

effort by the government to defuse and limit the impact of informed domestic criticism. These techniques can be grouped into five categories.

*1. Pro-forma consultations*

Many organizations are accorded interviews by External Affairs officials or the Minister. The delegates are received politely and a reply is given, without however, either set of participants having high expectations that the delegates' input will be significant. These meetings are brief, formal and, for each individual group, infrequent.

How difficult it is to overcome these severe restraints on effective interchange was revealed by a recent effort to that end by the Task Force on the Churches and Corporate Responsibility. For over a six-month period in 1980-81 it had sought an interview jointly with the Secretary of State for External Affairs and the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce in order to present the coordinated reflections of its member churches and religious organizations. The meeting took place on July 15, 1981. The Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce was, in fact, not present, and the meeting lasted three-quarters of an hour. Needless to say, most of the issues raised in the brief were not covered. However, the officials promised a detailed reply in writing to the Task Force's brief. That reply was not received until over a year later.

*2. Consultations via the Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence*

Representation before the Standing Committee is one of the more important of the forms of consultation that are used by major public interest groups. It can provide publicity for their viewpoint and, if endorsed by the Committee, may in turn be of some influence.

Nevertheless there are major limitations to the significance of this. For one thing, part of the government's motivation in supporting the work of the Committee was — according to Mitchell Sharp — to provide a comparatively harmless outlet for groups that wished to have an input into the discussion of foreign policy issues. The most important limitation, however, lies in the government's reception of the Committee's reports. Where they have been critical and effective documents, as for example, was the report of its Task Force on North-South Relations, the government has done its best to minimize their impact. Indeed, it is fair to say that the small band of all-party activists with an international commitment who have played an active role in this Committee have become somewhat isolated and now themselves almost constitute an interest group. Being given an opportunity to make representations to the Committee is, therefore, more likely to provide public interest groups with an impression of being of influence than it is actually to provide them with an input into the policy-making process.

*3. Diluted consultation*

Another technique being used is to engineer into existence a consultation at which the critics will be but a minority of the participants. Typically these are organized on External Affairs' stimulus by private organizations that are part of or close to the Department's broader "establishment." Typically at these consultations the main presentation is made by someone from the Department. In these ways the Department is able very largely to control the proceedings. Consultations of this sort are likely much

more to serve the Department's purposes by building up its constituency and giving an appearance of consultations, than to provide critics with a chance for significant input into policy formation.

*4. Government-sponsored non-governmental organizations*

A major and unattractive recent development is the indirect sponsorship by government of new national organizations that are to be concerned with major international issues. These are appearing in regard to questions about which the government clearly ought to consult domestic groups but on which it knows it will face severe challenge. By taking the initiative to launch a new national body, the government is able to influence both the choice of its board, and the choice of the executive director. The result is a body to which the more forthright groups can be invited but whose proceedings are unlikely to be upsetting to the government. Such structures now exist in regard to human rights, disarmament, immigration policy and international development.

The recent consultation or Conference on Human Rights and Canadian Foreign Policy organized by the Canadian Human Rights Foundation illustrates my point. The Board of the Foundation is eminently respectable. The Conference was totally "safe." The Minister of State for External Relations was the guest speaker and the major invited foreign guest was the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs in the US State Department. The working paper prepared for the Conference by the Executive Director was a careful exposition of the many obstacles to a more vigorous Canadian foreign policy in regard to human rights. Finally, although invitations were sent out quite widely, the Foundation did not pay any fares to Ottawa so that the churches and other anti-consensual human rights groups, already very skeptical, by and large could not justify the cost of sending delegates. The result was a good illustration of a government-sponsored NGO fulfilling its intended purpose.

Sometimes, however, the effort fails. The government has long felt a need for a national organization concerned with international development whom it might consult. It was instrumental in seeing to the establishment of the Canadian Council for International Cooperation. By securing active participation in it of a number of major international service and welfare organizations such as UNICEF and Save the Children Fund, which are largely non-political, the government at first had a forum it felt it could handle. It also largely financed the North-South Institute. However, neither seemed adequately to meet the political need for a seemingly-independent body which would however not challenge significantly official views. As a result, last year the government launched the Futures Secretariat and ensured the appointment to its Board of persons who would certainly not challenge its policies from an internationalist direction. However, to give it wider credibility, it made the mistake of appointing an independent-minded Director, David MacDonald. The Futures Secretariat is now without Mr. MacDonald and without a future — or even a past.

*5. Consensual but controlled and severely unrepresentative "consultation"*

This can hardly be regarded by anyone as very satisfactory. It involves private official consultations with a limited number of groups, all of them entirely within the ruling