

Richard Garwin pointed out that, when the Pentagon or the White House had something to say, carefully-crafted public relations techniques were used to “create the agenda” for US policy debates; the real questions were not raised by government officials because it was not in their interest to do so. Mr. Garwin asked Mr. Wren: Is there any way for journalists to move beyond the official agenda and to probe these deeper questions? Christopher Wren acknowledged that the US government set the agenda at press conferences; this was especially true of the Reagan Administration, which was far less accessible than the Nixon White House. He had no specific recommendations for overcoming this problem.

Hugh Winsor offered an explanation of why the level of dialogue on these issues was relatively unsophisticated in the Canadian press. Journalists might be under-informed, he said, but they did have a “nose for power”; the Canadian media homed in on areas where power was being exercised. The media paid less attention to the subjects addressed in this conference because of their overall perception that Canada had little or no leverage in these matters.

Mr. Winsor also touched on the contrasts between broadcast media and print journalism. He said that he understood full well one of the reasons why the sessions had been closed — to avoid the disruption of television lights. Television crews, he said, “shoot 45 minutes worth of tape and then broadcast a 45-second clip”. He agreed with Christopher Wren that print offered the journalist a chance to probe the issues, gather the background information, and analyze the arguments. Television went for visuals. Surveys showed, however, that the public got most of its information from the electronic media.

Hillary McKenzie, of *Maclean's* magazine, said that the only way to get better coverage was to open these conferences to the media. She acknowledged that radio and television were, in general, more superficial than print, but there were documentaries, such as Gwynne Dyer's *WAR* series, which developed the historical and political contexts for the current debates.

John Walker also disagreed with the decision to hold closed sessions at the conference. Geoffrey Pearson, Executive Director of the Institute, explained that the question had been debated at length by conference organizers. Some sessions had been closed in order to facilitate a candid discussion.