

Supply—External Affairs

committee in New York went even farther and the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom repeated in essence the other day in the House of Commons what Mr. Nutting said on this point in New York. Mr. Nutting said:

If limitation of nuclear test explosions is not possible under a disarmament agreement, we are prepared to try other methods, without delay, and without waiting for agreement on a comprehensive disarmament program.

This means that while the abolition of tests would be part of a broader agreement, the limitation of tests could begin independent of the achievement of any such broader agreement. I can say, Mr. Chairman, that we warmly support that position taken by the United Kingdom. We feel that it is of the most vital importance to press ahead both with arms limitations and with political settlements wherever there is any hope of reaching such a settlement with the other side. To adopt any other policy would be to accept the proposition that security rests, and must continue to rest, merely on the fear of common annihilation. That policy—some people call it realism, but I think it is realism based on despair—is not a policy which I am sure will commend itself to the members of this committee, or indeed to the people of Canada. A substitute for that policy, which may be essential at the present time for the avoidance of war, something which is even more permanent and in the long run more satisfactory, would be a policy of mutual agreement, mutual trust and mutual co-operation. I hope that in the effort to reach that objective the Canadian government will play a good part, and I am quite sure that if it succeeds in playing such a part it will have the support not only of all members of this house but of the people of Canada.

Mr. Green: May I ask the minister whether he will comment on the present situation in Burma which appears to be very serious?

Mr. Pearson: Well, Mr. Chairman, I think maybe I should have made clear at the beginning that I shall be glad, of course, during the course of the debate, or toward the end of it, to deal with special questions which may be raised by hon. members; but since one has already been raised maybe I can say something about it at the moment because I realize there have been some pretty alarming headlines in the newspapers. The information which we have been able to get—and it is not easy to get information because it is a remote border of Burma—is, though one cannot be dogmatic about it, that the danger and the extent of this action by the Chinese communists have been somewhat exaggerated.

[Mr. Pearson.]

The border in question is not well marked. It has been disputed for many years, before even the advent of the communist government in Peking, and there have been border forays of this kind before. It is to be hoped that this is no more serious than the previous ones, and there is not very much indication that we have had that it is. We have also learned, and the press has reported it, that the Burmese government is in touch with the Chinese communist government on this matter. It will be recalled that the Burmese government has a treaty with the Chinese government which provides for the mutual respect of each other's territorial integrity. This will be an opportunity for the Chinese communist government to show whether it respects not only boundaries, but that treaty, and for the Burmese government to confirm, or otherwise, the confidence which they have placed in an agreement of that kind between an Asian country and the communist government in China.

Mr. Diefenbaker: I shall follow the lead of the minister and devote less time than usual to a discussion of international questions by reason of the fact that a committee has been sitting at length in this regard and has dealt with many matters which otherwise would have received attention at this time. My remarks will be general. My colleagues will fill in the various matters respecting which they individually require information.

Before I proceed I think I should say something regarding the chairman of the committee on external affairs. I want to say this with great sincerity. The hon. member for Nicolet-Yamaska, as chairman of the committee, has acted throughout with dignity, courtesy, and fairness to all members of the committee. I also want to say a word of congratulations to my hon. friend, the Secretary of State for External Affairs, on his elevation to a position of one of the free world's three wise men, and I only wish that he had enlarged somewhat on the work of the group with whom he is associated in the achievement of the purposes which he set out in the last few minutes of his address. As a matter of fact, what he said could have been said several months ago. For some reason he did not deal at length with two situations which today face the free world. One of those is the dangerous and truculent attitude on the part of General Nasser, and the other is the continuance of communist infiltration which in the last few days has seen a repetition in Burma of the communist actions in other parts of the world on other occasions. He mentioned the effects of the fear of hydrogen war. That fear of hydrogen war and its effect on the psychological attitude of