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World of doubt

Foreign affairs minister needs to be more honest

By **EZRA LEVANT** -- Calgary Sun

Bill Graham, Canada's Foreign Affairs Minister, told reporters last week that Canada shouldn't go to war because "world opinion" is against it.

Why does our foreign affairs minister think his job is to represent "world opinion" to Canada, rather than to represent Canadian opinion to the world? What other decisions is he making based not on Canadian interests, but on those of foreign powers?

But let's put aside, for a moment, the abdication of Canadian sovereignty embedded within Graham's statement. Let's put aside the amorality of it -- that Graham cares less about right and wrong than he cares about getting to sit with the popular kids at lunch in the UN cafeteria.

Graham's statement about obeying world opinion doesn't just describe how he comes to conclusions, it describes how he makes observations. Because he has observed, he says, that the "world" is against war with Iraq.

But how does he know that?

Is he basing that on the smattering of anti-war rallies of the past few weeks? Even if one accepts the inflated attendance numbers propagated by rally organizers, the total number isn't more than a few million souls -- out of a world population in excess of six billion people. And those protesters were concentrated in a handful of cities, such as London and Paris, where protesting is a semi-professional occupation, funded by militant labour unions that pay to bus in protesters and even mass-produce their picket signs.

More educational was the absence of anti-war protesters in Eastern European cities, where, unlike in France, Belgium and Germany, citizens haven't forgotten the horrors of life under a totalitarian dictatorship.

So, by "world opinion," Graham can't mean a handful of carnival-style marches. Does he mean opinion polls?

Opinion polls on the war vary greatly, depending on the way the questions are asked. Last week, two polls in the U.K. came out: One put support for war at a staggering 75%, the other at a pitiful 15%. The only difference was the wording.

But polls aren't just limited by bias. They're limited by who is asked, and how free they are to reply. How reliable would a Chinese poll be -- in a country with few phones to begin with -- where citizens live in fear of holding illegal political views? And even if one could accurately gauge Chinese opinion, how informed is that opinion, given government censorship of China's media? Of course, these problems apply not just to China, but to all dictatorships -- Iraq included.

So if a few rallies aren't a good indicator of "world opinion", and if polls are equally spotty, does Graham mean the UN itself?

Not exactly. Because fully 90 countries at the UN are allies in the U.S. war on terror, and most European countries back war against Saddam Hussein. So Graham is being more selective -- he likely means the UN Security Council, a group of 15 countries Canada does not even belong to, but China, Syria and Pakistan do.

We don't know what people in China, Syria and Pakistan believe about the war, because they are dictatorships. We just know what their UN ambassadors say.

So Bill Graham has contracted out our foreign policy decision-making to 15 ambassadors.

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including several from repressive regimes.

So, a little more honesty, please. Bill Graham isn't obeying "world opinion." He is obeying the French, Syrian and Chinese ambassadors.

That's who is giving him his marching orders. And he should have the honesty to say so.

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