

Canada wants a scaling down of testing plans

U.S.S.R. — to take some interim or transitional measures to reinforce the PTB and to prevent the situation from deteriorating further while efforts are carried on to end nuclear testing. In particular, the Canadian proposal to the CCD of April 6, 1971, called on the two major testing powers to undertake, either unilaterally or on the basis of a bilateral understanding, some or all of the following steps: (a) as an earnest of their good faith in working toward an underground test ban, to begin as soon as possible to scale down their underground testing programs, beginning with high-yield testing that can be readily identified; (b) to announce in advance data concerning underground nuclear explosions so that existing monitoring facilities could be more easily tested and improved; (c) to take special measures to guard against potential environmental risks connected with testing; and (d) to undertake to co-operate in the use, development and improvement of facilities for the monitoring of underground tests by seismological means.

U.S.S.R.'s position

The U.S.S.R. has tried to suggest — quite speciously, we believe — that the Canadian interim restraint proposals would somehow “legalize” continued underground testing. It also specifically rejected suggestion (b) above on the curious ground that it would facilitate the leak of military information and thus endanger Soviet security — a contention quite inconsistent with the Soviet claim that other countries’ “national means” are adequate to provide them with this same information. The United States has so far not offered any specific response to the Canadian proposals, but seems to be quite unenthusiastic.

Since the early 1960s, while the negotiations have remained deadlocked, ostensibly over the verification problem, there has, in fact, been an increase in the rate of underground nuclear-weapons testing by the United States and the U.S.S.R. (an unofficial total of 285 from October 1963 to July 1970, compared to 475 in 15 years up to October 1963), as well as continued testing in the atmosphere, with its greater risk of radioactive contamination, by France and China. Canada has, therefore, continued to press for consideration and acceptance of some or all of the transitional measures we have suggested, together with any other restraints on testing that may gain general acceptability, pending the resolution of the issues between the two major testing powers that have been allowed for all too

long to prevent serious negotiations. If real efforts to reach a compromise solution

In an attempt to break this deadlock of inactivity, Canada’s External Affairs Minister Mitchell Sharp appealed for action by the nuclear-testing powers which he said to the CCD on September 7, 1971. Until this (a comprehensive test ban) can be achieved, we believe that all members of the United Nations would wish to appeal to governments that are conducting nuclear tests to put restraints on the size as well as the number of tests they are now carrying out, and to announce such restraints. This is a simple concept that does not involve any complications.

While the differing positions on verification procedures between the United States and the U.S.S.R. are frequently advanced as the main reason for the failure to conclude a CTB despite the avowed acceptance of this aim by both governments, it is becoming increasingly clear that, in fact, the nuclear-weapons states apparently continue to believe that their security interests are best served by continuing their nuclear testing. It is significant, for instance, that overriding national security interests were adduced by U.S. authorities as reasons for proceeding with the high yield Amchitka test on November 6, 1969, which followed by several weeks the major Soviet test explosion recorded on September 27 of between three to six megatons at Novaya Zemlya (according to the published estimates).

Three conditions

Thus, regardless of whether current underground tests are intended to guarantee the continued reliability of existing nuclear weapons, as well as to develop more sophisticated weapons, it has been carefully considered whether the future security interests of any nuclear state could be safeguarded more effectively through such testing than through an international agreement prohibiting tests in all environments, provided a reasonable deterrence against violations exists.

In answer to this question, I would suggest that three conditions — first, the attainment of approximate over-all strategic parity between the United States and the Soviet Union at very high force levels; secondly, the progress in the ability to monitor underground events by seismological means; and thirdly, the danger that will ensue if the proliferation of nuclear weapons to non-nuclear-weapons states should be allowed to gather momentum — all point to the urgent need for renewed efforts for the early conclusion of a treaty banning nuclear testing in all environments. These points are worth considering in more detail.