

Missile Defence: Bad for People, Bad for Peace

By Stacy Chappel

Canadian defence policy should be determined by Canadian citizens, right?

Not according to Canada's business lobby. We've all heard that Paul Martin is off to visit with George Bush. Less known is that another group headed to Washington April 19th and 20th — Canadian business lobby group, the Canadian Council of Chief Executives (CCCE). On the table at both meetings is Canadian involvement in the US missile defence program.

The CCCE have been promoting missile defence along with other measures to integrate Canadian and US defence, going beyond the theme of economic partnership one might expect from a corporate lobby. Their meeting included President Bush's chief of staff, Andrew Card, National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice, and Homeland Security Advisor, General John Gordon.

Up for discussion was the CCCE's recent position paper, "New Frontiers: Building a 21st Century Canada-United States Partnership". The paper makes clear that the CCCE thinks little of Canadian sovereignty in relation to issues of defence and foreign policy. Responding to missile defence's critics, the report declares, "arguments about whether Canada would be contributing to a new arms race are moot because the United States already has decided to proceed." In other words, once the US makes a decision, Canadian opinion doesn't matter.

While the CCCE argues that the views of Canadians are moot, Canadians themselves are not afraid to have an opinion. The latest Ipsos-Reid poll shows that 69% of the electorate are opposed to Canadian involvement in missile defence. Not surprising—we know a bad policy when we see it.

Canadians aren't alone; missile defence has opponents from some surprising sources. Forty-nine retired US generals and admirals publicly urged President Bush to suspend the program arguing that it is ineffective in addressing real security concerns. The American Physics Society, the largest US body of physicists, has publicly denounced the plan, stating that it will simply not work.

The issue has proved divisive for the Liberals. Victoria citizens should note that our MP, David Anderson, has supported missile defence in Parliament. He joined the Liberal cabinet and the Conservatives in February, voting down a motion from the Bloc Quebecois opposing missile defence. Meanwhile twenty-nine Liberal backbenchers, the NDP and the Bloc voted to keep Canada out of the program.

Canadians have good reason for concern. Missile defence may mean money for Canadian arms manufacturers—like CCCE members Bechtel, Bombardier, and CAE, but it is bad for people, and bad for peace.

A foremost concern for many is the fact that missile defence will put weapons in space. Martin and the CCCE both deny this. The facts, however, prove them wrong. The US defence budget for 2005 explicitly includes \$10.5 million dollars for space technology for use with the missile defence program.

This is in keeping with broader US policy. *The Air Force Space Command Strategic Master Plan FY06 and Beyond* lists “space power” and “full spectrum space combat command” as key to their vision of the US’s military future and argues, “While our ultimate goals are truly to ‘exploit’ space through SFE [Space Force Enhancement] and SFA [Space Force Application] missions, as with other mediums, we cannot fully ‘exploit’ that medium until we first ‘control’ it.”

Contrary to the assertions of the CCCE, Canada’s position on missile defence matters. The US was seriously damaged by international refusals to support the invasion of Iraq. They need countries like Canada to sign on and add credibility to their missile defence plans.

Canada was right to follow our own path on Iraq. Hopefully the will of Canadian citizens will prove to be more powerful than the CCCE business lobby, and Canada will say no to involvement in missile defence.

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