

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Ever Elusive Defence Debate

■ Professor K.R. Nossal's explanation in "All in Favour, Say Aye," (*Peace&Security*, Spring 1989) for the lack of defence debate in last November's federal election – "we have no debate because there is nothing to debate" – must surely have come as a surprise to the tens of thousands of peace activists who lined the city streets in the early 1980s, and to the DND officials who sought equal airtime for the military perspective in the heat of the cruise missile testing debates.

I accept his view that the circle of ardent advocates who vigorously debate Canadian defence issues is a small one. What he fails to ask is whether the defence decision-making process itself – one which is secluded from public scrutiny, highly technical and which carries dreadful implications most citizens would not care to confront on a daily basis – isn't also something which hinders public involvement.

The preoccupation with "concrete interests" is rather selective. Frankly, I would have thought that an interest in survival was fairly "concrete". To support his belief that "most Canadians have made a careful calculation about the consequences of embracing an alternative defence policy," he cites public opinion polls showing overwhelming public support for Canadian involvement in NATO and NORAD, [as well as] election results.

The problem with this reasoning is that making a "careful calculation" about your interests implies a detailed knowledge of them. But how many Canadians can honestly be expected to have an intimate understanding of al-

liance policies and their security implications? These statistics may tell us that Canadians support alliance participation, but not why.

The second argument that, "if Canadians wanted an alternative defence policy, they would have voted in the NDP by now," is equally weak. Professor Nossal ought to know that in Canada, as in many Western democracies, elections are not won or lost on foreign policy issues – so elections make poor indicators of public foreign policy preferences.
Tony Rogers, Hong Kong

Export or Die

■ Roger Hill rightly warns of the hazards of Canada-US defence production integration ("Unified Canada-US Defence Production," *Peace&Security*, Summer 1989). Leaving aside the fact that such integration is already well advanced, with serious implications for independence in Canadian security policy, it is worth considering whether the implied solution, a better developed (perhaps specialized) national defence industrial base in Canada, isn't in fact at the root of the problem.

The DND Task Force report which Hill quotes, promotes integration, in part, on the grounds that Canadian security requires a well-developed defence industry base in Canada that can be mobilized in times of crisis and that can assure the supply of military equipment during periods of intense demand. But that leads to the sixty-four thousand (more like billion) dollar question – how can Canada sustain a commercially viable military industry during periods of reduced demand (i.e. during peace time)? The problem is acknowledged in another defence industry report, the Department of Supply and Services Defence Industrial Base Review 1987: "The Canadian defence market is insufficient in size and scope to support a wholly Canadian defence industrial base." A commercial military industry cannot survive

on Canadian military purchases, so both the DND Task Force and the Supply and Services reports look to exports as the basis for economic viability in the industry.

That begs another question. Where is the industry to find those exports? The biggest export market available to Canada is the US, but access to that market is still under threat (despite thirty years of formal defence production sharing) from US protectionism. And as American procurement is inevitably cut back – the combined effect of detente and budget restraint – that protectionism is certain to increase in an effort to preserve the shrinking market for American firms. Thus, the argument goes, Canada needs a way around American protectionism to gain unrestricted Canadian access to the American market – namely, full integration of the Canada-US market and industry so that Canadian firms are essentially defined as American for purposes of defence procurement in the US. In other words, the perceived need for a more developed Canadian defence industrial base is precisely what is creating the pressure (from Canadians) for an integrated North American defence industrial base.

Those who want increased military production in Canada need to understand that this will be possible only through increased exports. And if the Americans won't buy more than they already do (over fifty percent of Canadian military production) Canada will have to rely more on Europe and the Third World to support its military industry ambitions. But Europe has plenty of surplus military production capacity of its own, and the Third World is a highly competitive market in which a willingness to sell to human rights violators and war zones is rapidly becoming a prerequisite to success.

If Canada wants to establish some measure of military production independence from the Americans and wants to avoid relying

on military sales to zones of repression and war, a commercially viable, enlarged Canadian military industrial base is a non-starter. A truly independent Canadian defence industrial base will have to depend entirely on public subsidy, not on commercial sales, and will have to accept the higher per unit costs of shorter production runs – that might be the best incentive yet for Canada to reassess its security and military equipment needs.

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Much Ado About Nothing

■ Ted Hopf's article ("Is the West Missing the Soviet Boat?" *Peace&Security*, Summer 1989) seems to be an effort to say something while bending over backwards to say nothing. Hopf gives three reasons why the West should be encouraging. First, it channels Soviet energies away from new adventures – so the West must give Gorbachev "a graceful way out of commitments" (that is, a graceful way to abandon his interests) "while ensuring that any settlement preserves Western interests." Is that not what the West is doing already, and how does it differ from "a chilly response"? Secondly, it promotes detente – so the West should use Gorbachev's priority for disarmament, which dictates his moderation in the Third World, "to its [the West's] advantage." Is that not what the West is doing already and how does it differ from "a chilly response"? Thirdly, to help him against his conservative colleagues who are concerned that Gorbachev's foreign policy "seems to do nothing but make one unilateral concession after another," the West should give Gorbachev "a constructive response." What constructive response? The earlier two suggestions to give Gorby a face-saving way to retreat still more for Western advantage or something unspecified which Hopf can't bring himself to write about?
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