

## The arms race

# Just a few shopping days left till Armageddon

Twenty-three years ago, two nuclear bombs, each with a force of about 15,000 tons of TNT, wiped out two large industrial cities. Today there are tens of thousands of nuclear warheads in the world, the largest of which have a force of 2 million tons of TNT. And they continue to be built at the rate of six a day.

Nuclear missiles are standing ready for instant use. Aircraft are on the runways, on alert. American, Soviet, British, French, Chinese missiles are in their silos, or on launching pads with military personnel ready, 24 hours a day, to press a button on signal. It takes a team of just two people to interpret an electronic message, and to launch a nuclear war. Two people of any nationality, in any state of health, at any time.<sup>1</sup>

Increasing numbers of scientists say the odds for a nuclear war within 20 years are better than fifty-fifty, if present trends continue.

*Atlantic Issues* takes a look at a group that's determined to change those trends.

by Dorothy Norvell and Eleanor Maclean

There's a new Canadian group that is bringing together issues of the arms race, human rights, and the economy. It has begun to alert the Canadian public to a dangerous game in which Canada is becoming more and more entangled. Project Ploughshares began last year with the support of the Mennonite Central Committee, the Canadian Friends Service Committee and CUSO. It now has very broad sponsorship. Its researcher and education officer are helping to set up study/action groups across the country.

What "dangerous game" is Canada becoming entangled in? Simply, the same game that is catching on in many countries today: drastically increased military spending and an unchecked spreading of nuclear technology. Both these trends are going to have disastrous effects on our economy and society, the group says.

Project Ploughshares is hoping to bring this to the attention of the Canadian public before and during the May and June United Nations Special

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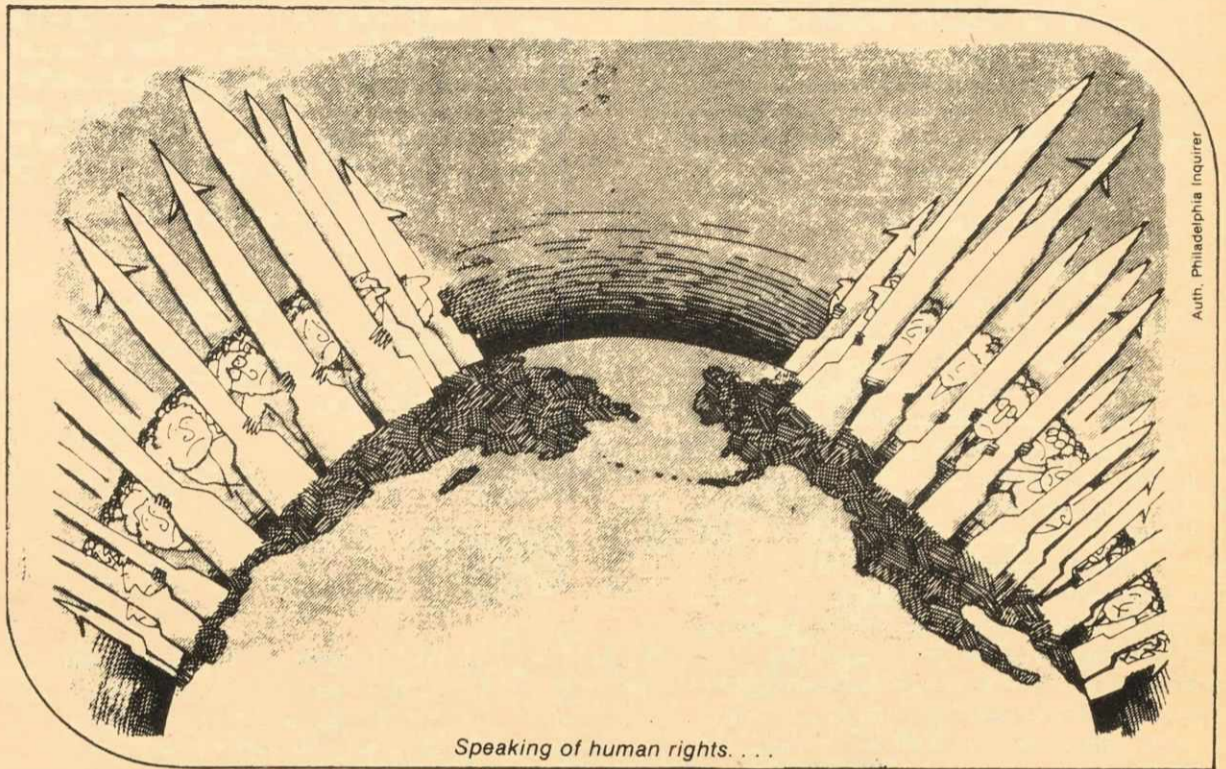
Assembly on disarmament. Canada is said to be "high on principles but low on direct commitments". Ploughshares wants to monitor the position of the Canadian Government, keep the public informed, and thus pressure the government to honour some of its commitments. Community groups used this technique with success during the World Food Conference in Rome 3 years ago, actually changing Canada's role there.

Contacts are listed at the end of the article if you would like to have more information or start your own Ploughshares group.

### Canada's involvement in the war machine of the superpowers

World-wide military expenditures total nearly \$400 billion yearly, having doubled since 1969 alone, and Canada is doing its part to keep those figures high. For example, the Minister of National Defence, Barney Danson, has 2.5 billion dollars of tax money to buy new fighter aircraft, and has the Liberal Government's go-ahead to increase his department's expenditures 12% over and above the inflation rate. No one's feeling the pinch yet, though, because we won't have to start paying the bills for the billions of dollars of military hardware till around 1986.<sup>2</sup>

One of the reasons given for such dramatic increases in spending is that we have to "keep up" with our NATO partners: but what does this mean for the country? Ally to the United States and a member of NATO, Canada is bound very closely to its friends. Indeed, the territory of the US and Canada are shown as being one unit on NATO information maps.<sup>3</sup> While not a nuclear-weapon nation itself, Canada does provide



Speaking of human rights. . . .

facilities, and these facilities become important targets: the target may be at Cape Race Newfoundland where Loran C navigation aids are used by ballistic missile firing subs; or Halifax, Nova Scotia, which is a large port of call for NATO subs and headquarters of Maritime Command of the Canadian Armed Forces; or even St. Margaret, New Brunswick, with its Baker Nunn satellite tracking camera.<sup>4</sup>

### Canada's military sales

While Canada may be an unwilling target in a nuclear war, in "peacetime" it is exporting arms to other parts of the world, averaging \$355 million a year between 1965 and 1974. Canada's stated policy is not to sell military commodities to areas of conflict, but military goods have gone regularly to "all the major Third World arms races outside the Middle East, namely, Latin America, East Africa and South Asia".<sup>5</sup>

Ploughshares aims to make Canadians aware of the many discrepancies between stated Canadian policy and its actual practice. It also hopes to dispel some of the myths that have grown up around the military.

### Myths and realities

One of the myths Ploughshares dispels is that military spending is good for an economy in trouble. It notes that at a time when there is supposed to be no more money for hospitals, increases in old-age pensions and other social services, there is lots of money for arms. "It's good for the economy", comes the reply, "military spending stimulates a stagnant economy and creates jobs and spending".

Ploughshares points to recent research that proves the contrary:

"High military expenditure in Western countries fuels inflation. It pumps money into our economies and creates buying power; but nothing for people to buy. Secondly, by diverting capital from investment in new plant and equipment, spending on weapons starves civilian industry of funds for new machine tools—tools that could increase efficiency and reduce prices. Thirdly, military demand affects prices by competing with civilian needs for scarce commodities such as oil and non-ferrous metals, and also, just as important, for labour skills."<sup>6</sup>

### Atlantic Canada

The economy of Atlantic Canada, we know, depends greatly on Canadian military expenditures of one form or another—for bases, jobs,

money. However, if this money spent in Atlantic Canada by the military were spent in the civilian sector, the economy would be immensely better off, according to this theory. A US research team has found that military spending creates fewer jobs per billion dollars spent than any other government spending except the space programme. In fact, the job-creating differential between spending \$1 billion on the Pentagon and \$1 billion on public service employment is about 57,000 jobs!<sup>7</sup>

What is your opinion of Project Ploughshares views and its work? You can contact them care of this newspaper or at the address given below. They want you to get involved.

There will be a regional conference at St. Mary's University in Halifax on March 10 and 11, and everyone is welcome to attend. For more information about any of the above, contact  
**PLOUGHSHARES STUDY GROUP**  
2 Windermere Road  
Halifax, Nova Scotia

### Further reading

**A time to disarm**, by Murray Thompson and Ernie Reghehr of Project Ploughshares. It is a discussion guide for stimulating a national dialogue on Canada and the UN's Special Session

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on Disarmament. \$1.00 available through the study group in Halifax.

**Ploughshares Monitor**, by the same group. Available through the Halifax group or through Conrad Grebel College, Waterloo, Ontario.

**The Permanent War Economy** by Seymour Melman, Simon and Schuster, N.Y. 1974.

1. Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, May 1977, p. 44, quoted in **A time to Disarm**
2. **Defense 76** Dept of National Defence, 1977, p. 67
3. **NATO Facts and figures**
4. "Canada and strategic nuclear weapons systems", Purcell Research Group Paper No. 1, p.3
5. **Ploughshares Bulletin** Vol. 1 No. 2, p. 5
6. **New Internationalist**, "A bread and butter issue", May 1977, p. 3
7. Marion Anderson, "The empty pork barrel", Public Research Interest Group, Michigan, 1975, p. 1