



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 49/40

THE PROBLEM OF DISARMAMENT

Statement made in the Security Council, on October 14, 1949, by Mr. L. B. Pearson, Secretary of State for External Affairs, and Chairman of the Canadian Delegation to the Fourth Session of the United Nations General Assembly.

The draft resolution which we have before us, submitted by the representative of the U.S.S.R. has the merit of brevity. It states only:

"The Security Council recognizes as essential the submission by States both of information on conventional armaments and information on atomic weapons."

This resolution is, I assume, intended to be disarming, at least in the sense that it is ingenuous and naïve. But, our need for disarmament and security is too serious for ingenuousness or naïveté. Nor is this matter one for propaganda or even psychological warfare. It is, therefore, I think, important that the Security Council should recognize that what we need now is not mere assurances but the submission of information which can be verified and substantiated, and that this information must itself be but a step toward effective disarmament and the effective organization of collective security for all people.

During the 1930's humanity learned the hard way that unsubstantiated declarations or unenforceable promises on armaments or other matters are inadequate, often give a false sense of security, and indeed, may be dangerously misleading in that sense. The subject of disarmament and collective security is vitally important, and it would be, in our opinion, irresponsible for the Security Council to mislead public opinion on such matters by giving the weight of its support to the thesis that, in present circumstances, value can be attached to unilateral assurances which cannot be verified. Such assurances can only be of value in an international atmosphere of trust and mutual confidence. It would be idle to pretend that we have this now. If we had, the Security Council would not be having this kind of discussion.

It is our view, therefore, that verification of information concerning armaments is essential. This is particularly the case, I believe, regarding information which is put out by régimes which are not responsive, as are free democratic governments, to the internal checks of a free and informed public opinion. Such régimes attempt to deny to the public opinion of their own territories and of the world the facts on which to judge of their true domestic and international policies. That, I submit, is very different from the position in the free democracies, where every man has the right to untrammelled expression, information from a free press, including the right to purchase and read the press of other nations, or to listen to the