



OPED / GUEST COLUMN

What will Canada do about the continued threat posed by the 34,145 nuclear weapons in the world?

By Independent Sen.
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What will Canada do about the continued threat posed by the 34,145 nuclear weapons in the world? A recent roundtable in Ottawa of 30 invited experts charted a course for Canada to follow, which would involve the government building a new diplomatic bridge for global security.

An ambitious project, yes. But it is one that the new Martin government is perfectly positioned to undertake.

Prime Minister Paul Martin has clearly taken up the challenge of re-building good relations between Canada and the United States while also reaching out to shore up the United Nations as the cornerstone of international security. The Ottawa Roundtable showed him how to effectively pursue both priorities.

The roundtable had its origins in an international Pugwash conference held in Halifax in July, 2003. Pugwash, named for the Nova Scotia village where the industrialist Cyrus Eaton founded an organization of scientists to contain the development of nuclear weapons, won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1995. The Halifax conference urged governments to take new steps toward nuclear disarmament when the 35-year-old nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) is reviewed in 2005 at the United Nations. The Canadian Pugwash Group, along with the Middle Powers Initiative, an international organization specializing in nuclear disarmament and that has three Nobel Peace laureates on its steering committee, organized the roundtable to produce a policy paper for Canada. The Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade gave its support and financial help.

The most recent roundtable, held from Feb. 26-27, brought together such prominent figures as Maurice Strong, policy adviser to Prime Minister Paul Martin and personal envoy of U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan to the Korean nuclear negotiations; Ambassador Sergio Duarte of Brazil, expected to preside over the 2005 NPT Review; Tariq Rauf, head of verification and security policy for the International



Photograph by Mike Wigg, The Hill Times
GLOBAL VILLAGE: PM MARTIN HAS TAKEN UP THE CHALLENGE TO REBUILD GOOD RELATIONS BETWEEN CANADA AND U.S.

Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and Canada's Ambassador for Disarmament Paul Meyer.

Several speakers pointed to the central issue facing the NPT Review: the treaty was supposed to be a bargain between the Nuclear Weapons States (the U.S., Russia, the U.K., France and China) and the rest of the world. Non-nuclear states undertook not to acquire nuclear weapons in return for the nuclear powers negotiating the elimination of theirs. Far from moving in this direction, the nuclear powers are modernizing their arsenals (while lowering their overall total numbers), and other states (India, Pakistan, Israel) have now joined the nuclear club or have established new weapons programs (North Korea, Iran, Libya). The nuclear powers have not lived up to their promises to rid the world of nuclear weapons; now they are seeing the results of their inaction.

Despite recent progress in monitoring nuclear activity in Iran and Libya, the present trend of proliferation is undermining the strength and integrity of the NPT. The North Korean move to develop nuclear weapons is a blow to the NPT, said Maurice Strong, but there is a prospect for a diplomatic solution. However, clandestine weapons programs are now being pursued and terrorists will inevitably gain access to nuclear materials and technology, if not actual weapons. The last review of the NPT, in 2000, said that the only absolute guarantee against the use of nuclear weapons by terrorists is their total elimination.

The IAEA has verification and safeguards pro-

grams, but as Tariq Rauf pointed out, the budget for this work is only \$100-million a year - the same amount of money the U.S. alone spends every day on the maintenance of its nuclear weapons.

Defence against nuclear weapons "does not warrant the indefinite possession of nuclear weapons," said Ambassador Duarte, whose own country of Brazil abandoned its nuclear weapons program. "There [is] no sensible alternative to nuclear disarmament if we aim at a more secure and safe international environment."

The Roundtable squarely faced Canada's dilemma. Canada alone cannot stop the nuclear trend, especially since the development of a new nuclear age has been led by the Bush Administration in the U.S. Canada wants good relations with the U.S. - but it also wants genuine nuclear disarmament. What to do? Build a bridge, said Roundtable participants.

The nuclear debate has, on the one side, the recalcitrant nuclear weapons powers, and on the other, the Non-Aligned Movement that wants immediate negotiations to lead to zero nuclear weapons within a specific time period, such as 10-15 years. The centre of this debate is occupied

by a group of countries called the New Agenda Coalition (Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, South Africa, Sweden), which is calling for steady progress in implementing the 13 Practical Steps agreed upon in the NPT 2000 Review. A ban on all nuclear testing is one of these steps, yet the U.S. has rejected a test ban.

Canada has voted in support of the New Agenda's principal resolution at the U.N. two years in a row. But it won't join the New Agenda because that would conflict with NATO policy, which still holds that nuclear weapons are "essential." Canada, as a loyal member of NATO, should build a bridge between NATO and the New Agenda countries so that, together, these important middle power countries can strengthen the centre of the nuclear weapons debate.

What would Canada do to build this bridge? The roundtable had several ideas: Encourage NATO states to work with New Agenda countries to get nuclear weapons out of Europe; seek agreement within NATO for a full-fledged review of nuclear weapons policies (Canada was successful in promoting this in NATO five years ago, and should do so again with a tougher outcome in mind); organize regular meetings between NATO moderates and New Agenda countries to develop common positions. The Pugwash-Middle Powers Initiative Policy Paper will be issued in mid-March, in time for a preparatory meeting next month for the 2005 Review.

Such steps would help Canada to energize the global dialogue on nuclear weapons, and bridge the gaps between the poles of the nuclear debate. Most of all, Canada must put forward some new proposals for worldwide nuclear disarmament at this moment,

when it is thinking of joining in the U.S. Ballistic Missile Defence program, which many experts hold will further de-stabilize the world.

The U.S. and other nuclear weapons states would have to take notice of these steps. And, in the process, the NPT could be

saved in 2005. That would be no small contribution the Martin government could make to both the U.S. and the U.N.

Senator Douglas Roche, former Canadian Ambassador for Disarmament, is Chairman of the Middle Powers Initiative.

The Hill Times

Before you get suckered again...

Last month, the Sierra Club of Canada held an Ottawa news conference to re-announce its 10-month-old study of household dust in Sydney, Cape Breton.

A national news organization, given "advance" details of the repeat announcement, ran scary headlines like, "Toxic tar ponds put children at risk".

The study tested household dust samples, collected by Sierra Club volunteers, for lead and arsenic. From these, it estimated potential lead levels in Sydney children. It speculated there was "a one to 15% chance" children might carry lead above internationally accepted guidelines.

It sounded awful—unless you knew what the Sierra Club failed to tell reporters. Public Health nurses already tested the blood of Sydney children, and not a single one had elevated lead levels. Not one.

You can find that study at www.gcocns.ca/health.

The reporter who wrote the scary story was dismayed to learn the facts the Sierra Club omitted. But her news organization declined to run a correction, or even a follow-up story. *Children at risk* is news. *Children are safe* is not.

Sydney reporters know too much about the Tar Ponds—and the Sierra Club—to fall for such fear-mongering. Their Parliamentary colleagues should be no less diligent.

All we ask is that you apply the same skepticism to our critics as you appropriately apply to us.

...call us for the facts.

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