

is rarely important, and what is important is rarely secret.”* It was a myth, but one that many civilians accepted, that questions of war and peace were sensitive topics to which only government officials should be privy.

In fact, according to M. Pelletier, there were very few things that political leaders knew and that citizens should not know. The “myth” that secrecy was always necessary for national security created reservations amongst the citizenry which were dangerous to democracy and to peace and security. The key facts, opinions and arguments must be made available to the Canadian people, in order for them to take part in important policy discussions.

3. Comments from the Floor

In the open discussion which followed, Anatol Rapoport, of the University of Toronto, commented that war was an institution which had become obsolete; no conceivable political goals could be realized by using nuclear weapons. In spite of this, the superpowers, as well as other nations, continued to arm themselves with nuclear weapons and continued to devise military strategies for the use of those weapons. In the formulation of nuclear strategies, an abundance of intricate problems arose and generated challenging work for hundreds of strategic analysts.

Professor Rapoport charged that the public was mesmerized by these “experts”. The primitive level of their reasoning was not apparent because the uninitiated were baffled by the jargon of defence planners. What was hidden beneath the disguise of competence and realism was a simplistic version of a zero-sum game: for one to “win” the other must “lose.” But, he emphasized, we were no longer playing a zero-sum game; in our nuclear-armed world, cooperation between adversaries had become imperative. To think about national interests and national security in the same way as did Louis XIV or Frederick the Great was both morally and intellectually irresponsible.

A response to this comment came from Christopher Wren, who pointed out that, while nuclear weapons might not be practical for war-fighting, wars fought with conventional weapons — in Vietnam, Cambodia, Lebanon, for example — were certainly not obsolete.

* French original: “En politique et dans les affaires publiques en général, ce qui est secret est rarement important et ce qui est important est rarement secret”.