

peace and security debate from an ethical perspective, it may be necessary for it to keep in mind that for its strategies to have real influence, they must reflect not only its own values, but also an understanding of what will work in the political arena. This is less a matter of becoming more "reasonable" than a concern for its own political future.

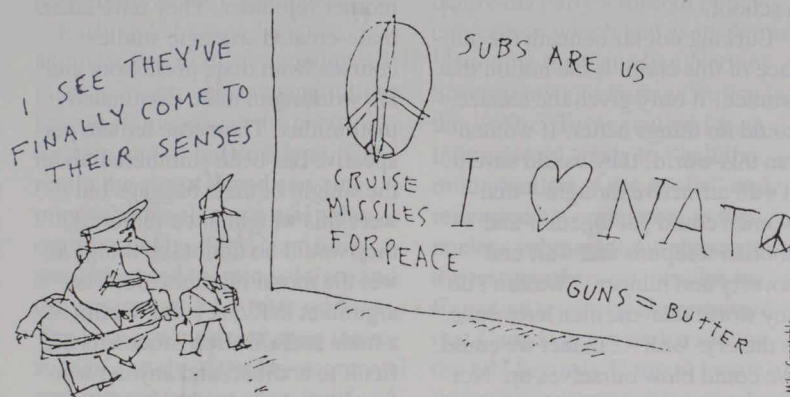
Calls by the peace movement for nuclear disarmament appeal to a public convinced that the risks of nuclear war have become intolerably high in a world armed with some 50,000 nuclear weapons.

The dilemma for peace groups has been to convince Canadians that the number of nuclear weapons in the world can be drastically reduced without giving the Soviet Union a military advantage over the West. More important than numbers, however, in the assessment of this risk, is the purpose governments assign to nuclear weapons through their military strategies. The doctrine of Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD) limits nuclear weapons to a retaliatory role designed to prevent their own use. Conversely, the "nuclear war-fighting" conception suggests that no deterrent is credible unless every possible battle scenario of the other side is deterred; thus, each side reciprocates whenever the other deploys.

That neither superpower would want an all-out nuclear battle is obvious. But despite statements from superpower leaders that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought, nuclear strategies continue to be premised on the idea that, should deterrence fail, their forces must also be capable of waging and terminating nuclear war on "favourable" terms. Each side deploys not only more nuclear weapons, but purposely develops destabilizing types of weaponry designed to gain early advantage in a nuclear confrontation.

Why are these military strategies politically relevant to the peace movement? Because until governments limit the purpose of nuclear weapons to a purely retaliatory role, initiatives to reduce their numbers will not make us proportionately safer from the

threat of nuclear war. War-fighting strategies currently place such an exaggerated value on nuclear weapons that their negotiated removal is made all the more difficult for political leaders who must play to domestic publics. Cruise missiles of East or West thus become "essential" to the security of either side. Undoubtedly, it would offend the values of many peace groups to be actively promoting the virtues of Mutual Assured Destruction. But they can create wider political support for an interim step that would lessen the



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risk of nuclear war by calling greater attention to the distinction between these two approaches and to their consequences for Canadian security policies.

The task of peace movements must be to create public pressure forcing political leaders to act on their statements, so that military policies reflect the futility of nuclear war. Thus, cruise missile testing, Air Defence Initiative and other such non-nuclear ventures should be challenged, not on the basis of whether they involve nuclear weapons directly, but on the ground that each of these pull Canada further into participation in a nuclear war-fighting strategy.

Drawing this distinction might also help the peace movement decide appropriate responses to Soviet foreign policy. Public fear of nuclear war continues to be circumscribed by mistrust of Soviet intentions. Peace movement literature has rightly questioned the more hysterical Western interpretations of Soviet foreign policy aims; but it must be remembered

that the Soviet Union is a great power. Like any great power, it is a collection of different bureaucracies with conflicting interests. Whatever the Soviet Union's true intentions are, many of its actions will be interpreted by conservatives in the West as evidence of expansionist designs, and as rationales for undermining the peace movement's critiques and advancing the arms race. Better to admit there are some Soviet defence officials who would prefer to expand military programmes, and attempt instead to seek out and

promote the position of those who accept the principle that nuclear weapons have little use.

All of this brings us to one final commonly-voiced complaint, that Canada can do little about the arms race so there is little point in trying. It is precisely because Canada's options are limited that we had better do some clear thinking and decide our future actively. Debates about Canada's participation in NATO and NORAD frequently lose sight of why, presumably, such alliances were created in the first place: the preservation of international security. While it is likely that Canadian governments will continue to view nuclear weapons as forming some part of any security arrangement between East and West for the foreseeable future, Canada can become more active in advocating a more limited role for nuclear weapons. Here, it must be noted that no Canadian government has yet gone on record as opposing the US strategic nuclear modernization programme, or more importantly, the nuclear war-fighting doctrine that underlies it. Canada

can articulate, without leaving NATO, its opposition to this conception of nuclear deterrence, and to policies such as cruise missile testing and the Air Defence Initiative which flow from it.

THE PEACE MOVEMENT'S PRIMARY goal is to radically alter the values that mould our priorities and our thinking about war and peace. But in its policy alternatives, the Canadian disarmament movement has in fact been decidedly less "radical" than its European counterpart. Only a handful of Canada's 1,500 peace groups advocate unilateral disarmament; and even fewer are unabashedly sympathetic towards the Soviet regime.

Still, the Canadian peace movement does face a dilemma in translating its values into policy alternatives. The argument here for a stricter interpretation of deterrence is not offered as a panacea for all peace groups; nor will it likely be accepted as such. Groups with radically different ways of looking at the world are often needed in a democracy to nudge forward the values of the majority who would otherwise remain silent. But given the inherent advantages of the state over disarmament groups, the Canadian peace movement will need to critically analyze its strategies if it is to continue to be a politically relevant force in the peace and security debate. □

#### Further Reading

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- Dennis Stairs. "Public Opinion and External Affairs: Reflections on the Domestication of Canadian Foreign Policy," *International Journal*, vol. 33, no. 1, Winter 1977/78.