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Envoy says peace groups now professional



Roche: Movement a growing force, says disarmament envoy.

By Gordon Barthos Toronto Star

Canada's peace movement has taken on a sharp new "professional look" that goes far beyond the days of peace protests and ban-the-bomb placards, says Doug Roche, Ottawa's ambassador for disarmament.

Once confined largely to student, labor and left-wing groups, Canada's peace lobby is now far more broadly based, with more than 2,000 national, regional and local organizations across the country, Roche noted in remarks prepared for a Hamilton audience last night.

While Roche did not use the term "yuppie" in reference to Canada's fast-growing peace movement, its membership is clearly on his mind as he launches a cross-Canada speaking tour on disarmament issues.

Physicians, lawyers, scientists,

educators and psychologists are just a few of the influential mainstream professional groups now speaking out on peace issues and lobbying actively for change, the ambassador noted. Other influential groups include the churches and women's groups.

For the first time, politicians in Canada and elsewhere have to reckon with a popular, stable and broadly based yearning for action on disarmament that effectively cuts across political boundaries, Roche told The Star's editorial board earlier yesterday.

The political impact of the "peace lobby" can no longer be measured only in terms of the number of demonstrators that turn out for a given protest or rally, he said.

In an interview in the current issue of Peace magazine, Roche agreed that

"some people are concerned that because the peace movement is not protesting in the streets, the politicians and the media think it doesn't exist."

"I can tell you that the peace movement exists in great depth and is going to be more and more influential," Roche said. "The politicians had better take note of it."

(Peace rallies aren't entirely a thing of the past. Rallies in Toronto this year attracted between 2,000 and 4,000 people. In Edmonton in November, 1986, 4,000 people turned out for a national conference on peace and security issues. And in June, 100,000 West Germans turned out for an anti-nuclear rally in Bonn.)

"The peace movement... has both widened its activity and deepened its grasp of the terrible complexities of the disarmament subject!"