

Moreover, the agreement negotiated so far with the British only gives Canada the nuclear technology which is in the Trafalgar today. The French, on the other hand, have proposed joint development of reactor technology. All this puts the French proposal in a better light than expected when it entered the competition as the perceived underdog.

Ottawa knows it cannot please everyone in its design choice; the challenge will be to keep the diplomatic damage to a minimum. One way of doing that is to direct other defence contracts to the losing country. For example, both Britain and France have companies involved in the \$2-billion-plus Tactical Command, Control, and Communications programme. Also, the French are likely to put in a bid for the \$2.5 billion tank replacement programme.

REGARDLESS OF THE DESIGN choice, the Canadian shipbuilding, nuclear, and associated industries all stand to benefit greatly from the government's proposed acquisition of nuclear-powered subs. Jim Clarke, President of the Canadian Maritime Industries Association, says there is a vast difference in benefits for industry between building diesel-electric and nuclear-powered submarines. He says the technology already exists in Canada for diesels, but the nuclear programme "would introduce a whole new generation of technology into Canada."

The government's proposed programme is an economic lifesaver for the shipbuilding and nuclear industries, for which orders have plummeted in recent years. Clarke says cancelling the plan and replacing it with one for diesel-electric boats and surface ships, will not bestow the same benefits. Not surprisingly, his organization strongly supports the decision to buy nuclear-powered submarines. So does a group of businesspeople and academics who have formed a group specifically to promote the acquisition of nuclear-powered subs. The Committee for a Sovereign and Effective Naval Defence includes former Liberal defence minister

Jean-Jacques Blais, academics Harriet Critchley and Joel Sokolsky, and businessmen Conrad Black and Jim Clarke.

Some have questioned the credibility of the Committee because a couple of its members could benefit directly from the programme. Blais, for example, is acting on behalf of Thomson-CSF, one of the key suppliers to the French Navy. But the Committee was not formed purely out of self-interest; the members believe acquiring a fleet of nuclear-powered submarines is Canada's best naval option.

Apart from the Liberals and NDP, the most vocal opposition to the purchase comes from the non-governmental "peace movement" and the Canadian Centre for Arms Control and Disarmament. Representatives of the Centre have dispensed their views to newspapers across Canada and have appeared before the Standing Committee on National Defence.

If the nay-sayers in Canada and the US convince Ottawa to drop its plans, the after-effects will be felt at home and abroad. Such a decision would amount to a repudiation of the 1987 defence white paper. The proposal to acquire a fleet of ten to twelve nuclear-powered submarines was the centrepiece of the Conservative government's policy paper. That document painted a picture of a bipolar world in which Canada would willingly shoulder the military burden of being a reliable member of the western alliance. To that end, Canada would do more in its own defence, and rationalize its alliance commitments.

The government, recognizing Canada as a maritime nation, put as its first priority the rebuilding

of the navy; the heart of that plan was to acquire a nuclear-powered submarine fleet. The navy was elated. Plans to buy fourteen more frigates and four new diesel-electric submarines were cancelled and instead the navy would receive six more frigates and ten to twelve nuclear-powered subs.

The change of plan fits in nicely with one of the government's top priorities – deficit reduction. Based on the government's estimated cost of \$8 billion (critics expect the cost to be much higher) the annual expenditures will average \$300 million over twenty-seven years. The programme to buy the first six patrol frigates, in comparison, has annual expenditures as high as \$800 million. The annual expenditures for the cancelled eight anti-air warfare frigates and four diesel-electric subs would have been even higher. By buying nuclear-powered subs instead and spreading the purchase over almost three decades the government is freeing up hundreds of millions of dollars which could be used to reduce the deficit in the near term.

CANCELLING THE PROGRAMME FOR nuclear-powered submarines will not solve the government's deficit problem; it will likely make it worse as Ottawa struggles to come up with the money for shorter-term naval projects to maintain an effective fleet. Internationally, a cancellation could irreparably harm Canada's reputation. Britain and France have provided large amounts of extremely sensitive information in good faith that Ottawa intends to proceed with its plans. If the Canadian government

now turns around and drops the programme, it will have received that information for absolutely no (financial) cost. Neither France nor Britain will acquiesce quietly; other allies will wonder whether or not Canada can be trusted again.

Canada has invested a lot of diplomatic capital in the submarine programme. Ottawa has worked hard to convince NATO that a Canadian nuclear-powered submarine fleet will strengthen the alliance. And in the United States, President Reagan went against the advice of the US Navy and others to back Canada's decision to acquire the subs. Still, the allies have remained skeptical of Canada's commitment to carrying through: as strategic analyst Joel Sokolsky says "they're waiting for Canada to be Canada." Only by going ahead with the programme, will Canada gain NATO's respect.

The task force assigned to evaluate the competing submarine design proposals has not formally finished its evaluation. The evaluation was broken down into ever smaller groups studying finer and finer details. The areas looked at included operational characteristics (the submarines were not compared to each other but to the navy's requirements), cost, international implications, and industrial benefits.

The teams have now completed their work but what remains to be done is the final "roll up" – bringing it all together. Once "rolled up," the evaluation goes to the Senior Review Board (an inter-departmental board) and the Minister of Defence. He will then present it to Cabinet. Given the political will, this could all be accomplished within a number of days.

For the past nine months, that will has been lacking. Aware that an election was to be called this summer or fall, Cabinet has been reticent to make a decision on an \$8 billion programme, especially one with the word "nuclear" in it. Especially worrying were some public opinion polls which showed that support for the project was waning, although DND's own polls did not show this. With the election over, the government must now decide. □

