While these new atomic weapons have this vast power, yet they are only fully effective when used in a surprise attack on concentrated targets. They do not therefore replace conventional armaments and they are not an absolute weapon in the sense that their employment by themselves could be expected to win a war.

The circumstances in which the effects of atomic bombs is to be most feared is when unsuspecting people are concentrated in great cities, when harbours are congested with unwarned shipping and before measures can be taken to disperse important large industries. In consequence what we have to dread is the secret accumulation in hostile lands of stocks of atomic bombs. This might be effected imperceptibly over a number of years and so it follows that even very small quantities of fissionable material have significance. Because of the vast power of the atomic weapon even a small stock is a very great menace and from the time that it is thought that these may be in the possession of hostile or possibly hostile states, there will be ever-present anxiety which can only be dispelled if arrangements are entered into not only for the prohibition of atomic energy for destructive purposes, but also, and even more important for the creation of safeguards and international controls which will give certainty to the universal enforcement of this prohibition.

Unfortunately it seems that in the current phase of world development that every improvement in rapidity of communication and movement has served not to promote agreement and accord between nations but to accentuate differences and sharpen disputes -- which is all the more reason why we must press forward patiently in the fuller organization of the United Nations.

Atomic energy is not just another military weapon. It has a dual character. On the one hand there are its potentialities for cataclysmic destruction -- on the other the almost limitless possibilities for beneficent peaceful use through which the frontiers of knowledge may be pressed back and the vistas of human understanding widened in most remarkable fashion. These visions intrigue the imagination and everyone would be very happy to facilitate this search for new knowledge by contributing the information and the help which they may have available. But, unfortunately as matters stand, it is not in all fields that there is freedom to give or to use information, nor can this be so because the same materials which are useful to the peaceful arts are also the materials of the bomb and in the hands of unscrupulous persons, even in comparatively small quantities may be a terrible menace to our security.

It is for this reason that, in all matters related to atomic energy, the requirements of national defence must take precedence. There can be no compromise of security until the position has been made safe by means of an international agreement for the control of atomic energy which will give acceptable safeguards.

The solution of this problem is not a simple matter. The secrets of nature being uncovered by the scientists cannot be wiped from the world's memory by edict or decree. The presence of fissionable material is a fact, for good or for evil, and certainly mankind will not consent to be deprived of the manifest advantages of atomic energy merely because of the destructive possibilities of its misuse.

The first step toward the creation of such an international agreement was made very shortly after the termination of the war by the United States, Great Britain and Canada in a declaration issued at Washington, D.C. on 15 November 1945. Recognizing the need for an international agreement, the President of the United States, and the Prime Ministers of the United Kingdom and Canada proposed, as a matter of great urgency, the setting up of a Commission under the United Nations to study the problem and to make recommendations for its control.