

Qualified Acceptance

- Canada could concentrate on technologies that correspond to Canadian expertise or security interests (communications and surveillance) and that did not risk being destabilizing or undermining arms control.
- Yet qualified acceptance would not significantly influence U.S. policy, the costs and benefits would be roughly the same as in the case of the first option and Canada could still not escape the charge that it would be endorsing "an escalation of the arms race" which would hamper the conduct of Canadian diplomacy in international meetings on arms control.

Qualified Rejection

- Canada would be better able to monitor strategic defence programs of both superpowers and express its concerns accordingly by not being formally tied to SDI.
- Canada would keep options open and not preclude involvement at a later stage after thoroughly assessing the program's implications.
- An autonomous space program, with both civilian and military dimensions, fitted best with this option.
- The drawback was the risk of being unacquainted with developing defence technologies certain of which could relate to the defence of Canadian territory.

Unqualified Rejection

- Prohibition on research undertaken by the private sector would likely damage the Canada-U.S. defence relationship and diminish the confidence and trust which have permitted a fairly free flow of information and have "powerfully bolstered Canadian security."

In general terms, the committee recommended that the government remain firmly committed to the letter and spirit of the ABM Treaty. It emphasized that technological and economic factors should be considered subordinate to strategic and arms control concerns in the formation of the government's decision. It also stressed the importance of a coherent plan for the Canadian aerospace industry which would straddle both military and civilian purposes. The three issues on which no consensus could be reached even by a majority of the committee were:

1. the effect participation in the research phase would have on Canada's arms control efforts;

2. the size of commitment that would be expected from Canada and its effect on the fulfillment of existing military roles and responsibilities;
3. which technological program would best provide a clear focus for the Canadian space industry and support for Canada's military objectives.

THE GOVERNMENT DECIDES

After extensive meetings with his cabinet on a wide range of topics and after meeting as well with the Progressive Conservative Caucus, the Prime Minister conveyed the government's decision to President Reagan in a 15-minute telephone conversation at 3:20 p.m. on Saturday, September 7. News of the decision and the text of Defence Minister Nielsen's reply to Secretary Weinberger were released to the press the same day.

The government had concluded that Canada's own policies and priorities did not warrant a government to government effort in support of SDI research. The Prime Minister hastened to add, however, that "although Canada does not intend to participate on a government to government basis . . . private companies and institutions interested in participating in the program will continue to be free to do so."²⁶ Mr. Mulroney emphasized the government's belief that SDI research by the U.S. was "both consistent with the ABM Treaty and prudent in light of significant advances in Soviet research and deployment of the world's only existing ballistic missile defence system." Mr. Nielsen's letter relayed the government's conviction "that the extensive existing cooperation in defence research between our two countries is mutually beneficial and should be encouraged to grow."

By and large Liberal and New Democratic spokespersons hailed the government's decision as a vindication of the opposition, while James Stark, president of Operation Dismantle, spoke for many peace groups when he remarked, "We are going to take this as a victory. We don't get too many of them, you know."²⁷ Both of the major Toronto newspapers applauded the government, the *Star* commenting on September 8 that henceforward Canadian interest in SDI would be from the perspective of arms control and the *Globe and Mail* declaring on September 9 that the decision proved "an independent foreign policy is alive and well and living in Ottawa." Albert Juneau in *Le Devoir's* editorial on September 10, however, sounded a cautionary note: he took issue with the Prime Minister's assertion that the Soviet Union was far advanced in ballistic missile defence and called for recognition of the dangers that SDI posed to arms control negotiations in Geneva.