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A NEW SPIRIT IN DISARMAMENT TALKS

Statement by Lieutenant-General E.L.M. Burns,
Canadian Representative on the First Committee,
United Nations General Assembly, October 26, 1966.

A year ago, the Secretary-General of the United Nations pointed out that to halt the spread of nuclear weapons was the most urgent problem confronting this organization. The same view has been expressed by many world leaders in speeches before the United Nations and elsewhere. Spokesmen of my own Government have repeatedly called attention to the grave dangers to peace which could be caused if more countries acquired nuclear weapons.

If this problem was urgent a year ago, it is much more urgent today. In the 12 months which have elapsed since last we debated disarmament in this Committee, several countries have carried out further tests of nuclear weapons. The U.S.A., the U.S.S.R. and France have each conducted several nuclear tests and China, already an important military power, has given further evidence of her determination to develop her military nuclear capability. This makes it plain how important it is to bring all the present nuclear powers into active participation in international disarmament deliberations. With every month that passes, nuclear technology is becoming more widespread, and, with every reactor constructed to generate electric power, more fissile material adaptable for the manufacture of bombs is becoming available. The Canadian Delegation has long urged that action be taken immediately to curb the further spread of nuclear weapons, and to diminish the threat of nuclear war by ensuring that these weapons are restricted to nations now possessing them. Among possible measures, priority should be given to a non-proliferation treaty and to an agreement prohibiting all nuclear tests, whether in the atmosphere or underground.

To the Canadian Delegation, and I think to all of us, it must appear that the prospects for achieving agreement on non-proliferation are more favourable today than they were a year ago. At our meeting on October 20, we heard Mr. Federenko say: "There are no insurmountable difficulties for the solution of this problem". And later: "The Soviet Union is working consistently for the conclusion of an agreement on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons without delay". Mr. Goldberg quoted what Mr. Gromyko, the Foreign Minister of the U.S.S.R., said after his recent meetings with President Johnson and Secretary Rusk: "Both countries, the United States and the Soviet Union, are striving to reach agreement to facilitate conclusion of an international agreement on this question". And Mr. Goldberg also quoted what President Johnson said on October 13: "We have hopes that we can find some language that will protect the national