

Book Reviews

Canada feels Reagan

by Anthony Westell

Canada and the Reagan Challenge by Stephen Clarkson. Ottawa: Canadian Institute for Economic Policy, 1982, 383 pages, \$12.95.

Professor Clarkson sets out to report and to analyze what he calls "the most acute crisis in the Canadian-American relationship in living memory," in essence the outraged reaction of the United States in 1981 to the National Energy Program and to the proposal to enlarge the role of FIRA, and the Canadian response. By interviewing some 200 persons and obtaining access to confidential records, he has done a splendid job of reporting which puts to shame most daily journalism. His analysis of what the facts mean is more questionable, but the book stands as an important contribution to the continuing debate on the Canada-US relationship.

Clarkson begins by describing the coincidence of two events, the return of the Liberals to power in Ottawa in 1980 with a nationalistic program, and the accession to power in the United States of the Reagan government committed to a more aggressive foreign policy asserting US interests abroad. The result was an angry confrontation, and Clarkson documents the public recriminations, private arguments and written exchanges.

His conclusion is that Canada quailed before empty US threats, dropped the plans to expand FIRA and promised there would be no more NEPs.

But Clarkson goes further to argue that the crisis, as he carefully defines the word, was not a passing phase but confirmation that the two countries are on diverging courses in many areas of policy. He supports this opinion with detailed descriptions of the problems of trade policy, the Alaska pipeline, cultural sovereignty, defence issues and other matters. This leads him to the conclusion that in order to assert and defend its national interests in future, Canada will need a deliberate strategy for dealing with the United States, and probably a powerful new agency outside External Affairs to implement the strategy. Unfortunately, Clarkson does not make clear just what strategy might work.

An alternative way of viewing the events of 1980 and 1981 is that they were merely a temporary disruption in what is normally a cooperative relationship, and that both governments have since recoiled in alarm from the path of

confrontation. There has certainly been a concerted effort to oil the waters. It is obvious that the Canadian government has retreated from some of its nationalist positions, but it was probably bowing as much to domestic politics and to economic recession as it was to US protests. It is doubtful, in fact, that there was ever a majority in Cabinet for any proposition to extend the NEP formula to other sectors. The Americans, for their part, concede that on coming to power, the Reagan administration was inexperienced in dealing with Canada, and at times quite undiplomatic. It was a matter of style, they say, rather than substance; they were merely clumsy in pushing the protests against Canadian policies which the Carter administration had in fact initiated. But all is now well, the relationship is back to its normal friendly state, and to quiet diplomacy.

If Clarkson's view that there has been a fundamental change in the relationship is too dramatic — the wish of a Canadian nationalist may be the father to that analysis — the US view that all will be well in future is too optimistic. The relationship is so complex and intense that there are bound to be rows, and often in the areas Clarkson has described. But on the other hand, the outcome of the 1981 affair seems to show that neither country is willing to push differences too far. We are too vulnerable to each other to dismantle the famous special relationship.

Anthony Westell is Professor of Journalism at Carleton University in Ottawa.

How war could happen

by John R. Walker

Risks of Unintentional Nuclear War by Daniel Frei with Christina Catrina. Geneva: UN Institute for Disarmament Research.

This sobering survey of the risks of unintentional nuclear war makes clear that the Dr. Strangelove syndrome — war by accident or by mad colonel — is the least likely risk. "Minute and negligible," as Professor Frei puts it, provided there is strategic stability.

But strategic instability grows with the arms race, as the two superpowers build up their retaliatory capacity and