

# Mutual deterrence policies are dangerous

By MIKE MACKINNON

"More arms do not make mankind safer, only poorer."  
—Brant Commission

"Nuclear weapons have kept the peace for nearly 40 years." On the surface this appears to be an accurate statement for we have managed to avoid global warfare since the end of the second world war. The key word is "global", because in the last 40 years there have been 130 conventional wars in which 10,000,000 people have been killed. The majority of these wars, although local in nature, had the potential for drawing in the superpowers. This situation, given the presence of nuclear arsenals, could easily have led to global annihilation.

The opening quote would indicate that a policy of mutual deterrence, such as the one that already exists, places world peace in a precarious position. The underlying notion for such a policy is the maintenance of a nation's security. The fact that both the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. have nuclear weapons pointed at each



other means their very existence is threatened. This threat creates a feeling of insecurity that requires governing members to manufacture psychological security, which they accomplish by developing and building more nuclear weapons. The justification for such behaviour is the enemy's (whether it be the Soviets or the Americans) aggressive

nature. In this manner we attain psychological security while increasing the justification for fear.

Superiority is an integral part of any mutual deterrence policy. In the U.S. there is a firm belief that it is necessary for the Americans to retain the nuclear advantage established at the end of the second world war. American security has

always been closely associated with maintaining this lead. The Soviets, on the other hand, have always experienced feelings of insecurity until mutuality was achieved. This resulted in a drive to "catch up". These efforts are necessarily ambiguous in light of the fact they know little of what the West is trying to do. Their actions then appear to be efforts at achieving superiority and the race is underway.

The dissolving of the American nuclear advantage in the 1970's put pressure on U.S. leaders to use more overt methods to frighten the Soviets. This pressure was further aggravated by the American defeat in Vietnam, India's successful nuclear explosion (in 1974), the challenge posed by OPEC and rising oil prices, and a growing rivalry among Western nations for export markets. The climax to this came in 1978 when anti-American revolutions took place in Iran and Nicaragua.

As a result, threats to engage in Nuclear War have become more explicit. The American government continues to warn the Soviet Union it is prepared to act as if it possesses nuclear superiority without this being an actuality. While it is doing so the leaders inform the public that Soviet nuclear capabilities are superior and that only "rearmament" can change this. In the meantime, there is evidence of Soviet fears as to where this nuclear arms race may end.

These attempts by the U.S. government to convince the public there are "losses" of strategic superiority have been a recurring theme of the arms race since the 1950's. There was the "bomber" gap in the 50's, the "missile" gap in the 60's, and now we have the "window of vulnerability". While the leaders express a fear of falling behind they are really trying to stay

ahead. It is interesting to note that these "Moments of official anxiety" coincide with efforts to increase Cold War tension. During these times the leaders are required to convince the public that they know best. Witness Ronald Reagan's response to the peace movement in early 1982:

"I would hope that some of these people...would realize that I'm with them...but I would ask them to consider...only in this position do you have all the facts necessary to base decisions upon action, and therefore I would ask them trust and confidence..."

After a few empty words of reassurance Reagan basically tells the public they have no idea of what is really involved, only he does, thus only he can make the decision. This is a basic characteristic of a mutual deterrence policy, one that makes you question the democracy of such policies.

The possession of nuclear weapons by the U.S. has never been confined to a mutual deterrence policy. Although the American government has used a variety of methods to threaten the Soviet Union with limited nuclear attack to prevent limited provocation, American nuclear strategy policies have never been confined to post-attack settings. The idea of being able to strike and retain enough capabilities to prevent retaliatory attacks from the enemy is the underlying notion of limited nuclear war.

Covered here is just a small portion of the reasoning that forced the UN First Special Session on Disarmament to conclude:

"Enduring international peace and security cannot be built on the accumulation of weaponry by military alliances nor be sustained by a precarious balance of deterrence or doctrines of strategic superiority."

## Get involved!

# Pacifism not a passive role

By KAYE MACPHEE

Relax! The future will take care of itself. I'm only one person...there's nothing I can do. If you really feel these statements are true, read no further. However, if you are concerned about the nuclear arms issue and fear for this planet's survival, read on...

A feeling of powerlessness has pervaded the very fabric of our society. Sadly, this attitude appears to be particularly prevalent among our youth. People have been led to believe that an individual's efforts will prove to be futile. I do not share this belief nor, obviously, do the countless thousands of those involved in the peace movement throughout the world.

One person can make a difference; that's been proven so often throughout history that it can be taken as fact, a given, making further discussion concerning the statement unnecessary. In relation to the peace movement we have examples of individual initiative and courage that have prompted other people to make themselves aware of the issues and become

actively involved. An example of this type of individual that comes immediately to my mind is a New Brunswick woman, Kay Bedell. Marching for peace in New York; tying a rowboat to a vessel that was bringing nuclear products to Saint John harbour as a form of protest to this action; and many other activities that most of us would never have the courage to do are not considered extraordinary to Mrs. Bedell. This usually quiet and unassuming individual has been an inspiration to me personally and to many others in this province. Her actions have encouraged numerous people to become involved. Mrs. Bedell and thousands of other individuals like her in Canada as well as in the U.S.A. and Europe have pro-

ven that one person CAN make a difference.

Many feel that pacifists are passive, however, just the opposite is true. Pacifists generally are those people who become actively involved in promoting peace. For those among you who read news reports and watch TV news, you are undoubtedly aware that pacifists' activities take many forms. They can range from chaining oneself to a nuclear weapon such as the women did in Greenham Common, England, to sitting in your kitchen writing a letter to your MP expressing your concern. Your actions do not have to be dramatic or what the media considers newsworthy.

In short, all I and the other members of our groups are saying is that you as an individual are not powerless; and those who try to tell you otherwise are in effect telling you to deny your worth; your value. So become aware of the issues; write a letter; discuss the issues with your family and friends; go to a meeting; demonstrate; sign petitions; do something!

Don't be passive—be a pacifist!

