

## IV.

### INFORMING THE PUBLIC

#### 1. Getting the Information to the General Public

One of the risks of holding a conference on new technologies and their effect on strategic doctrine is that the various invited experts may lapse into a jargon ridden exchange totally unintelligible to the lay-person. There is always a danger of becoming fascinated with technical minutiae and overlooking larger policy implications. In the last session of the conference, panelists addressed the question: Are Canadians getting the information and analysis that they need to make informed and thoughtful decisions on Canadian foreign and military policies?

Canada's Associate Minister of Defence, the Honourable Harvie Andre, in a speech given the previous evening to the Canadian Council on International Law, had declared that we must get the "facts" to the Canadian people. John Sigler, Professor of International Relations at Carleton University, countered that it was not a question of presenting "facts" but of exposing the debate over how these facts should be interpreted; each proponent of a given policy should be allowed to put forward his or her arguments and the reasoning by which a particular conclusion was reached.

Christopher Wren, Ottawa Bureau Chief for the *New York Times*, admitted that he found the credentials of the members of the audience, let alone the panelists, intimidating; he reminded the participants of the danger of arms control experts talking above the head of the "man-in-the-street." The press, he said, had a key role in acting as an intermediary, asking the experts and politicians probing questions, and keeping the public informed both about the "facts" and about their implications for national policy.

John Honderich, of the *Toronto Star*, was disturbed because some sessions were "off the record".\* He pointed out that the Canadian public had a right to know the strategic implications of new technologies and new doctrines. Researchers who were experts in the field very often did not have the time to communicate their arguments to a general audience. It was the responsibility of the Cana-

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\* The intent of CIIPS was that all participants were free to use the substance of the discussions as they wished, but that if journalists wanted to attribute comments, they should seek the permission of the participant or arrange a direct interview at the end of the session.