

Frustration and disappointment over slowness of disarmament

By R. Harry Jay

Canadian spokesmen have repeatedly pointed to the growing frustration and disappointment felt by most countries — and certainly by Canada — at the failure of the international community to face up more concretely and rapidly to the awesome problems that confront it in the field of disarmament. Despite some modest steps, the record of achievement provides no comfort.

Shall we be forced to admit in five years that the declaration of the 1970s as the Disarmament Decade was a half-hearted gesture? International security will be in even greater peril if, in these next five years, we do not come to grips with the tasks set out for the Decade. Early agreement must be reached on the most pressing arms-control problems and vigorous action taken to resolve them.

All states of military significance share this task, but the primary responsibility to ensure that the Disarmament Decade is not a failure rests with the nuclear-weapon states. Of all the problems we face in the arms-control and disarmament field, none is greater or deserves higher priority than the need for limitations and reductions in nuclear arms, for an effective ban on all nuclear-weapon testing and for further strengthening of the nuclear non-proliferation system.

As valuable as they have been, the strategic-arms limitation talks (SALT) between the United States and the Soviet Union have not yet slowed the nuclear-arms race — much less led to any reduction in nuclear arms. Canada welcomed the SALT I agreement and the establishment

at Vladivostok in 1974 of the principle of numerical equality in central strategic systems. Four years have passed since the SALT I agreement and the Vladivostok principles still remain to be confirmed by a definitive SALT II agreement. During those years, new developments in strategic weaponry have further complicated the task of curtailing competition in nuclear weapons. The problems facing the United States and the Soviet Union in undertaking even gradual and partial measures of nuclear disarmament are very complex. Nonetheless, the two super-powers must make a more determined effort to come to grips with these problems. They must move with greater speed towards the conclusion of SALT II and then move on to SALT III — that is, from limitations to effective reductions.

Nuclear-weapon testing

Despite the appeals made year after year for almost three decades in resolution after resolution of the United Nations, progress towards a ban on all nuclear-weapon testing has almost imperceptibly advanced. The Partial Test Ban Treaty of 1963 has not yet been signed by two nuclear-weapon states of which is still engaging in atmospheric testing.

It is difficult to accept the fact that more resolute efforts have not been made by the nuclear-weapon states themselves to overcome the obstacles to a nuclear test ban. It is even more difficult to understand why, as the Soviet Union has argued, movement towards a CTBT is impossible unless all five nuclear-weapon states participate from the outset. Equally — and sooner rather than later — all nuclear-weapon states must stop nuclear-weapon testing in all environments. At least the two super-powers, as well as many other nuclear-weapon states, should enter into a formal international agreement to end their nuclear-weapon testing for a specific trial period. The nuclear arsenals of the super-powers are so huge and their capacity for destruction

Tasks shared by all states of military significance

Mr. Jay is Canadian Ambassador to the Office of the United Nations at Geneva and to the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament. The views expressed in this article represent the views of the Government of Canada. A fuller version of the Canadian views was given in Mr. Jay's statement to the First Committee of the UN General Assembly on November 5, 1976.