

The United Nations and Disarmament

DEBATE AT THE FIFTEENTH SESSION

As in previous years, discussion of the disarmament question occupies a prominent place in the proceedings of the General Assembly of the United Nations. No fewer than four items related to the subject appear on the agenda of the current session. The Assembly has also had to deal with an important question of procedure raised by Premier Khrushchov's suggestion that debate on the disarmament item proposed by the U.S.S.R. should take place in plenary session rather than, as is customary, in the First (Political) Committee.

Mr. Khrushchov's proposal was debated on October 11, and defeated by a vote of 62 (including Canada)-12-24. The Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. Green, spoke in opposition to the Soviet leader's proposal. As a result of the vote, the item on disarmament proposed by the Soviet Union was assigned, with the other three items relating to disarmament, to the First Committee for consideration. The text of Mr. Green's October 11 statements follows:

I DO NOT need to remind this Assembly that disarmament is the most important question facing us; in that regard, I agree with the statement to that effect made by Premier Khrushchov. Nor do I need to emphasize my country's serious concern for the earliest possible solution to this pressing problem.

Canada's nearest neighbours are the U.S.A. on the south and the U.S.S.R. to the north; in other words, we happen to live between the two nations which would be the main antagonists in a nuclear war. We are directly and vitally affected by any increase in world tension.

Under these conditions, it will be easily understood by all delegations why Canada is anxious to see a thorough discussion of all the disarmament items on the agenda.

Premier Khrushchov said in his remarks that the representatives of the Western powers do not find time for discussion of disarmament. This, I submit, is not an accurate statement. I believe that every member of this Assembly stands ready to discuss disarmament now.

Question of Allocation

The immediate purpose of the Assembly, however, is not to enter upon a substantive discussion of disarmament today but to consider a procedural question raised in the draft resolution submitted by the Soviet Delegation in Document