

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION
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DISARMAMENT

Statement by the Hon. L.B. Pearson, Secretary of State for External Affairs and Chairman of the Canadian Delegation, in the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly, New York, January 21, 1957.

We are once again engaged in what must seem to many one of the most unrewarding activities of the United Nations, discussing ways and means of reducing arms in a climate of international fear, tension and insecurity. This climate is indeed, and the conditions which produced it, the main reason why, in spite of a rather bewildering array of proposals and counter-proposals, we are still far from our goal of agreement on the major steps of a substantial disarmament programme. I think, however, that we have made some progress to that goal.

There should be a special incentive for such progress in the realization that as the years go by without reaching agreement, the problem becomes more and more complicated and difficult, particularly with respect to the question of nuclear weapons. As the destructive power of these weapons increases and as the stockpiles grow, the obstacles in the way of an adequately safeguarded disarmament scheme are magnified. Nevertheless, our long, drawn-out negotiations on disarmament have been worthwhile. This persistent debate conducted in various bodies of the United Nations over the past ten years has at least ensured that the major powers have maintained steady contact on this subject and that world public opinion has been kept fully aware of the catastrophic consequences of the use of the arms we are trying to eliminate or reduce.

It is true that conflicting points of view have generally been held so tenaciously that by the time any particular agreement on disarmament seemed to be emerging, the underlying conditions have often been changed to such an extent that the problem has had to be faced again in different terms. For example, Mr. Moch, who has made such an outstanding personal contribution to this long search for security through disarmament, warned us repeatedly in the past that unless agreement was soon attained it would become virtually impossible to devise a control system adequate to allow a secure and safeguarded prohibition of atomic weapons.