

# Commentary

## Nuclear war - an umbrella, a funnel, or a club?

*Editor's note: The following Commentary is in response to a letter printed in the December 2 issue of the Gazette.*

by **Martin Tomlinson, for the Dalhousie Disarmament Society**

War is a terrible thing, and it had become more so with the invention of dynamite, the machine gun, the tank and other weapons of mass destruction. The invention of nuclear fission and hydrogen weapons have, like their predecessors, made war *unthinkable*. Supposedly no nation would dare to war, through fear of annihilation. Yet this is not so and nations continue to war; there being an estimated five million dead as a result of military activity since 1945.

While conventional wars continue, nuclear weapons exist in ever increasing numbers. The two superpowers alone intend to spend trillions of dollars before the end of the century in an ever-escalating arms race. The effect of massive financial input and international competition on the military is an increasingly complex system of communication links, computers, submarines, satellites, missiles, and

people, all planning one another's destruction.

With this increased complexity also comes a greater probability that something will go wrong with the command and control system, especially in a crisis situation. The effect that these weapons would have on the Northern Hemisphere in the event of a full scale exchange of weapons would *undoubtedly* be the complete destruction of human life through blast, lingering radioactivity, plague, and starvation.

Recently, political control of these weapons has taken a new twist. In the past, U.S. policy was based on the much vaunted and now daunted concept of mutually assured destruction (M.A.D.), where both the U.S. and the U.S.S.R were seen as holding each other hostage under the threat of nuclear attack (also blithely known as the nuclear umbrella). The Reagan administration, however, has outlined a new policy based on the idea that the U.S. and its allies acquire the capability to fight and win a prolonged nuclear war, so as to then impose conditions satisfactory to the West. Therefore, nuclear weapons are no longer deterrents



and the nuclear umbrella has become a nuclear club.

Secretary of Defence, Caspar W. Weinberger, reported to Congress that the U.S. had "to impose termination of a major war on terms favourable to the U.S. and its allies, even if nuclear weapons had to be used." C.S. Gray, a military analyst and administration advisor, stated that U.S. war aims should be "the destruction of Soviet political authority and the emergence of a

post-war situation compatible with Western values". Dr. Gray also claims that "an intelligent U.S. offensive strategy wedded to homeland defence should reduce U.S. casualties to approximately 20 million, a level he believes is acceptable and would allow for postwar recovery. Dr. Gray does not mention the number of Canadian, European, or other non-American casualties that would be acceptable to the administration.

Dr. F.C. Ikle, Undersecretary of Defence for Policy, views a favourable nuclear exchange as one that leaves a ratio of forces favourable to the U.S. even if the number of dead and the amount of damage were to be so great as to nullify any concept of winning.

Rhetorically speaking, one wonders how anyone could feel secure under the American nuclear umbrella. Perhaps a more apt term than nuclear umbrella would be *funnel of stupidity*. This indicates the new policy to be not so much a physical barrier like an umbrella, but rather a policy that will funnel Soviet I.C.B.M.'s on to targets of prime strategic importance like Washington - or Halifax.

The Gazette accepts Commentaries from the Dalhousie community as an outlet for people with opinions and views.

Comments may be up to 750 words in length, and must arrive at the Gazette, typewritten and double-spaced, before Monday noon for inclusion in that week's newspaper.

## Letters

### Open letter from VP Robbie Shaw

**To the Editor:**

**From: Peter Rans, President, Dalhousie Student Union**  
**From: Robbie Shaw**

I can appreciate the confusion and frustration which you experienced in reading the (Chronicle Herald) front page story on November 18th concerning comments I made to a seminar sponsored by the Institute for Public Administration. In view of the fact that I was either misquoted in each case, or quoted totally out of context, you can appreciate the degree of my own frustration.

The problem arose from the fact that I.P.A.C. seminars have, without exception in the fifteen years since I have been a member, been closed to the media. Unfortunately, someone chose at the very last minute to make a decision to admit one media representative. That media representative did not use any quotations from the presentation which I made to the seminar, but rather simply used comments which I made in answer to several questions from the floor following my presentation. The inevitable result was to be totally inaccurate.

May I deal with each of the quotations separately.

(a) "The restraint measures to date have not had any negative impact on academic programs." The point that I actually made was that while the University had been in somewhat of a restraint posture in recent years that this had not had the effect of cutting back or eliminating any of the existing academic programs. I went on to elaborate that each year we have added academic programs at Dalhousie and at most other universities in the Province. The primary point I was making to this particular question from the floor, was that in view of government cutbacks, in the future it would be unlikely that we will have a net increase in academic programs but rather we might well be subtracting either parts of programs or whole programs.

(b) "Nova Scotia clearly has too many universities and we are not as efficient as we should be." The question I was asked was whether I would favor a form of university rationalization that would result in a lesser number of universities existing in the Province. I answered that I thought the question was unrealistic because it was my opinion that no Provincial Government, regardless of political persuasion, would

close down universities in Nova Scotia in spite of the experience of the A.I.E. I added that in my personal opinion, if we were to design the University system all over again, that I would feel that we should have a lesser number of universities and greater efficiency would have been the result. I think you would find that very, very few Nova Scotians would disagree with that statement.

(c) "It would take a gutsy government to close any more institutions down." In fact, you yourself misquoted what the newspaper said. The newspaper said that I said "It would take a gutsy government to ever close any down." I believe emphatically in what I said in that statement and in talking with a number of government officials in the last few days, none of them has taken any exception to that remark. Obviously, the story on the front page of the Herald has created an undue amount of concern and reaction from both faculty and students. The answer, I guess, is that university officials can no longer make "off the cuff" remarks in public meetings. That is a very unfortunate circumstance but I accept that that is the lesson learned.

**Robbie Shaw**

### Pauling tour and disarmament seminar not rigged

**To the Editor:**

This is with reference to a letter entitled "Angel Dust" published in the Gazette of November 25th from Charles Spurr.

Please be advised that the Canadian government did not finance the "Two Days for Disarmament" or Dr. Pauling's tour to Halifax. Therefore, the claim that Dr. Cappon stated that Canadian government financing for the program was conditional on presenting speakers from "both sides" was absolute rubbish.

Charles Spurr would be best advised to check his facts and memory carefully before making such statements in the future.

**Sincerely yours,**

**Ken Persau**

**Coordinating Committee for the Linus Pauling tour  
and the Coalition against Nuclear War  
P.O. Box 7157  
Halifax North, Halifax, N.S. B3K 5J5**

### Setting the Gazette straight

**To the Editor:**

In my discussion with Ken Burke, on which the article on university funding in your December 2nd issue was based, I at no time said that university students should "foot the whole university bill", nor did I mention the figure of \$11,000 for Dalhousie tuition. In fact, I mentioned no figure.

I was, for example, careful to say that the cost of research and related activities, a major part of the University's functions and costs, should be supported by block public funding. What I did say was that, since students are the principal beneficiaries of their university education, tuition fees should reflect the bulk (not all) of **instructional costs**, and that students should then be assisted, according to their economic circumstances, to meet those fees through a system of loans and grants from governments, so that low-income students would not have to bear a heavier burden of debt than high-income students, on the average. Much of the public funding that now comes directly to the universities from government would instead come through fees that would be largely financed by government by payments to students.

University funding is a complex issue. My proposals can only be fully understood and appreciated by examining them carefully in their entirety. For anyone interested in doing so, I suggest reading carefully the volume on the universities in the **Report of the Royal Commission on Education, Public Services and Provincial-Municipal Relations**, especially Chapter 64. In this period of financial constraint in the funding of all public services, it is important to consider alternatives that are both rational and equitable (just) and that might help us to maintain university funding at a level that will permit universities to perform their important functions in the interest of students and Canadian society. This proposal is an exploratory contribution to the discussion of alternatives.

The errors in the article, noted at the beginning of this letter, are serious ones; for they grossly distort and undermine the whole argument in the eyes of the reader. This is doubly unfortunate, because the balance of the article is clear, accurate and informative. The damage, once done, is very difficult to correct; but the purpose of this letter is to correct it.

**Yours very truly,  
John F. Graham**