

Committee's Record

Two years ago, the Eighteen-Nation Disarmament Committee held its first meeting in this historic room. Since then there have been periods of disappointment — sometimes of great discouragement — when progress has seemed painfully slow in the light of the urgency of the problems of peace and disarmament. But I should like to say to you that I think the Committee's achievements are not without some noteworthy aspects, and certainly the world has been watching its work and has reasons, in spite of the frustrations, to feel that there is some justification for encouragement; because last year we saw the direct communications link established between Washington and Moscow, the decision not to station or orbit weapons of mass destruction in outer space and, above all, the agreement to stop nuclear-weapon tests in three environments.

Those are the first steps which have been taken since the last war to curb the senseless arms race, and they were the result of long, and at times very difficult, preparatory work that was done here. This demonstrates, I think, the truth of what I said at the last session of the General Assembly — that the Eighteen-Nation Disarmament Committee is the most effective forum for disarmament discussions which has yet been established under the auspices of the United Nations. Canada, which has participated in disarmament negotiations since the beginning in the United Nations (and I need not emphasize this), will continue to support wholeheartedly the work of this Committee.

At the moment, my main concern — and I am sure it is shared by all of you — is that the impetus created by the agreements reached last year must not be lost, for a breakthrough was effected last year, and it is our responsibility to make sure that we follow up those first steps with further advances this year towards slowing and then halting the arms race.

This morning I should like to limit myself to the discussion of a number of issues on which my Government believes that real progress towards agreement is possible in the near future. Of course, Canada continues to regard the negotiation of a treaty on general and complete disarmament as the main objective of the Eighteen-Nation Disarmament Committee. But I believe that the Committee's detailed examination of the disarmament problem has convinced all members that the way to general disarmament must be prepared by agreement on what are called collateral measures.

Nuclear-Weapon Vehicles

The crucial problem of how to reduce, and finally eliminate, nuclear-weapon vehicles from the arsenals of the nations has been long and vigorously debated. Unfortunately, no agreement has been reached so far, but it would be wrong, I think, to say that the discussion has not yielded some results. The work the Committee has done on that central problem has given us all a better understanding of the basic difficulties involved; and it has led one of the major military powers — the Soviet Union — to make significant amendments to its original proposals. Canada hopes that further negotiations here will serve to increase the area of common ground on this issue. However, there still remain great differences in the views of the two sides on how nuclear-weapon vehicles should be reduced in number and finally abolished. In the absence of agreement