

In all these multilateral debates and procedural wrangles about conferences on the testing issue and its linkages to non-proliferation, there begins to be a danger of losing sight of the underlying stakes, and the rapid evolution of the situation in the real world. It would be tragic if governments were to become committed to a whole series of positions through middle-level debates among officials which might then impede the kind of decisive step forward at the top political level which might become possible in the current climate.

While Canada and others may have had reservations about the "back door" strategy of using the Partial Test Ban Treaty to promote a wider ban, it might provide a valuable opportunity if key participants are prepared to move from their fixed positions in the current political atmosphere. More generally, as the opinion poll conducted for this Institute in October 1989 powerfully demonstrates, the majority of Canadians (59%) supports a Canadian push for a complete test ban, even against strong US opposition.³ Given the fact that Canadians also rank the spread of nuclear arms to smaller countries as the most important potential threat to world peace, the current Canadian approach of gradualism and quiet persuasion is going to come under very serious attack as the issues of nuclear testing and proliferation come into public focus.

If, indeed, the current political momentum of arms control is sustained, and the United States returns to its traditional concern over proliferation, it is conceivable that a dramatic political initiative toward a test ban could, at some point, be launched by Washington, leaving Canada, among others, as a bemused defender of an abandoned American position. If, on the other hand, the American position is to be sustained, even to the point of opposing Canada's own watered-down resolutions, Ottawa has both the right and the need to secure a clear and plausible rationale to explain to the Canadian people and the rest of the world why such a vital political and substantive step toward disarmament cannot be taken in the present, highly-promising atmosphere.

Chemical weapons – the "poor man's nuclear weapon" – represent another proliferation danger that has become alarmingly real and immediate since their verified use in the Iran/Iraq war in 1984 and 1988, and the discovery of Libyan preparations for production (with West German and Japanese technology) in 1988. International negotiations toward a chemical weapons ban have gained momentum and direction, particularly since over 140 countries participated in the Paris Conference on the subject in January 1989. There is still a very long way to