

Report of the working Group on Arms Control and Disarmament of the 17th
Pugwash Conference

The working group considered the question of the proliferation of nuclear weapons, including particularly consideration of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty: the question of the strategic arms race including particularly the question of anti-ballistic missile defence; and, vary briefly, possible extension of the nuclear test ban treaty to include a prohibition on underground nuclear tests. Our comments follow

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty

We have examined the texts of the draft treaties submitted by the US and the USSR to the 18 Nation Disarmament Conference and conclude that acceptance of a treaty based on those drafts would be a major step in preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons and in reducing the threat of a nuclear holocaust. We urge completion of negotiations on the treaty, including particularly resolution of any differences with respect to Article III, and acceptance of the treaty by all states at the earliest possible date.

In our consideration of the treaty we have focused our attention particularly on the following which have been identified by some members of the group as concerns which could possibly affect the decisions of some states regarding the treaty:

- (a) The suggestion that it might not be in the interest of some states to accept the treaty because of the possibility that by so doing they would be denied the benefits that might be realized through the use of nuclear explosions for peaceful purposes.
- (b) The suggestion that, because of the verification and control provisions that might apply were they to accept the treaty, certain non-nuclear-weapon states would be at a disadvantage, in competition for sales of reactors and services associated with the nuclear power industry, as compared with nuclear weapons states.
- (c) The suggestion that the asymmetry in obligations demanded of the non-nuclear-weapon states on the one hand and of the nuclear-weapon states on the other should be reduced by the latter undertaking to reduce armaments or enter into other agreements to halt or restrain the arms race.
- (d) The suggestion that if the non-nuclear-weapon states are to accept the treaty, they should be given assurances or guarantees against nuclear attack.

With respect to these points we offer the following comments.

While there might be a long term economic advantage in employing nuclear explosions for recovery of oil, construction of canals etc., there does not seem to be any significant present advantage in using nuclear explosions as compared with other means of realizing the same objectives. Indeed, we believe even the potential advantages of nuclear explosives for peaceful purposes to be sufficiently small so that such programmes should be prohibited if they appear to conflict with progress in arms control and disarmament.