

The UN, disarmament and Canadians

the "nuclear freeze" proposal currently being debated in the United States. (According to various US national opinion surveys that proposal is similarly supported by between two-thirds and three-quarters of Americans.)

Three additional general points must be noted if the foregoing results are to be seen in proper context. The first is that those surveyed, while favoring arms control and disarmament, nonetheless regard measures in this direction as unlikely. Almost 90% are pessimistic or very pessimistic about the prospects for arms control. Almost all

MOST IMPORTANT INTERNATIONAL PROBLEMS

	Ranked first by (%)	Ranked in top three by (%)
Danger of nuclear war	35	58
Economic weakness of Western states	16	45
Poverty of developing nations	14	49
World hunger	7	22
Energy and resource shortages	5	20
Population growth	4	22
Pollution	3	22
Human rights	2	15
Wars now being fought	2	9
Refugees	1	6

TABLE 1

(97%) similarly regard the prospects for disarmament. Many observers of the current international scene would consider such consensus judgments not as pessimistic, but merely as realistic.

Perhaps in part because of this pessimism, but also presumably because of felt threats, few of those surveyed support unilateral Western disarmament. Nine out of ten disagreed or strongly disagreed with the notion that "the West should disarm even if the USSR does not." The reductions desired, clearly, are mutual reductions. Concerns about the possibility of nuclear war apparently do not override concerns for deterrence.

Some trade, others disarm

A third point which needs noting is that the Canadians surveyed here seem to believe that arms control and disarmament is largely up to the superpowers. They apparently do not generally regard such measures as a primary Canadian responsibility or their achievement as being within Canadian capabilities. Despite the importance most respondents personally attach to arms control and disarmament, they do not believe the Canadian government regards them similarly. Only about one in four (26%) rate such measures as very important. This discrepancy, however, does not appear to be a matter of strong concern. When asked to rate a number of foreign policy issues in terms of importance to Canada, the CIIA survey respond-

ents overall rank controlling the arms race well behind trade agreement negotiations and the protection of our oceans and management of fisheries and other resources. Four out of five (80%) regard trade agreements as very important. Almost as many (77%) give the same priority to ocean protection and resource management. About one in every two respondents regards controlling the arms race as a very important foreign policy issue for Canada.

Interestingly enough, approximately the same number (54%) give this high priority to collective defence arrangements such as NATO. When asked directly the vast majority (86%) oppose Canadian withdrawal from NORAD and NATO. Moreover, most (74%) agree that Canada should maintain its existing defence arrangements although not have its own nuclear arsenal. (Indeed, the same number of respondents would oppose Canada acquiring nuclear weapons even "for national security reasons" in the event of significant nuclear proliferation.) A clear majority (54%) nonetheless believe Canadian conventional forces should be larger, and a near majority (46%) want to see the size of Canada's military presence in Europe maintained while one in three (36%) want these forces increased. In short, Canadians surveyed here apparently do not see a paramount responsibility for their country in arms control and they support its continued, even stronger, contribution to the Western alliance.

Discussions at the current United Nations Special Session on Disarmament were expected to cover a wide range of measures and proposals. Most of these are so complex and technical that they are well understood only by a relatively few experts. It is doubtful that most Canadians ever give much if any thought to the issues involved. A relatively interested and well-informed group, however, should be able at least to provide a meaningful indication of what they regard as the priorities, even if they do not possess a detailed knowledge of the intricacies.

Real reductions beat treaties

When provided with a list of twelve proposals (see Table 2), those surveyed here select two clear priorities. The largest proportion (60%) believe a reduction in American and Soviet nuclear weapons is a "highest priority." Almost as many similarly rank a general ban on chemical weapons. No other proposals gained a majority consensus. It is interesting to note that respondents who regard an actual reduction in US-USSR nuclear weaponry as a highest priority are twice as numerous as those who so regard a SALT II treaty. A substantial proportion thus apparently finds the SALT agreement form of limitations and ceilings on arms stockpiles as being insufficient. This interpretation is borne out by the fact the only one in seven (14%) respondents thinks that a new SALT agreement would "greatly reduce" the danger of nuclear war.

A variety of possible measures falls into the second tier, along with a new strategic arms limitation treaty. Approximately one-quarter to one-third of those surveyed also give highest priority to reducing the supplying of conventional weapons to Third World countries, reducing national defence budgets, banning the testing of new missile systems, and general disarming through the United Nations. (Combining the rankings for the two highest priority categories does not alter the above order significantly, al-