

External Affairs

Supplementary Paper

No. 53/56 AD HOC COMMISSION ON PRISONERS-OF-WAR

Text of statement made on December 2, 1953, by the Canadian Representative, Mrs. A.L. Caldwell, in the Third Committee of the eighth session of the United Nations General Assembly, New York, on agenda item 71 - Measures for the peaceful solution of the problem of prisoners-of-war.

Note: Voting results and the text of the resolution adopted are included at the end of the statement.

The importance which the Canadian Delegation attaches to this problem now under discussion arises solely from the fact that it affects intimately the happiness and well-being of thousands of men, women, and children, human beings like ourselves. For that reason, we will vote in favour of the draft resolution jointly sponsored by Australia, Brazil, Cuba, Mexico, Thailand, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

We sincerely regret that it has not been possible to avoid entirely, throughout this debate, the emphasis which has at times been laid on the political divergences, which unfortunately are found among the various nations of the world. For our part, the Canadian Delegation desires most earnestly to avoid any word of rancour or recrimination. We feel that the debate on the question of the prisoners-of-war offers to all members of the United Nations, notwithstanding their political ideologies, a unique occasion to testify before the world that no one will refuse to do whatever it is in his power to do, to alleviate human suffering, especially in this case where eight years after the end of the war, prisoners are still in prison camps, and wives, children, and families are still grieving, deeply apprehensive, and uncertain.

I do not intend to enter into details of the Report submitted by the Ad Hoc Commission. It is a moving document, impressive above all for its restraint and objectivity. It speaks for itself. I would merely like to say that, in our opinion, the efforts of the Ad Hoc Commission, set up by the United Nations in 1950, show signs in recent months of achieving at long last a modest but encouraging measure of success. The recent return from the U.S.S.R. of a number of German prisoners, and the working arrangements recently completed by the U.S.S.R. Red Crescent and Red Cross Societies, the Japanese Red Cross and other organizations clearly prove this assertion. For this we should all be grateful.

Mr. Chairman, in concluding my remarks, I would like to say that the Canadian Delegation joins most earnestly with other delegations in the appeal that political differences be laid aside, and this problem be looked at in its true aspect, which is the humanitarian aspect.