

External Affairs in Parliament

Nuclear Tests and the Radiation Hazard

The following statement was made to the House of Commons by Prime Minister Diefenbaker on November 5:

... Some question was raised on Friday with reference to the attitude taken by Canada in connection with nuclear testing, and in particular with the motion and the several amendments which were before the United Nations. For that reason I feel it proper that I should place before the House at this time something of the stand which the Canadian representatives have taken there in the light of the decision which was made today in the Political Committee.

The 36-power resolution on nuclear testing, as amended by Canada with sub-amendments by several other delegations, was adopted by the Political Committee this morning by the very large vote of 81 in favour, none against, with 25 abstentions. Immediately following the vote on that resolution, a separate United States-United Kingdom resolution was also put to a vote and adopted with 50 in favour, including Canada, 12 against, with 42 abstentions. The action which the Political Committee took this morning on these two resolutions will, I hope, lend new impetus and direction to the negotiations in Geneva which have been marking time while this matter was under discussion in New York.

The purpose of the Canadian amendments to the original 36-power resolution was to attempt to improve it in two respects: first, to link up future discussions with the references to testing contained in the recent correspondence between President Kennedy and Chairman Khrushchov and, second, to remedy an omission in the original text by incorporating in it a call for an immediate cessation of testing in the three environments — in the atmosphere, under water and in outer space — on which all sides are agreed that no special inspection mechanism is needed.

The sub-amendment submitted by Ghana had the effect of adding a third element to the Canadian amendments by calling for an interim arrangement during which underground tests would be suspended while the research for a formula for their permanent suspension would be continued. The United States and United Kingdom Governments submitted further amendments to the Ghanaian proposal to make clear that they wanted adequate assurances for international verification during this interim period. The United States-United Kingdom proposal was accepted, as was that of Ghana, and thereafter the resolution as a whole, incorporating the Canadian amendments thus revised, was adopted with the result that I have already indicated.

Throughout the negotiations, which were complex, Canada has kept in close consultation with all the members of the 18-Nation Disarmament Committee and,