GOVERNMENT OF CANADA

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
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No. 59/39 GENERAL AND COMPLETE DISARMAMENT

Statement in the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly by Mr. W.B. Nesbitt, Vice-Chairman of the Canadian Delegation, on November 2, 1959.

The Committee is committed by the draft resolution before us to the proposition that disarmament is the most important problem facing the world today. This idea is not new, since disarmament has been recognized as an important problem throughout most of the twentieth century and as both an urgent and important one ever since the end of the Second World War. The new fact in the present situation is that 82 countries, by putting their names to the draft resolution, have subscribed directly to this proposition.

Of course we have had resolutions in this Assembly before which have recognized the importance of comprehensive disarmament and have set out procedures for dealing with it. We have even had resolutions on the subject with joint East-West co-sponsorship. For example, in 1954 there was a resolution, the original draft of which was prepared by the Canadian Delegation of the day, and which was eventually co-sponsored by Canada, the U.S.S.R., the U.S.A., the U.K. and France. That resolution, which was adopted unanimously, expressed the General Assembly's recognition that the continuing development of armaments increased the urgency of the need for a solution to the disarmament problem and concluded that a further effort should be made to reach agreement on comprehensive and co-ordinated proposals to be embodied in a draft international disarmament convention. We all know only too well the fate of the negotiations which were undertaken in response to that unanimous General Assembly appeal. This is no time to look backwards, but it does seem to me to be necessary to point out, as others have done, that unanimity with respect to an objective does not necessarily mean that the objective can easily be realized..

I think that the question at issue at the moment is not whether the goal of comprehensive disarmament under effective control is desirable - we seem all to have subscribed to that - but rather what steps we are ready to take to avoid the risk of mutual destruction.