

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 62/13

THE WORLD'S MOST FATEFUL PROBLEM

Statement by General E.L.M. Burns, Canadian Delegate, First Committee of the United Nations, October 11, 1962.

Mr. Chairman,

In the opinion of the Canadian Delegation, there is nothing before this Assembly which is more urgent or fateful than the question of how to put a final stop to the testing of nuclear weapons. This is an object for whose achievement all members of the organization should stand united, for all of us will suffer if these experiments continue. The United Nations General Assembly cannot legislate an end to nuclear tests, but it can and should use the immense moral force of its decisions to press for a speedy solution of the problem.

Mr. Chairman, my Government remains unequivocally opposed to all nuclear-weapons tests. That virtually all delegations also oppose them has been made clear by the statements which we have listened to in the general debate in plenary. This can be taken as proof that nuclear testing is opposed by the vast majority of men and women all over the world.

The Canadian Objections

Canada is opposed to further testing for two good reasons. In his statement in the general debate, the Secretary of State for External Affairs emphasized that, first of all, we are gravely concerned by the dangers to human health which result from nuclear testing. In our view, which we believe is supported by scientific findings, the bodily health of everyone is endangered by exposure to additional radiation. But, what is more disquieting, increased radioactivity resulting from nuclear tests can have incalculable effects on future generations. This generation would, therefore, perpetrate a grave moral wrong on posterity by continuing nuclear testing.

It may be said that, from the humane and moral standpoint, these arguments are sound, but that, if considerations of defence and national security require them, nuclear-weapons tests must go on, notwithstanding their undesirable effects. But does