

War and conscription in Canada

HAMILTON (CUP) -- Is another war involving Canada inevitable? Do you oppose registration for compulsory military service? The Department of National Defence (DND) is asking these kinds of questions in surveys and some people want to know why.

A report compiled by the DND says that 56 per cent of Canadians over the age of 18 believe chances are good that Canada will be involved in a war with another country within the next ten years. A full 72 per cent would support registration of young people between the ages of 18 and 29 for compulsory military service as the best preparation against the danger of war.

In the U.S. there is already a registration for the draft to keep the country in a state of "national readiness". But over half a million Americans are already defying compulsory registration.

Registration is not the same as a draft. However, the question Americans are asking is, "If the draft is unnecessary, why register?" To some the answer seems clear. When America has fought a "popular war" like World War II, the supply of recruits has been good. Some people fear that the registration is there in case of an unpopular war, say El Salvador or Angola, for which recruits would be sparse.

Both here and in the U.S., trying to bring back compulsory military service is a big selling job. One group most heavily affected would be university students.

Manitoba student activist Tom Evans is uneasy about the military getting into the public relations business.

"What better way to convince people of the validity of a major policy initiative than to conduct a survey and then show them that it's really what they want," says Evans.

"All the DND has released is a public opinion poll, with all the limits of a public opinion poll. It shows Canadians are afraid there could be another war, probably a nuclear war. But the only option presented to survey respondents to deal with that fear was registration for compulsory military service. What about peace initiatives?" he said.

James Stark, director of Operation Dismantle, a disarmament group, agrees.

I regret to say that I share the pessimistic expectations of most Canadians who apparently feel Canada will be at war this decade," said Stark. "My problem with the DND is that it assumes that the next logical question should be the prospects for conscription."

According to Stark, if Canada is at war, it will be because the

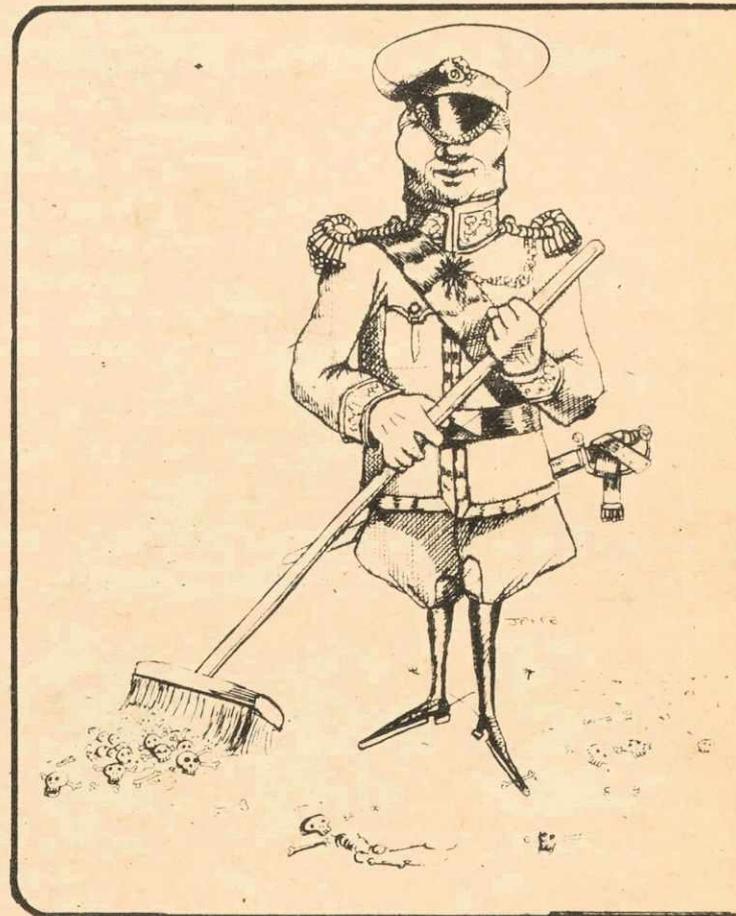
super powers are having it out. "And if the super powers are at war, we're surely looking at a nuclear war, which would take all of an hour to complete -- hardly enough time to say a rosary, let alone conscript anyone."

National Defence obtained the survey results from a Montreal-based polling firm, CROP Inc. CROP surveys a random sample of Canadians five times a year on subjects like eating habits, political inclination and attitudes towards current affairs.

According to Colonel Boulet of the National Defence Information Service, "DND is a regular subscriber to the report and decided to ask some questions which it hoped would assist in development of personnel policy, particularly with regard to recruiting."

The 72 per cent favourable response to the registration question surprised Michael Sayklay of CROP. He suggests the results may reflect a romantic wistfulness, betraying a love of the uniform and dismay at a perceived loss of discipline in our society.

"We shouldn't jump to conclusions interpreting its meaning," he says. "It would be valuable to probe exactly what people actually have in mind in this apparent enthusiasm for conscription."



Government involvement in press criticized by Doyle

by Alice LeDuc and Bob Kozak

The editor-in-chief of the Globe & Mail peered over his horn-rimmed glasses and said: "Slowly the government could take over the direction of the press."

Cabinet-appointed press panels and editor contracts, both recommended by the Royal Commission on Newspapers, would be an unwelcome intrusion into newsrooms, Richard Doyle told an audience at King's College last Thursday evening.

The royal commission, chaired by Tom Kent, said newspapers could gain credibility by making editorial requirements public knowledge and it recommended each paper create provisions for public input. It also suggested editor-proprietor contracts to define editorial performance.

Doyle disagrees with these findings, saying that they would not improve the quality of newspapers, noting that contracts can be bought out.

"Management is not as servile as the Kent report would have you believe," Doyle said.

According to the Kent Commission, Ken Thompson would be required to sell either the Globe & Mail or the other 39 newspapers he owns in Canada. The alternative would require the Globe & Mail to "kill" the national edition, Doyle said.

He maintained it is total nonsense to suggest that Thompson's other papers competing with the Globe & Mail would become mere stuffed inserts in

the national edition.

"Nationally, we have nothing to satisfy local papers or small communities," he said.

Doyle cited a study showing that 95 per cent of the people

who purchase the Globe & Mail also buy another paper. This situation wouldn't change, he said.

The royal commission also recommended changes in legislation to prevent further increases in the concentration of press ownership, but Doyle does not agree.

"It is a business like all other businesses," he said. "Sure, there should be limits put on combinations of companies, although all combines are not necessarily bad."

"The Tories, if in power, would probably not proceed with the recommendations of the Kent Commission," said Doyle.

Satellite editions of the Globe are printed in Montreal, Vancouver, Calgary and Ottawa.

Although Halifax had been mentioned in the past as a Maritime printing location, Web Offset Publications Ltd. will begin printing the national edition in Moncton early next year.

Doyle said the logistics of transporting the Globe would be better from the New Brunswick location.

Circulation of the Globe & Mail in the Maritimes is now about 5,000 copies a day said Doyle, but they hope to raise that figure to 20,000.

Ecology Action Centre

by M.L. Hendry

The Ecology Action Centre is on the march! On October 17 this Halifax-based environmental group will join with other Maritimes organizations in an anti-nuclear energy march to Point Lepreau, New Brunswick, site of a newly-constructed nuclear power plant.

Amidst growing health and safety concerns caused, in part, by evidence of sloppy construction, the Point Lepreau plant is now applying for its operating permit.

"We are demonstrating in an effort to ensure a responsible review by the Atomic Energy Control Board of this facility," Ecology Action Centre spokesperson Ginny Point said.

This event is an example of what the Ecology Action Centre is all about.

For ten years the group has been operating out of the basement of the Forrest Building on University Avenue, promoting public involvement in environmental issues, researching, amassing an extensive library and vocalizing constructive alternatives to pressing environmental problems.

The Ecology Action Centre is well known in environmental circles in Nova Scotia and commands a high level of respect from local politicians

and bureaucrats, though there is disagreement on some issues.

But, as Point declared, "Funding is tight, there is a perpetual battle to keep going. The general public is unaware to a great extent of our existence and what we are trying to do."

So what DO they do?

First, there are action programs. The Centre takes a stand on controversial issues and presents briefs to governments, "Sometimes on request, sometimes without being asked," Point said. "Often we are the only ones who can speak out."

Because the Ecology Action Centre is a private organization depending solely upon its membership to keep operating, they can say what they think is important and not risk antagonizing sponsors.

"We're never faced with that decision," Point said, "because no one gives us that much money."

Other projects the Centre has undertaken in the past include intervening in Public Utilities Board hearings to suggest that electricity rates should favour the small and not the large con-

sumers, as they do now, and implementing neighbourhood paper recycling.

Besides action programs the group is heavily involved in research, in gathering information and in giving public lectures to schools and other interested groups.

The Centre's research coordinator, Susan Holtz, is a respected expert and spokesperson on energy policy in Nova Scotia.

First conceived by students of a Dal course called 'Ecology in Action', the Ecology Action Centre was originally funded by assorted federal government job creation grants which provided short-term support for special projects.

In 1975 the group decided to become a membership organization in order to support their core function: to maintain the library, give lectures and provide information to the public.

Depending largely on volunteer committees who offer a wide variety of talents and knowledge, the Centre now supports two full-time and one part-time paid staff.

