

John Walker, of Southam News, commented that anyone who had attended NATO conferences knew that members of the Canadian delegation would not tell journalists very much about what had gone on, whereas every other delegation would. The Canadian government, Mr. Walker said, was too secretive with its citizens. For example, the negotiations over cruise missile testing and the dropping of the clause referring to Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) from the NORAD agreement were kept secret from the Canadian people. Government officials must move away from secrecy if they expected the citizenry to be better informed.

George Bell asked Mr. Honderich whether it was possible for the media to achieve sufficient expertise to publish information which threw light on all sides of an issue? Mr. Honderich replied that every journalist was trained to get all sides of a story. The peace groups, according to Mr. Honderich, had become particularly sophisticated in dealing with the media and getting across their point of view. Some academics had contributed to the debate by submitting articles to daily newspapers. Strategic analysts might worry that journalists would not deal adequately with their information and their point of view, but it was better for strategic analysts to present their opinions and arguments rather than leave the debate wholly to the other side.

Ms. Joanna Miller, of Project Ploughshares, commented on the seeming uniformity of the American media. There was, she said, a strong tendency among American media to parrot the position of the Administration rather than to present a probing analysis or a historical perspective. She reported that over the years she had heard many US journalists complain that there was a strong pressure to “go along”, to be a “good team player”, especially in the case of those assigned to the Pentagon. She asked Christopher Wren whether American reporters were under pressure to conform?

Mr. Wren emphasized the difference between print journalism and television. He said that he had chosen not to move into broadcast media but to remain a newspaper reporter, because in print there was more space for analysis and background information. In general, however, he disagreed with Ms. Miller’s position: American reporters were not willing to be “good team players”.

Paul McRae commented that he saw two disturbing trends in the United States: one was a movement towards military “machismo”, the other was a diminishing capacity for self-criticism. Christopher Wren disagreed. Not only could one criticize US policy, he maintained, one could probably get a sizable grant to do so.