

represent an extension of domestic concerns. There is nothing remote about foreign relations.

Another reason for public interest in foreign policy is that, unless a reasonably large group of citizens without particular axes to grind expresses concern about foreign-policy issues, governments could be excessively influenced by special interest groups whose approach is narrow.

Of course, a price is paid in a democracy for the involvement of the public in foreign policy -- it is not, however, a high price given the importance of this involvement. The price is what James Reston, the American columnist, has described as playing an "open hand" in the poker-game of international negotiation with authoritarian societies whose card-hand is kept closed. Public debate at home can restrict the flexibility of negotiators in their discussions with other countries.

It is worth noting that "wide interest" among the general public should not be interpreted as universal interest. Surveys in other democratic and developed countries have suggested that only about 25 per cent of the adult population sustains an interest in international issues. Even with education programmes, the percentages do not seem to have risen greatly. Thus it would be Utopian to expect the entire population to be vitally interested and knowledgeable on foreign policy on a continuing basis. To quote an astute British observer of the international scene (Max Beloff), "the problem of the modern foreign minister, seeking legislative and popular support, is often how to get people to absorb more information rather than to keep information from them".

But this does not preclude deep concern on a particular issue at a particular time -- for example, the war in Vietnam. In all probability, the poll taken across the country last summer which indicated that foreign policy topped the list of important problems for more Canadians than any other single issue reflects the deeply-felt concern among large numbers of Canadians about the continuing conflict in Vietnam.

The Government shares this concern and has been working in every possible way in the international effort to end hostilities. Unfortunately, all attempts that we and others have made to find a feasible "de-escalation equation" -- that is, a mutually acceptable pattern of steps to be taken by both sides more or less simultaneously -- has not succeeded in winning the agreement of the parties concerned.

As a result of our diplomatic soundings over the past year and a half, we have become convinced that the key to de-escalation and the creation of an atmosphere in which talks could take place is the cessation of the bombing of North Vietnam.

There is, of course, no absolute guarantee that a suspension of the bombing will necessarily and immediately bring about a beginning of talks. It seems to us, however, that if the bombing were suspended unilaterally, an entirely new situation would emerge in which considerable international pressure might be brought to bear on the North Vietnamese to enter into negotiations or preliminary talks, especially since they and their friends have placed such heavy emphasis on this point. An inflexible position on the part of the North Vietnamese in the context of a situation in which the bombing had stopped would place a serious responsibility on them for a continuing impasse in this tragic war.