

The question of disarmament continues to occupy a large part of the UN's attention, much as it has since the organization's inception 34 years ago. October 24-30, 1979 has been officially designated Disarmament Week by the United Nations. Disarmament and arms control is a long and painful process. Nevertheless, progress has been made in some areas over the years to limit weapons of war, and I remain optimistic that more progress will be made in the future.

The United States and the Soviet Union have, as a result of the SALT negotiations, taken a first step to placing equal numerical ceilings on the numbers of strategic nuclear weapons possessed by both of these states. Discussions between the UK, USSR and USA concerning a comprehensive test ban have succeeded in defining the major elements of a treaty. At Canada's initiative the General Assembly has called for negotiations to ban the production of fissionable material for weapons purposes. Nevertheless, the nuclear arms race continues, and the danger of the spread of these weapons remains.

Last year about \$400 billion was spent for military purposes, of which some eighty per cent was allocated to non-nuclear weapons. Thirty-two countries spend more than 20 per cent of their annual central government expenditures on defence. The control of the sales of conventional weaponry is therefore a growing concern. Canada is particularly interested in such UN initiatives as proposals for reductions in military spending and the establishment of public records of arms sales and transfers. We have supported efforts by regional groups, especially in Latin America, to limit levels of arms spending and participate in the talks to reduce forces in Europe.

A significant event in the history of disarmament was the UN Tenth Special Session on Disarmament in 1978. An important aspect of the resulting final document was the call for more research and education on disarmament, and greater contact with interested Non-governmental Organizations. As a result, the UN is carrying out eight major research projects, of which the study of disarmament and development is the most extensive. Canada participates in this study and a Canadian is also taking part in the UN study of the implications of nuclear weapons. The Department of External Affairs is fostering research in other aspects of arms control, such as verification, and has formed a consultative group of Non-governmental Organizations to exchange views on these and other matters of common concern. It is also hoped to publish a newsletter.