

Statement to the Special Political Committee of the United Nations General Assembly on November 2, 1962, by the Canadian Representative, Mr. Heath Macquarrie.

Just over a year ago, on October 16, 1961, against a background of sharp alarm following on the sudden resumption of nuclear-weapons testing in the atmosphere, the Canadian representative on this Committee stated: "Whatever disagreement or doubt there may be about the level of radiation which would pose an immediate menace to human well-being, the fact that all radiation does present a potential hazard and that higher levels increase this hazard is beyond dispute." The Canadian representative added: "Everything we learn about the nature and the extent of consequences of radiation reaffirms the gravity of the problem. The fact that we have still so much to learn about its long-term effects cannot fail to add to our apprehension."

Since those words were spoken...two important developments have added to our apprehensions for the health and safety of present and future generations. One is the ominous fact that nuclear testing in the atmosphere has, during the last twelve months, been taking place with ever-increasing frequency. The other is receipt by the General Assembly of a second comprehensive report of the Scientific Committee on the effects of atomic radiation. This carefully written and objective report makes it clear that fallout from nuclear tests represents a significant contribution to the total level of radiation to which the human race is exposed. The inescapable conclusion is that such fallout increases the danger of harmful somatic and hereditary effects of radiation for present and future generations.

With the forbearance of the Committee, I shall add a very few figures -- very recent figures -- from Canadian sources. The Canadian health authorities, in their most recent report on radioactive fallout in Canada covering the months of July, August and the first part of September of this year, have revealed that the average concentration of Strontium-90 in milk reached record levels during that period, and that correspondingly high levels of Coesium-137 and Iodine-131 concentrations in milk were recorded. Thus, during the month of July, 1962, the average concentration of Strontium-90 in milk reached 26.5 micromicrocuries per gram of calcium, compared with the national average value for the preceding 12-month period of 10.7 micromicrocuries per gram of calcium. While Canadian health authorities do not consider that such levels as yet require the initiating of precautionary measures, all members of this Committee will, I am sure, agree that the magnitude of the increases recorded is highly disquieting. The firm opposition to nuclear-weapons tests which Canada shares with so many countries has not been strengthened by the conclusions reached in the second comprehensive report of the Scientific Committee. All of my colleagues here are no doubt familiar with the Scientific Committee's disquieting conclusions on this question, which are set out in Chapter VII of the report. One of those important conclusions was that "a final cessation of nuclear testing would benefit the present and future generations