

The hon. member for Saskatoon (Mr. Knight) said the other night, in what I thought was a very thoughtful speech:

Somehow or other the people of the world will have to get together and solve this problem.

He was referring to the atomic problem. He also said in the same speech: "We must learn somehow or other to break that cycle" which is preventing results. "Somehow or other"--but how! He asked for some reassurance on these matters which would be a renewal of faith, and he was disappointed that I had not been able to give him such reassurance in my earlier statement. To be perfectly frank, reassurance is not easy in the light of present circumstances, but I know he can be assured as can all other hon. members of the house, that so far as the government is concerned we will do our best and not lag behind in the search for a solution to this problem.

When a man finds himself struggling against a blizzard, a moment comes when because of fatigue and despair he longs to lie down, relax and die. There are times, when we must all feel as though, in the international field, we were pushing through a bitter and blinding blizzard. But it would be fatal to yield to the temptation merely to sit it out, just as it would be fatal to yield to the temptation to panic and frantically rush in new directions without any knowledge of where they may lead. So far as Canada is concerned--and I am sure we all agree on this--I know there will never be any lack of willingness to search for a solution to this and the other problems which divide us from the communist world.

None of these problems is insoluble. Atomic energy need not destroy us; it can open for us a great age of human progress. Nor is there anything insuperable in the questions which have arisen about the future of Germany and Japan. Between the communist and non-communist worlds some modus vivendi, some agreement to live and let live, can be worked out. But this can never happen except through a process of genuine and mutual compromise and accommodation. If there remains any doubt about the desire of the western powers to find a basis for such compromise and accommodation then of course we must try to sweep away that doubt. This may require a great new effort on everybody's part--possibly some new high level meeting, possibly a full dress conference of the powers principally concerned, the fifteen, sixteen or seventeen powers if you like, on all forms of disarmament, including atomic disarmament; or it may require something else. It might suggest a meeting of the United Nations assembly in Moscow, an invitation to which may not be too easy to obtain. If, for example, direct negotiations amongst the great powers would initiate a process of settlement, no one should object to them on the grounds of procedure or prejudice. In this respect, I agree with the Secretary-General of the United Nations, who not long ago said that he was in favour of great power negotiations, and I quote from his statement:

. . . all the time, and on all levels . . . inside the United Nations and outside the United Nations.

Certainly, we must not become fixed in any rut, atomic or otherwise, or assume that any scheme we put forward is necessarily final or perfect.

The World Council of Churches, meeting recently at Geneva, made a moving plea for such negotiation in the following terms: