

also ran into trouble. At one point the Washington, D.C., staffer who was lobbying for tighter DNA guidelines, Leslie Dach, was called before EDF's executive board to justify his work and explain

some remarks he had made to the press. Dach's supervisor, Joseph Highland, said that "in terms of flak caught per dollar spent" the DNA program produced a "much higher" rate of antagonism than

anything else EDF has done. Highland estimated that EDF spent at most \$1000 on this project in 1977, a sum which came out of a budget of \$250,000 for work on toxic chemicals. The EDF does

Conference on Nuclear War Not Peaceful

From philanthropist Stewart Mott to the Unitarian Universalist Association, the liberal Establishment gathered in Washington on 7 December for a 1-day "Nuclear War Conference" paid for with a \$25,000 check from actor Paul Newman. Newman, sitting on the podium all day under the television lights, distinguished himself at the meeting not only by virtue of his status as a movie star but because he kept quiet—unlike his fellow panelists and the 300-member overflow audience.

The conference's flyer said it "aimed at permitting the public to understand the problem of nuclear war in concrete, realistic terms . . . not in generalized abstractions with little meaning. . . ."

"It is high time the American public be given the facts, clinically and objectively, about the realities of nuclear war" it said. But the way the conference unfolded demonstrated how hard this is to do with this grave subject.

Conference cochairmen were Gene R. La Roque, the Navy admiral-turned-dove who runs the Center for Defense Information, and Richard J. Barnet of the Institute for Policy Studies. The panelists discussed ways nuclear war could break out. Richard Falk of Princeton said that the weakness of the dollar and America's perception of her loss of power in the world could make her feel sufficiently impotent to try some bold military stroke. Jerome D. Frank, a psychiatrist, discussed how national leaders could decide to push the nuclear button if "the prospect of the destruction of one's self-image is more damaging than the prospect of bodily death. . . . History is strewn with the bodies of civilizations whose leaders' judgments failed under pressure." George B. Kistiakowsky, the Harvard chemist and former presidential science adviser, admitted that wars are caused "by geopolitical conflict" but nonetheless detailed how the "advent of ever more sophisticated weapons is the main source of military instability." (Later, in answer to a question, Kistiakowsky gave his own formula for avoiding nuclear war. "What to do with nuclear weapons? Leave them alone. Put them in storage. They will rot, like everything else, and then no one will be willing to use them.")

Author Harrison Salisbury said nuclear war would most likely break out between the Soviet Union and China, but that the United States would probably be drawn in, as it has been in other wars in this century. Three retired military officers offered scenarios in Europe and Africa showing how the first use of nuclear weapons—perhaps escalating to large-scale exchanges—could take place.

But with virtually none of the papers available to the audience, and a relatively unstructured discussion plan, the "clinical and objective" approach seemed to get lost.

Audience and panelists began plying their own pet, often contradictory, peeves. La Roque at one point announced that the real "enemy" was the military, to whom Americans had abrogated responsibility. Harvard Nobel

George Wald shortly countered that the real master of both military and the civilians was big business. Journalist I. F. Stone, from the floor, denounced American policy towards Iran.

The confusion thus created was epitomized in an exchange begun by Homer Jacks of the World Conference on Religion and Peace. Jacks, from the floor, asked actor Newman what he thought of the fact that the United States had voted against a recent United Nations resolution that the use of nuclear weapons would be "a crime against humanity." Newman replied with a statement about terrorism, and then asked psychiatrist Frank to comment on "how much does every new weapon under development add to the miscalculation of terms" in nuclear war. Frank's reply was that "nuclear war would not be started by an insane person, but by a sane person under stress."

Things got a little more disciplined during the afternoon, which included a rousing prepared speech from Senator John Culver (D-Iowa). Several panelists discussed the effects of fallout and the effects of radiation on the Bikini islanders and the Japanese, the two main populations available for study of the effects of weapons bursts. But the afternoon, too, became a long exposition of things that people in the room didn't like. Question after question was directed to the Administration's civil defense chief, Bardyl Tirana. (People who think the public should remember the horrors of nuclear war don't like civil defense, because if the public believes in civil defense it might be convinced nuclear war is survivable and be less resistant to starting one.) But the initially constructive dialogue between the audience and Tirana eventually deteriorated. Nearly the last question of the meeting was hurled at him by a woman who claimed to have known him before he became the government's civil defense chief 2 years ago. "What is it about government service that unhinges peoples' minds?" she demanded, and, not waiting for an answer, strode away from the microphone.

Afterwards, cochairmen Barnet and La Roque were saying that the meeting's main value was in the extensive media coverage by public radio and network television. (Within a few days of the conference, it became clear that the public reaction was indeed large.)

But, apparently conscious of that mass audience beyond the conference room, several participants seemed concerned that the meeting had not seemed more constructive. From the floor, journalist Stone said: "Tirana will carry the day because to the distant observer he will seem to be the only one to come forward with a constructive plan."

Stone said that civil defense would not remove the threat of nuclear war, but more fundamental institutional changes could. "If you live in a lunatic asylum, one strategy is to wear an asbestos nightgown and get a bulletproof vest and carry long, sharp knives. But a better approach is to get the hell out of the lunatic asylum." —DEBORAH SHAPLEY