

DISCUSSION

The first comment focused on the failure of the speaker to provide a conceptual basis for his paper. He asked: How do we use violence? When is it legitimate? Is it possible to speak outside the rubric of repression when the level of physical violence is reached? After all, the problem of an escalating arms race threatens humanity as a whole. In the realm of human rights, mankind has a right to be protected against human repression. Lemle replied that indeed, the nuclear freeze movement lacks a conceptual basis. It does, however, have a well-conceived set of objectives and it has expended a great deal of effort developing a political plan of action. There are compelling reasons for this lack of focus; when so many disparate groups are brought together, as is the case with the freeze movement, it is difficult to achieve a consensus.

Another participant suggested that the freeze movement is not really a movement for social change. It addresses a very narrow issue and is quite circumscribed and isolated. This is why it has enjoyed so much success. In response, it was suggested that the fact that the movement exists indicates that there has been social change. The freeze movement is indicative of spontaneity, not organized planning. At this point, Lemle called for a definition of the phrase: "social change."

One participant argued that the freeze movement does not constitute social change, but rather a series of transformations. Most important is the transformation of a taboo area—the need for nuclear weapons. Once a forbidden topic of political discussion, it is no longer beyond public scrutiny. Again it was argued that the nuclear freeze movement is not itself a movement for social change, but is instead moving in that direction. It was noted that the freeze movement has so far confined itself to the structure provided by its leaders and has not raised issues of development. It has not been elevated to a more philosophical level. Humanistic concerns and human rights issues are not yet a part of the overall discussion.

Lemle pointed out that, unlike other efforts at changing public policy, the great motivation behind the freeze movement is emotional and moral. Its objective, however, is one of practical international politics. The humanistic side of the movement plays a negligible or non-existent role.

Returning to the issue of the relationship between the nuclear freeze movement and the concept of social change, one participant posed this question: "Is this movement's relative failure an example of a grassroots movement being thwarted by an elite, or does the movement itself question its hypothesis and course of action?"

The discussion then turned to the possibility that the nuclear freeze movement might become a violent one. One discussant suggested that violence within any movement is a demonstration that the movement is not a strong one. Violence is necessary only if the movement lacks adequate support. The democratic process, neither in the United States nor in India, can permit violence as a legitimate tactic.

One participant argued that the discussion's frame of reference was too narrow. The experience in the United States has been that when dealing with foreign policy questions, they are treated differently than questions of domestic policy. In the past, the public has not been involved in foreign affairs. Vietnam and the freeze movement brought the public, for the first time, into foreign policy debates. Senators Edward Kennedy and Alan Cranston have successfully made the link in the public mind between increased defence spending and reduced funding for entitlement programmes. As a result, the freeze movement is effectively causing slow, incremental social change to take place. On the question of violence, the only time it has effectively been used in a United States social movement was during the 1960's in the civil rights movement. Nonetheless if a solution to the problem cannot be bought, and the government is unwilling to solve it, an explosion of some sort is likely to be the ultimate outcome.

Lemle agreed that these comments addressed the central thesis of his presentation. Reality and posturing are not the same, he said. The reality of the situation is that the military budget is increasing by leaps and bounds at the expense of the entitlement programmes.

The presentation was then linked with the question of law and social change. The nuclear freeze movement, he said, is a bottom-up, as opposed to a top-down, movement. This bottom-up movement is being thwarted by an elite which is vested with the power of the government. When we raise questions of extra-legal behaviour by freeze supporters, we implicitly raise the question of "What is law". This brings us squarely into the area of civil disobedience. Are we working with natural law here? Or are we dealing with the law of social contracts?

One of the Indian participants questioned the extent to which issues of social change can be absorbed into issues of policy. What are the actual changes which the freeze movement is causing in the social structure? Is this a social or strategic question? Another participant queried the costs to the social structure of movements which adopt a strategy of civil disobedience. Lemle replied that he attempted to simultaneously address both of these facets of the freeze issue in his presentation.