

The Study of Nuclear Radiation

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OF ALL THE scientific and technological achievements of recent years the unleashing of the power of the atom has undoubtedly been the most spectacular and far-reaching. Henceforth mankind must live with the atom. Already many ways in which this new force can serve man, in his pursuit of a better life, are known or are foreseeable. Yet, at the same time we must learn to control the terrifying potential of the atom for destruction.

The position of the Canadian Government on this question has already been made abundantly clear. For example, we are convinced of the need to reach agreement on the cessation, under appropriate controls, of all nuclear weapons test explosions. We hope that negotiations to this end and in the general field of disarmament will soon lead to an agreement stopping further such explosions.

However, even when this desirable result is achieved, the problem of ionizing radiation will still exist. There will continue for several years to be fallout of radioactive particles already in the atmosphere. There will also be long-term effects from the movement of radioactive isotopes through food chains. Even more important, there will continue to be for a long time genetic and biological effects from radiation, both man-made and natural, on the health of human populations.

In a manner of such concern to human life and to future generations, we believe it is vital to fill the gaps that continue to exist in our knowledge of the phenomenon of radiation. There is widespread concern that we should be able to assess more accurately than is now possible the nature and extent of the hazard resulting from the addition of man-made radiation to that which already occurs in nature.

Radiation Committee

The United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, which was set up essentially for the purpose of enquiring into these questions, has done very useful work since it was established four years ago. Following its first comprehensive report, which was considered at the last session of the General Assembly, the Committee has gone on to prepare a programme of work for its forthcoming sessions. This programme appears to my Delegation to be well balanced and practical.

The Committee plans to continue its study of the physical aspects of fallout, the physical and biological problems concerning the transmission of fission pro-