

world, have been waiting in hopeful expectation for these discussions to get under way. The House will, I am sure, expect a few remarks from me about the circumstances in which the talks are to begin.

This evening the five Western powers represented on the Committee are releasing a paper which sets forth the opening negotiating position of the West. It takes the form of a three-stage plan for comprehensive disarmament.

During some six weeks in Washington, the Western five evolved this plan; last week it was put in final form in Paris, and was considered and approved by the NATO Council.

Honourable members will understand that what has been formulated and announced is an initial negotiating position. This means that it may undergo modification as the negotiations develop, for there could be no negotiating if one side or the other were to stand on a fixed and inflexible position. Canada will urge that the Western negotiators continue to seek improvements in an effort to reach agreement with the Soviet side.

While both the Western powers and the Soviet Union have put forward blueprints for a three-stage programme, the proposals of the West do not constitute a package. They call for study leading to agreement on specific measures of disarmament. However, as soon as required studies on many items are completed, the appropriate agreements can be concluded and implemented, whether or not other items in the same stage are ready for agreement. Therefore, in areas where it proves possible to move forward to agreement, progress will be rapid and there can quickly be partial measures of disarmament within the scope of the general plan.

I have said that there is agreement among the Western powers on the broad lines of the programme presented. There have been, and remain, differences of approach and emphasis, just as there are differences of interest and judgment. For example, under instructions General Burns has pressed to have urgent attention given to measures of nuclear disarmament and he has had some success in this respect, though not as much as I should have liked. In this approach we shared to a degree the views of the French Government, whose proposals dealing with the control of the means of delivering nuclear warheads seemed to meet one of the major causes of anxiety in the world today.

Similarly, in our view, the items concerning the cut-off in the production of fissionable material for weapons purposes and the conversion of existing stocks to peaceful uses deserve higher priority and should be closely linked with the reduction of armed forces and armaments to the levels proposed.

While these views have found some expression in the Western plan, we continue to believe that there is room for improvement. In line with this attitude we welcome the inclusion, early in the Western programme, of studies and measures designed to prohibit, under effective control, the placing in outer space of weapons of mass destruction.