

Editorial

The U.S. is to Blame for the Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) announced last week that it had detonated a nuclear device and had joined the ranks of the nuclear weapons states. The United States was quick to denounce the nuclear test and has now pushed through an emergency UN Security Council resolution imposing economic sanctions on the DPRK. The Security Council resolution was adopted unanimously. However, China and Russia have warned against any attempts to vigorously enforce the sanctions and China has stated that it will not conduct inspections of goods destined for the DPRK. The DPRK has stated that it considers sanctions to constitute an act of war.

The condemnations of the DPRK represent hypocrisy of the highest order. The Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty, which bans all nuclear weapons tests, was signed in 1996. However, it has not come

into effect because seven states – the U.S., China, Israel, Colombia, Egypt, Indonesia and Iran – have not yet it. In addition, three states – the DPRK, India and Pakistan – have not yet even signed the treaty. In other words, an international agreement banning nuclear tests is not in effect because many of the countries which are condemning the DPRK for its tests want to retain the right to conduct their own nuclear tests in the future. In particular, the U.S. has been discussing the possibility of a new generation of tactical nuclear weapons, such as “bunker buster” devices. India, which has been quite vociferous in condemning the DPRK for its test, itself defied the UN and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in the 1990s when it acquired nuclear weapons in 1974 and conducted a number of tests over the years, the latest

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Conservatives Attempt to Dismantle Canadian Wheat Board

The Harper government is moving full steam-ahead with its plans to dismantle the Canadian Wheat Board (CWB), despite all evidence suggesting the majority of wheat and barley farmers want to retain the board's monopoly selling powers. Recent polls indicate that if a referendum were held on the subject over 70 percent of the 85,000 wheat and barley farmers in Western Canada the board sells on behalf of would vote to keep the single desk.

“Single desk selling” means the CWB is the only entity that sells western Canadian wheat and barley in the international market and the only seller of all wheat and barley for human consumption domestically. This enables farmers to fetch premium prices for their high quality wheat in a marketplace

increasingly dominated by a few big players. All revenue from the sale of their grain is returned to farmers, minus the CWB's operating costs. The majority of farmers' grain sold in the world is handled by a handful of American or European-based multinational corporations – Louis Dreyfus, Cargill, Bunge, Con Agra and a few others. Their aim is to make maximum profits by buying grain from farmers at the lowest price and selling it on the world market at the highest price.

Besides strong support for the CWB monopoly, polls also indicate that an overwhelming majority of farmers believes that they should be the ones to

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IAEA Meeting on Nuclear Fuel Supply and Non-Proliferation

From September 19-21, 2006, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) held a Special Event in Vienna on: "Assurances of Nuclear Supply and Non-Proliferation." More than 300 participants from 61 countries and organizations attended. Charles Curtis, chairman of the meeting, described its purpose as being to: 1) discuss the possible expanded use of nuclear energy as a solution to increasing global demands for energy, and 2) find ways to minimize the risks created by further spread of sensitive nuclear technology such as uranium enrichment and plutonium reprocessing.

According to Curtis, discussion was to focus on one main proposal: the establishment of an independent, non-political, and non-discriminatory back-up mechanism to ensure supply of nuclear reactor fuel to states that voluntarily choose to rely on international fuel rather than developing their own capabilities. This would ensure fuel supply for commercial use in the event of a politically-motivated interruption. It would not interfere with the existing commercial market in nuclear fuels, nor would it deal with supply disruption due to commercial, technical, or other non-political causes.

Those supporting such a mechanism argued that it would eliminate two main obstacles to the use of nuclear energy to solve the energy crisis. First, it would offer security to countries reluctant to embark on commercial nuclear-power programs, using international fuel supplies, for fear of supply interruptions because of political conflicts. Secondly, it would lessen some of the pressures that drive vulnerable states to develop their own national enrichment and reprocessing capabilities.

Under the proposal, a state using such a back-up mechanism would not lose its rights, guaranteed in Article IV of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), to develop research, production, and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, and to facilitate and participate in the fullest-possible exchange of equipment, materials, and scientific and technological information for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. However, this is misleading because, in fact, all the IAEA proposals put forward in preparation for the meeting contained recommendations that impinge on states' Article IV rights.

The U.S., Britain, France, Canada and some other countries interpret Article IV in a way that limits the terms "inalienable right" and "fullest possible,"

especially in relation to the right of states to develop an indigenous nuclear fuel cycle. The proposals made by the advanced nuclear states, the nuclear industry, and non-government organizations followed naturally from this interpretation of Article IV. They all recommended that states would have to give up their right to uranium enrichment in order to use the proposed back-up mechanism.

This was reflected in several specific proposals presented at the meeting including:

- "Concept for a Multilateral Mechanism for Reliable Access to Nuclear Fuel", jointly drafted by France, Germany, Netherlands, Russia, Britain, and the U.S. (six-nation proposal), recommending that a state only be eligible to use the back-up mechanism if it has implemented the extra safeguards under the Additional Protocol, has no exceptional safeguards implementation issues outstanding with the IAEA, and has chosen not to pursue sensitive fuel cycle activities;

- World Nuclear Association proposal - "Ensuring Security of Supply in the International Nuclear Fuel Cycle" - drafted by nuclear industry experts and the world's four leading uranium enrichment companies and proposing that to be eligible to use the back-up mechanism "a customer state must have made a commitment to forego the development of, or the building or operation of, enrichment facilities;"

- Global Nuclear Energy Partnership, announced by the U.S. government and based on the premise that the U.S. and its international partners would develop a fuel services program to supply developing nations with access to nuclear fuel in exchange for a commitment to forego the development of uranium enrichment and plutonium reprocessing technologies;

- Nuclear Threat Initiative proposal, which announced that it would donate \$50 million to the IAEA to help create a low-enriched uranium stockpile; this stockpile would be available as a last-resort fuel reserve for nations that have made the "choice" to have no indigenous enrichment facilities.

None of these proposals would guarantee a backup supply of nuclear fuel to recipient states. Furthermore, even if a recipient state agreed to forego the development of enrichment processing and agreed to the more intrusive supervision of its nuclear program through the Additional Protocol, the major

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powers still have sufficient political, economic, financial and military weight in the world to pressure many states in international organizations like the IAEA and on the United Nations Security Council to support measures depriving other countries of access to nuclear fuel. For example, there is no evidence that Iran's nuclear program has any military dimension but the U.S. has still been able to get resolutions through the IAEA and Security Council which declare that Iran is "non-compliant" with the NPT. According to these proposals, Iran would not qualify to use the backup supply mechanism.

A further controversy arose at the meeting among countries with advanced nuclear industries over the issue of access to export markets. The six-nation proposal put forward by France, Germany, Netherlands, Russia, Britain and the U. S. divided states into suppliers (i.e., those that currently export nuclear fuel) and recipients. A number of states within the Nuclear Suppliers Group, such as Japan, Australia, Canada and Brazil, are not currently exporters of nuclear fuel but consider it within their right to do so. These countries are concerned that they will be thrown into the recipient category and denied the opportunity to export nuclear fuel. As a result Japan tabled its own paper entitled "IAEA Standby Arrangements System for the Assurance of Nuclear Fuel Supply," which recommended that a back-up supply system should "make it possible for as many states as practicable to participate in and contribute to the system"

The nuclear-weapons states and their allies are not opposed in principle to the proliferation of nuclear weapons or nuclear-weapon technology. They actively support proliferation wherever it serves their strategic interests, and oppose it when it does not. Last month, for example, the U.S., along with Britain and France, refused to attend the signing of a treaty that set up a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. Under the treaty, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan agreed not to produce, buy, or allow the deployment of nuclear weapons on their soil. The Americans oppose the treaty because they want the option of deploying nuclear weapons in this region in the future. In the Middle East, the U.S. opposes the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone because its ally Israel would have to destroy its nuclear-weapon arsenal.

The Special Event did not reach any firm conclusions except to say that further detailed study was required in order to put together a

recommendation for the establishment of a back-up nuclear fuel supply mechanism. However it is clear that the meeting was primarily a forum for the nuclear-weapon states, and other states with advanced nuclear technology, to push forward their own military and commercial agendas.

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in 1998. It too retains the right to test further nuclear devices in the future.

In addition, the nuclear weapons states, especially the U.S., have violated the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in the past in order to arm their allies with nuclear weapons. Both Israel and the South African Apartheid regime acquired nuclear weapons with the active assistance of the U.S., which not only supplied them with nuclear technology but also with weapons-grade plutonium. The U.S. has also recently concluded a deal with India for the exchange of nuclear technology, despite the fact that India refuses to sign the NPT or to accept IAEA supervision of its nuclear facilities, and the exchange of such technology is, therefore, illegal. In other words, an international double standard exists on the issue of nuclear proliferation, with select allies of the nuclear powers being quietly armed with nuclear weapons, while a huge furor is raised if any other country attempts to acquire such weapons.

However, in the case of the DPRK the issue goes beyond just a matter of a blatant double standard. For almost two decades the DPRK has been offering to abandon its nuclear weapons program in exchange for a promise of non-aggression from the U.S. Not only has the U.S. consistently refused to make such assurances, but for the past several years the Bush regime has been openly threatening to launch pre-emptive nuclear strikes against the DPRK, Iran, Iraq and any other country which even attempts to match the U.S. in military spending. It is commonly acknowledged that, despite the numerous lies told by the U.S. administration about Iraq's supposed possession of weapons of mass destruction, the U.S. only invaded Iraq when it was certain that no such weapons existed. The gunboat diplomacy of the U.S., its blatant disregard for international law and its open bullying of the UN Security Council, the IAEA and other international bodies in order to get its way has created an international climate of fear in which small countries like the DPRK feel that their only hope for security against American aggression is through the acquisition of a nuclear deterrent. Therefore, responsibility for the current crisis in the Korean peninsula must be placed squarely at the feet of the United States.

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determine any changes to the way the CWB operates, not the federal government.

The Canadian Wheat Board Act currently stipulates that a plebiscite is required for any substantive changes in the CWB's operations to take place. This clause was introduced in the act in 1996, at the same time that the CWB was transformed from a crown corporation into a farmer-controlled marketing body. The CWB is now led by a 15-member board of directors, ten of whom are directly elected by farmers and five of whom are appointed by the federal government. Agriculture Minister Chuck Strahl, and David Anderson, his parliamentary secretary, have both repeatedly refused to answer in the House of Commons when asked if they would hold a referendum before abolishing the CWB's monopoly. Outside the House of Commons, they have argued that the majority of farmers voted for the Conservatives in the last federal election, which gives the party a mandate to fundamentally change the CWB.

Over the past four months, the Conservatives have released a policy paper calling for the creation of an "open market", under which the CWB would continue to exist but without its monopoly on wheat and barley sales. The Conservatives have set up an advisory committee which is expected to release a report on how this can be achieved sometime before the end of the year. This committee is headed by a senior Agriculture Canada bureaucrat and contains representatives of major grain companies and the transportation industry along with a handful of farmers selected specifically because of their long-standing opposition to the CWB. When invited to be part of this committee the CWB, refused, pointing out that without the advantage of being the only seller of western Canadian wheat and barley, there would be little point for its existence.

In September, Strahl appointed Ken Motiuk – a vocal opponent of the CWB monopoly who had led an unsuccessful campaign to have the board dissolved in the mid-90s – to the vacant position on the CWB board of directors. Motiuk was appointed to the position on the board that had traditionally been set aside for someone with expertise in international trade law. Just last week, Strahl issued a

directive barring the CWB from spending any money to communicate with farmers around the issue of the board's future, an announcement which was greeted with outrage by many farmers and farm organizations. In making the announcement Strahl said that the CWB is accountable to parliament through him and is not accountable directly to farmers.

In the mid-90s, the same groups currently leading the charge to dismantle the CWB, including the railways, representatives of large agri-businesses and the Alberta provincial government, were confident they were close to dismantling the board. In 1996 they lobbied for and got a plebiscite on whether the board should retain its monopoly on barley sales, believing that losing barley would mean the beginning of the end for the CWB. Their hopes were dashed, however, when 70 percent of farmers voted to keep the board's single-desk for barley. This includes 67 percent of Alberta barley farmers, despite the millions of dollars the Alberta government spent telling farmers they would make more money marketing in the world market as individuals rather than as a collective.

Now it remains to be seen whether or not the Conservatives will be able to dismantle the CWB without a plebiscite. In the last month, an organization called Farmers for Real Choice has begun campaigning actively for a plebiscite. The group is currently investigating the possibility of suing the government for lost revenues if the Conservatives are successful in their attempt to dismantle the CWB.

Modern Communism

**Bulletin of the Manitoba Regional Committee
of the Communist Party of Canada
(Marxist-Leninist)**

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