

OPINION

A Nuclear Disarmament Agenda for Canada

Ernie
— REGEHR

Bookstore shelves in Ottawa these days are filled with titles warning of a possible new Cold War between the West and Russia. Are things really that bad?

There's no doubt that almost twenty years since the end of the Cold War, nuclear weapons are still viewed as the currency of power. The states that have them intend to keep them, but others want to join the exclusive nuclear club.

Tomorrow morning I will appear before the Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, and I will urge the government to reaffirm its fundamental commitment to the elimination of nuclear weapons at the highest levels. Even more, it should use its good position to focus international attention on the disarmament agenda.

Last month at NATO's recent meeting in Oslo, Norway, Minister of Foreign Affairs Peter MacKay raised the issue of NATO's continued reliance upon nuclear weapons

with the foreign minister of Germany who serves as the alliance's president.

This is an important first step to having NATO review its outdated and dangerous nuclear policy, but the government continues to send mixed signals. A few weeks ago Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor told Parliament that, "we are a member of NATO and we stand by NATO's policies. NATO, at this stage, has no policy of disarming from nuclear weapons."

My presentation to MPs this week will be an addition to the growing number of voices in Canada today urging the government to show leadership in the disarmament arena.

In the Senate recently, Senator Roméo Dallaire put forward a motion calling for the Government of Canada to take a global leadership role in the campaign of eradicating the dire threat to humanity posed by nuclear weapons. The motion was overwhelmingly supported by the chamber.

Parliamentarians are also working for Canada to show leadership. The Parliamentary Network Against Nuclear Arms, an all-party group of MPs chaired by

Alexa McDonough, meets regularly to educate parliamentarians about nuclear issues.

There is also the Middle Powers Initiative, an international committee led by retired senator and former UN Ambassador for Disarmament Douglas Roche, that works at the UN and around the world to press for nuclear disarmament. Among its supporters is former prime minister of Canada Kim Campbell.

The Foreign Affairs minister's statements at NATO followed on the heels of calls by Canadian members of the Nobel Peace Prize-winning Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs to address NATO's reliance on nuclear weapons.

Canada has a strong moral voice and can play a constructive role in aiding this process. The Canadian government needs to:

- Work with like-minded states to press for adoption of Canadian proposals to address institutional arrangements that impede the disarmament process at the NPT.

- Play an active role in promoting international mechanisms to severely restrict the spread of sensitive civilian nuclear power

technologies (that enable uranium enrichment programs for nuclear weapons, as is the case for Iran) and monitor compliance with nuclear weapons non-proliferation obligations.

- Push for India, Israel and Pakistan to be brought under the nuclear non-proliferation regime and ensure that any changes to nuclear co-operation guidelines under the Nuclear Suppliers Group produce a non-proliferation benefit and do not facilitate growth in the arsenals of these de facto nuclear weapons states.

- Resolve the NATO-NPT contradiction, where as a NATO country Canada insists that nuclear weapons are essential to its security yet promotes nuclear disarmament through the NPT.

Foreign Minister MacKay's meeting with NATO's president is an important first step in promoting a nuclear weapons-free world. However, Canada needs to do more.

Ernie Regehr is a member of the Canadian Pugwash Group and former executive director of Project Ploughshares.

editor@embassymag.ca

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Thanks for Digging Up Mining and Human Rights

I commend *Embassy* on last week's editorial (Re: "Canada's Mining Companies: It's the Government's Turn" May 23). This is the first piece I have seen that discusses both the serious and ongoing human rights concerns raised about Canadian mining company TVI Pacific's operations in Mindanao, Philippines, and the consensus report by members of the Canadian extractive industry and NGOs to establish guidelines for the operations of Canadian extractive companies operating overseas (Advisory Group Report on the National CSR Roundtables).

The link between TVI Pacific and the National CSR Roundtables is more direct than is obvious from your editorial. It was testimony in 2005 by two members of an affected community in the Philippines before a parliamentary sub-committee on human rights and democratic development, about the human rights and environmental impacts from TVI Pacific on their community, that caused the parliamentary committee to delve more deeply into the problems caused by Canadian mining companies abroad and the lack of mechanisms available to hold

Canadian companies to account here at home. Not only did the parliamentary committee end up writing a report that led to the National CSR Roundtables, but the committee also asked the government of Canada to investigate the complaints made against TVI Pacific.

Unfortunately, the government declined to carry out that investigation. The only hope villagers affected by TVI Pacific have left now is that the government of Canada adopt the recommendations that came out of its own CSR Roundtable process as soon as possible.

CATHERINE COUMANS, Ph.D.
Research Coordinator
Coordinator Asia Pacific Program
MiningWatch Canada
Ottawa, Ont.

I am so pleased to see the editorial regarding Canadian mining in the Philippines. Thank you for taking that initiative. The printed word is powerful.

ANNE MCNALLY
Kelowna, BC

New Insurance Covers Afghan Missions: Deputy Foreign Minister

I am writing to correct a number of misunderstandings and to confirm the current support provided to Canadian government employees serving in or travelling to Afghanistan and Iraq (Re: "Life Insurance Last Priority for Diplomats in War Zones" May 9).

DFAIT recognizes that a lack of a special risk insurance and a compensation package appropriate to the risk posed serious barriers to recruiting public servants to these assignments. More importantly, we recognized our responsibility to those who accepted this duty.

An accidental death and dismemberment insurance has been in place since March 2007. DFAIT employees currently on assignment to Afghanistan are covered by this policy, as are those travelling in and out for short-term duty. DFAIT managers have been advised of insurance coverage and have been forwarding details of the coverage to any staff considering an assignment or being assigned to Afghanistan. Partner departments have also been invited to par-

ticipate in this insurance plan.

This unique authority for such insurance shows how this department is committed to working closely with the Treasury Board Secretariat and our partner departments to ensure that appropriate measures are in place to allow departments and agencies to respond in a timely and effective manner to changing circumstances overseas.

The new international reality has created a requirement for public servants to accept assignments in non-traditional and extremely difficult locations which present serious challenges and equally serious risks. The Canadian government is asking considerable personal sacrifice and commitment from its employees who accept the challenge to support the government of Canada's important goals in Afghanistan through serving there. Our overriding commitment to their safety and security is paramount and will remain so.

LEONARD J. EDWARDS
Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs

Canada and the United Nations Have Backtracked Before

I was dismayed by the interpretations of the two Greek-Canadian MPs and the Greek Embassy's press counsellor regarding the Greek objections of the name Republic of Macedonia (Re: "Macedonia Dispute Goes to the House," May 23).

Contrary to John Cannis's claim that "the international community and Canada have already set a precedent by referring to the country as FYROM, and for Canada to backtrack now would send the wrong signal," Canada will show its democratic values by "backtracking" on this precedent, by which a country has been bullied into accepting a temporary name in order to join the UN and the international community.

Canada has shown its moral stand by backtracking on a number of occasions, such as the Chinese head tax. The UN constantly makes new precedents on many issues. Nearly 120 UN members, including the United States, Russia and China, have recognized the country as the Republic of Macedonia.

Both Mr. Cannis and Jim Karygiannis seem to feel that the problem is "between the two neighbouring countries" and that they "have to sort out the issue before we are able to do it here and voice it here." In fact, keeping in mind the inalienable right of every country and people to choose its name, this is all a non-issue since The Republic of Macedonia and the Macedonians themselves have no problem with their national and historic name.

Perhaps the Greek officials can ask themselves why then they are using the name "Macedonia" for their northern province, since that too is a part of the whole region called Macedonia. Following their logic, they should tell the country of Britain not to use that name since France has a province by the same name, and the Americans should not call their country by that name since it is a part of a continent.

DRAGI STOJKOVSKI
President,

United Macedonians Organization of Canada

Fisheries Minister Questions Morality of Misinformation

Dr. David Lavigne's letter requires some clarification (Re: "Animal Rights Activist Calls for Moral Debate on Seal Hunt" Letters, May 2).

Dr. Lavigne implies that Fisheries and Oceans Canada has gone against its own management plan in setting the 2007 harp seal quota. This is not the case. A quota of 270,000 respects our management objectives, as our scientists have clearly stated.

Although proposed bans are not directed at the Inuit harvest, aboriginal groups have stated themselves that any market closures will have a direct and significant negative impact on their livelihood and traditional way of life.

Similar claims that the Inuit would not be affected were made prior to the 1983 ban on the importation of whitecoat and blueback pelts into Europe. Numerous studies have since shown that the ban did cause significant hardship for Inuit hunters along with

the Atlantic sealers who were targeted.

The Canadian seal hunt is a well-managed and regulated harvest that meets or exceeds modern humane hunting standards. It provides opportunities for employment in isolated regions, and it helps allow people to remain in their communities and make a living to support their families.

As pointed out by Dr. Lavigne, controversy has been associated with this hunt for over 40 years. The main reason for the continuation of this debate is that a vocal group of opponents do not accept the right of others to hunt seals to provide a living.

Should misinformation be used to stop the seal hunt? Perhaps that should be part of whatever "moral debate" Dr. Lavigne is proposing.

LOYOLA HEARN
Minister of Fisheries and Oceans

Road to Security in Darfur a Long One

Thanks so much for this fine piece by Andrew Cooper and Andrew Schrumm (Re: "How Mia Farrow Got UN Troops into Darfur," April 25).

Please will you pass along my thanks, along with the hope that they will find ways

to keep the pressure on China until the people of Darfur experience security. We have a long road ahead.

MIA FARROW
Beverly Hills, California, USA