

## INTRODUCTION

The material from which these comments are derived consists entirely of national public opinion surveys conducted across Canada. All the polls cited below meet contemporary standards of scientific sampling for surveys. While most of the polls are of recent origin, some attempt has been made to provide an historical perspective where relevant and possible given availability of materials.

## INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

Asked by Decima in 1985 to name "one issue or problem which you feel is the most important one facing the world, that is, the one which concerns you personally the most", more than twice as many Canadians identified nuclear war, wars and peace in general, or the arms race and disarmament (33%) than did all conventional economic issues, such as unemployment and inflation, combined (13%). Indeed, more expressed concern about world hunger, famine and food supply (17%) than conventional economic matters, reflecting perhaps then current reports of starvation in Ethiopia. When provided with a list of five issues the proportion saying "poverty and hunger" was the most "serious" issue (40%) was greater than that for "the arms race" (28%) but the latter issue exceeded "economic problems" (20%).

The 1985-86 polls also showed continued public concern over the threat of a nuclear confrontation. The degree of public worry about nuclear weapons and war has generally increased in recent years. Table I portrays Canadian expectations from 1972-1985 on whether the chances of nuclear war are greater or less than they had been 10 years earlier. The proportion answering "greater" doubled between 1971 and 1975, and then doubled again between 1975 and 1982. There is a decline after 1982 but in 1985 a majority of Canadians still said that war is closer than a decade ago.