

non-governmental organizations.

Thus, the first meetings of the CD were, in some cases, more educational than substantive. With the passage of time and the gaining of experience, that changes.

The CD established four working groups on the following topics:

- chemical weapons (CW);
- negative security assurances (NSA);
- radiological weapons (RW);
- comprehensive programme for disarmament (CPD).

Once these began working, the rhetoric tended to evaporate. In a general debate, there is a tendency to indulge in polemics, but the atmosphere changes when specific subjects are examined. Let us examine the four topics more closely.

1. Working Groups

a) **Chemical Weapons.** The USA and USSR have been negotiating a treaty to ban these weapons and destroy stockpiles since 1976. They have not succeeded, and a cynic would say that is because they have chemical weapons in their arsenals and because some strategists believe these would be an important advantage in war. One of the major stumbling blocks is how an agreement could be verified. This is difficult when a factory producing industrial chemicals could be converted to producing chemicals for weapons in a short period of time and with virtually no visible change to an outside observer. CW is an area where Canada can speak with authority because Canadian scientists are renowned for their knowledge of defensive measures, including the development of protective clothing and equipment.

b) **Negative Security Assurances.** So far, it has not been possible to eliminate nuclear weapons. Under these circumstances, can some way be found to avoid or prevent their use? Can the nuclear powers be persuaded to "*promise never to use these weapons?*" At UNSSOD I, all five nuclear weapons powers made unilateral pledges regarding the non-use of nuclear weapons. But so far, it has not proved possible