

There are those who have a fatalistic view of the proliferation of nuclear weapons. They argue that nuclear proliferation is ultimately unavoidable and that there is little sense in putting undue constraints on the international flow of nuclear-energy resources in the hope of being able to stem the process.

I do not share that view. I note with satisfaction that the list of countries said to be on the verge of a nuclear-weapon capability is not very different today from what it was a decade or so ago. I believe world security would be seriously diminished by the further spread of nuclear weapons and that it is the responsible course for governments to pursue policies based on the presumption that proliferation can be stopped.

We in Canada have perhaps gone further in our support for an effective non-proliferation system than have most other countries. In part, this is the result of national experience. But in much larger part it is a reflection of public opinion in Canada, which does not believe that we should be serving the cause of a rational world order by being negligent in the requirements we place on Canadian nuclear exports.

I make no apology for Canada's precedent-setting safeguards policy, though it has been criticized by some as being too stringent. Canada is asking of others no more than what we have ourselves accepted voluntarily as a party to the Non-Proliferation Treaty. We have not manipulated our safeguards for commercial advantage nor have we hesitated to accept commercial loss where our safeguards have inhibited nuclear sales. We have shared our technology freely with developing countries and we have applied our safeguards to all on a non-discriminatory basis and without trying to distinguish between capability and intention.

Canada judged it necessary to adopt a national policy even though nuclear transfers were already within the compass of international regulation. Canadian action was based on genuine concern about our role as a nuclear-supplier. We did not think that the international safeguards system, as it stood, was likely to be equal to the problems posed by the advance of nuclear technology. Our object was to bring about a new, more effective international consensus. Canada recognizes that the international system will need time to adapt to the new energy situation. It is now accepted by all that nuclear energy will have to play an increasing part in meeting incremental world energy needs in the remainder of the century. It is equally accepted that the benefits of nuclear energy must be accessible to all countries having no alternative energy options.

It is understandable that, with the experience of another energy crisis still fresh in their minds, many countries would like to aim at a high degree of energy independence. In particular, they will expect to be protected against the interruption, without due cause, of essential supplies of nuclear fuel. Any new system will need to accommodate these aspirations.

But we shall also have to consider that we are hovering on the threshold of a plutonium economy. We shall have to make sure that the vulnerable points in the fuel