

Commentary

Popular opinion unpopular in the arms race

by Peter Kavanagh

Why vote in a Referendum on Nuclear Arms? Dr. Ursula Franklin has described the nuclear arms race as a "crisis in democracy." Despite the protests of millions throughout the world, the superpowers continue to escalate production and deployment. The decisions being made are out of whack with the wishes of the world's people. Canadian officials openly acknowledge that, despite a majority of Canadians being against the Cruise tests, Canada will permit the test.

This denial of popular opinions runs contrary to western values. We in the western democracies pride ourselves on a form of government held in check by popular will. The

nuclear arms race is a matter of planetary survival. To ignore the wishes of the population on such a basic issue makes a mocking of our participation in any other decision.

Last fall 117 Canadian municipalities permitted their citizens to speak out. This year the Dalhousie Student Union presents you with the same opportunity. What does such an impression of popular belief accomplish? In Western Europe many NATO countries are applying pressure on the US to work more assiduously on achieving an accord on nuclear weapons. This has only been achieved by hammering home to the West European governments the obvious fact that the nuclear arms race has gone too far.

There is a real concern that the US desire for nuclear superiority, rather than the parity now in place, weighs more heavily in the balance than their desire for an accord. Canada is an active participant in this quest for superiority. We as a nation must convince the US that true security is wrought through accords, not needlessly enhanced fire power. As global citizens we owe a duty to ensure that an accord is secured. Only in this manner can we ensure that our grandchildren will be born.

The much praised western values which nuclear weapons seek to protect include a respect for the wishes of the governed. When a federal minister insists on following through on a pol-

icy rejected by the majority, we must question what became of the values we seek to protect. By using such techniques of democracy as the referendum we bring home to our elected officials our respect for the values they espouse.

Our governments never make decisions in a vacuum. In the era of nuclear arms, they are advised by strategists, scientists, the defence industry and military personnel. What input there is from the disarmament perspective usually comes from the "outside." As more and more people sign petitions, march or vote in "unofficial" referenda the message becomes clear. The issue of nuclear weapons is no longer one we wish left to the "experts" or those

with a vested interest. Rather it has become one for us all.

In a sense the dichotomy is clear. The disarmament movement wishes to negotiate an end to the nuclear threat. We ask that the process be opened up. There are other factors which need to be considered. It is not just a question of megatonnage, theatre wars or tactical superiority. It is also a question of how the world is to continue. The armament industry has no monopoly on whether we should strive to rid the world of this nightmare.

Peter Kavanagh is a member of the 'Yes' Committee on the Referendum question.

Letters

Put me in my place

To the Editor:

I read with interest Mr. Dickie's letter (Women Love First Choice) in the January 27, 1983 edition of the *Dal Gazette*. Although, as a rule, I do not support extremist groups, I was pleased to learn of the existence of the society to keep Woman in her place.

I do not wish to take issue with Mr. Dickie's position. In fact, I might venture to suggest that his "points of clarification" were somewhat UNDERSTATED. i.e. T&A are not only "good" for the economy, they are its *raison d'être*.

It is good to know there are persons out there who are not taking all this feminist cant lying down. I congratulate whomever had the ingenuity to organize the society of which Mr. Dickie is chairman. I was considering making application for membership; am I correct in my assumption that your club is exclusive to "intellectual GENTLEMEN?" Alas, I am a member of the weaker sex.

Perhaps, Mr. Dickie, at your next meeting, you would raise the issue of female membership; you must need someone at your assemblies to make the coffee, take minutes, or serve the drinks. Barring that consideration, I would settle for a date. i.e. I'd love to be there the next time you turn on your TV, or vice versa. Please call: 429-0331. Sincerely yours, (Miss) Emma Lange

Erotica not pornography

To the Editor:

Although I consider myself quite "liberated", I confess I can't understand all the fuss being made by Canadian women about the CRTC approval of airing "soft" pornography on pay TV.

In the February 3rd/83 edition of the *Gazette*, Adele Dyal suggested that "this (is) as yet another means of degrading and exploiting women" and she expressed concern that "this exploitation of women through the media will lead to an increase of attacks on women." I must remind Adele that by definition, "soft" pornography does not portray women as oppressed victims and I personally can not see how, by airing sexual encounters of non-violent, unoppressive nature, women are being "exploited" any more than men are! (It takes two to tango.) Also, it has been well-documented in hundreds of reliable studies that sexual assault is an act of violence, not erotica.

I understand that the pay TV channels are making efforts to discreate about the showing of these controversial films and that a gadget is available so that parents may lock off the channels when programs are felt to be unsuitable for their children. Thus, I believe that, at least for the adult subscriber, freedom of choice is made possible without harm to anyone

else. I suggest that we not try to shove our own morality down everyone else's throats.

Karen Joghin
Box 41 Tupper Building

Glen's garbage swept..

To the Editor:

It is indeed tiresome to be subjected to COMMENTARIES of the level put forth by Glen Johnson. One was a novelty; two was an insult. I felt I must address Mr. Johnson's published views.

This self-labelled "moderate conservative" sees the real impetus behind the peace movement as, "human cowardice, a lack of confidence in liberal democratic institutions and Soviet/Communist-front agitation *Gazette, Feb. 3*). I do not count the fear of premature and unnecessary death of oneself, of millions of others, and possibly of human civilization, as any indication of human cowardice. That millions of people of late have publically expressed their fears says more of human courage and determination than of cowardice.

Today's huge crowds of peace demonstrators are comprised of individuals accepting their democratic responsibilities by participating in the political process. Their resolve is to be commended; if Mr. Johnson could think a little deeper he might see that this public action marks the revitalizing of liberal democratic institutions. To correct Mr. Johnson, the "crisis of confidence" in the West is due to the widespread concern that the will of the majority is neither reflected in government nor respected by government leaders (Allan MacEachen's recent put-down of the 52% of Canadians opposed to the Cruise Missile testing is but one example of this). To pretend that weak-kneed waffling and KGB manipulating is behind public concern is puerile. The crisis in the West is the crisis of democracy.

Mr. Johnson should note that Edmund Burke, no mean conservative himself, supported the American Revolution as an example of Englishmen standing up for their rights. The cry in those days was, "No taxation without representation." The cry today might be, "No incineration without representation." It is responsible people insisting on their democratic rights that compose the peace movement.

The major theme in Mr. Johnson's diatribes, the omnipotence and the omniscience of the KGB, tells of the effect that the recent, quite excellent TV series, *Smiley's People*, can have on easily excitable minds. It is when Mr. Johnson compliments this wild conjecture with such cliché judgments — Soviet occupation of Europe . . . "a fate worse than death" — that embarrassment supplants offense. Is this a university newspaper or a Captain American comic book? From a possible position on the *Gazette* publishing board, will Mr. Johnson continue such assaults on intelligent readership?

The issues surrounding the nuclear arms race are deadly serious, not to be reduced to good-guy bad-guy banalities.

The "enemy" does not come in a human form, the enemy is the nuclear weapon itself. Proliferation of nuclear arms threatens human survival and though they may never be completely abolished they must certainly be strictly controlled. Everyone has the responsibility to educate themselves on the nature and the effects of the arms race and to discover their own particular role in which to act. To refuse to act because one's Soviet bloc counterparts are not so acting is nonsensical. Westerners must exercise their freedom of action to the benefit of all. Responsible action must get started, the first step must be taken.

John Figg

.. under the carpet

To the Editor:

It's rare when something gets me off my fat ass to write about it. But this commentary by Glen Johnson is the worst piece of garbage I've seen in six years of reading *the Gazette*. Aside from his attacks, in *poor* taste, on G. Martin's character, Johnson makes an amazing number of (at best) silly statements, only a couple on which I will comment.

First of all, as a quick glance at the literature will show, there is no reason to believe that the Soviets are anymore aggressive and devious towards the US than the US is towards the Soviet Union. "Most thinking people" just don't share your point of view.

Secondly, about the fine piece of logic which states that a fate worse than death for Western Europeans is living under Soviet occupation — Come on! I'm sure if you canvass the majority of the Western European population, you will come to the startling conclusion that they would rather live under the Soviet jackboot as opposed to frying like a piece of bacon in a US-Soviet exchange of nuclear weapons.

Also on the subject of Europe security, about the West buildup of weapons for security. That kind of 'my pile of stones is bigger than your pile' mentality went out of fashion years ago. You've missed the strategic implications of these new weapons. The MX and Pershing II missiles are just as likely to begin a war in Europe as deter one.

Finally, I save the dumbest for last. You said that Vietnam was an American fluke while Afghanistan type Wars are common for totalitarian states. We're not too up-to-date on our Latin American (and Iranian) history, are we? I hope that you don't consider the Mossadeq (Iran), Arbenz (Guatemala) and Allende (Chile) affairs mere flukes, 'Making the world safe for democracy.'

In closing (and I've already taken up too much of your time) it's nice to see that facism isn't dead. It's gaining new life on the commentary pages of *the Gazette*.

Chow!

Philip DeMont
1st yr (MA) PolSci

continued to page 8