.]

under this arrangement about the preservation of the environment, Arctic conditions and navigation, the status of minorities and on matters which, hopefully, will lead to a reuniting of families.

I want to say something about the first of the possible advantages to flow from this new arrangement with the U.S.S.R. We have an immense amount in common with the geography of northern Russia. Canada for years, quite understandably, has been very interested in the Soviet Arctic, particularly the eastern areas. We have in common with Russia a vast area of permafrost, a boreal forest, a sparse population and peoples some of whom have a very similar ethnic background to some Canadians. Canada wants to know more about a range of considerations relating to the Arctic, wherever that Arctic area may lie. So far, far eastern Siberia has been closed to the west. Hopefully, that area can be opened to our scientists.

This flow of knowledge and information cannot be a one-way street. It is wrong to assume that Canada is the only possible beneficiary of such an exchange. We have done some unique things in our own Arctic and this information is of interest to our Soviet neighbours. There is a possibility, then, of a sharing of information which may well be of substantial benefit to both nations. They build dams in permafrost in the U.S.S.R. It would be good for our scientists to discuss dam-building techniques in our permafrost.

How does the vast Soviet forest industry cope with pollution? Do we have technical knowledge which can be shared in this area? If it helps the Soviet Union, then it helps the environment of the world and our youngsters and people will benefit just as much as young people and citizens in any other part of the world. How are natural gas pipelines constructed in permafrost? Surely there are opportunities to share information and knowledge with respect to community and social development and ways in which the capabilities of our respective native peoples can be brought to full development. Surely there are ways to share information with respect to the education of our respective native peoples and the ways in which their rich heritage of life, language and customs can be retained, while offering these peoples an opportunity to realize their full potential.

In the Northeast Passage, within the area under Soviet jurisdiction, a remarkable system of navigation has been established by the Soviet through 40 years of development. Surely Canada has an interest in sharing with the U.S.S.R. and all other countries knowledge which may ensure safe and efficient navigation in the dangerous Arctic waters. We have a common interest in Arctic ecology and in methods involved in preventing pollution of these waters.

In other words, those who heap scorn on this agreement and attempt to read into it all sorts of dark implications must be unaware of the world in which we live, a world where a diplomatic thaw already is under way between China and the West. For 22 years since the Communists came to power in China scarcely a constructive word has been exchanged between the United States