

an increased interest in disarmament", can have any impact.

This leads to consideration of the SALT process. If Canada is to have any impact on arms control, it is in its capacity as an ally of the United States. Of course, here the Canadian ability to participate is marginal, certainly behind that of the Germans and the British. And the weapons under consideration are mainly strategic, those dealing with the direct security of the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. Nevertheless, SALT is where the action is and where Canada ought to concentrate its attention. The realities of modern arms control are played out in the committee rooms and back offices of the U.S. Senate and not in the elegant halls of Geneva. What resulted from the last SALT ratification process and what is likely to result from the current process, should give Canada pause to reconsider arms control in general and SALT in particular.

Mr. Epstein complains that despite SALT I, the qualitative advance in weaponry had increased markedly. This is undoubtedly true. But the reason for this can partly be found in the nature of successful arms control efforts, which as Edward N. Luttwak notes, tend to channel the competition for military power into newer weapons and into those weapons which defy further efforts of control because of the difficulty of verification of compliance. Added to this, is the nature of the American ratification process, which results in the Administration having to buy Senate approval with more, not less, expenditure on strategic nuclear arms.

Now, the recently announced MX missile system is undoubtedly needed, but the timing of its introduction casts doubts on the whole SALT process. Moreover, there are other outcomes of the strategic debate in the U.S. which will be of immediate concern to Canada. First, aside from the MX and other strategic weapons improvements, the priority of SALT would be increased at the expense given to conventional forces in Europe by the U.S. and the Euro-

pean allies. This in turn would entail additional demands on Canada to upgrade its forces along the Rhine. Second, the failure to include the Soviet Backfire bomber under SALT II will likely mean greater attention to the air defence of North America. Although the Soviets say they will not use the Backfire against targets in the U.S., no responsible American military planner can discount their potential.

Third, and most important, SALT is likely to, and indeed already has, become a further source of Soviet-American friction. The agreement not only raised expectations of Soviet good will in sticking to the "spirit" if not the letter of the treaty, it implicitly raised expectations that the Soviets will behave in the non-nuclear sphere and added tensions will result when they do not. Much of this is due to the fact that SALT, and arms control in general, became for certain groups in the American government an end in and of itself and not a tool of national strategy. To this extent, SALT introduced an element of instability in the relationship between the two super-powers that cannot be in Canada's best interest.

These are some of the realities of arms control today. And if Canada is to put its effort anywhere, it may well be best placed in trying to moderate the influence of professional arms controllers in the U.S. government and force them to reconsider the fruits of their misguided labours. Granted, this is a difficult task, but at least it would be one that has a reasonable relationship to Canada's national interest.

What Canada must avoid is the kind of ephemeral activity advocated by Mr. Epstein. Efforts to "suffocate" the arms race only themselves become suffocated in endless debate and self-righteous posturing. Canada is not a third world nation, nor is it non-aligned, (as its negative vote on the resolution to produce a UN anti-war film indicates). It should not join in the propagandistic behaviour of some of these countries. There is simply nothing to be gained

in engaging publicly in disarmament delusions. Expenditures of time, money and diplomatic credit would be better made in those areas, such as health, technology transfer and even direct foreign aid, where Canada has something concrete to contribute and where the impact would be greatest.

Certainly a country such as ours can offer the world something more than empty rhetoric. And certainly, a country as deeply concerned with the strategic balance of nuclear power as Canada should be, can find a better forum to make its views known.

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Editor's note: Mr. Sokolsky's letter was written before the SALT II ratification process was suspended in the wake of Soviet intervention in Afghanistan.

Human rights

Sir,

Douglas Roche's article "Towards a foreign policy for Canada in the 1980s" (*International Perspectives* May/June/July/August 1979) was thought-provoking because it touches on many issues confronting us in formulating our foreign policy. Although, by and large, I am in agreement with what the author has stated, I wish to comment on the subject of human rights. When we talk of violation of human rights in other countries we usually forget that we are not free from the malady ourselves. In her statement to the U.N. General Assembly on September 25, 1979, Secretary of State for External Affairs, Flora MacDonald, gave her sober assessment of UN failures in protecting human rights around the world. She also admitted that Canada's own record was not free of blemish. About our own country she was referring to the plight of native Indian