

*Of armaments and things nuclear*

# Canada's moralistic policies could use some consistency

By W. A. Wilson

On three related current issues of importance in international affairs Canada holds markedly inconsistent positions. On two of these issues the line taken is a strongly moral one. This ethical stance, almost self-righteous in its expression, is so marred by contradictions and exceptions motivated by self-interest that it opens Canadian policy to the complaint of hypocrisy. Although there are contradictions within these policies, however, the greatest contradiction is that the third issue is totally exempt from this approach.

In principle, but not always in practice, Canadian policy bars the sale of armaments and military supplies to areas of international tension or conflict. This policy has been marked, however, by a major contradiction: the exploitation of open warfare to conduct a lucrative arms trade throughout the American involvement in the Vietnam war. The fact that a particularly controversial conflict was involved did not prove to be a barrier to profits.

The dividing-line for the Canadian arms trade, as a result, appears not to involve ethics but the practical question of whether profits can be secured through the military involvement of a country that in other areas is an active friend and ally. The application of the Canadian policy is hard-headed, not moral.

The Government's policy demands extremely stringent safeguards on the sale of nuclear fuels to its political and economic friends, some of them military allies, safeguards substantially more rigorous than those in current international use. This particular policy is pursued with such determination that, for instance, when the European Community is groping with the difficulties in the way of greater unity, Can-

ada seeks to exploit the national difference by insisting on bilateral negotiations with members of the European Economic Community.

This policy so far appears free from the contradictions that mar the first of the three positions. It is followed in the face of arguments that it disregards other Canadian interests in the field of trade relations by building significant resentment in customer countries, that it shows indifference to the vital, long-term concerns of fuel-short customer countries such as West Germany and Japan, and that it ignores the reality that diplomacy, like government, is the art of the possible.

The third related policy area is in total contradiction to the previous two. Canadian policy permits the most active efforts, including the use of some dubious methods, to sell nuclear technology and installations not only in secure areas but to countries such active or potential instability that the signature of safeguard agreements becomes meaningless. These latter are rendered inherently unreliable by the inability of an existing government to commit its successors or even to know what sort of political regime they will impose. In the case of Argentina, strange and still unexplained payments facilitate the sale of a reactor and the associated technology were made at a time when it was known that the government of that country would soon be overthrown by a military coup but before it was known who would form the new regime or what its standards would be. The certainty of an early coup was so great that only the date at which it would occur and the new policies of the who would take over remained unknown.

The basic action in this case, the sale of nuclear technology to a part of the world so unstable that the value of signed safeguard agreements was of great doubt, is in complete contradiction to the second of the three policies, the very rigorous standard on fuel supplies demanded from reliable friendly countries. Its quality is much closer to the major, money-making exception to the policy on the export of arms and military supplies.

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