



Statements and Speeches

No. 84/16

THE ROUTE TO PEACE

Notes for a Speech by Douglas Roche, Ambassador for Disarmament, to the United Nations Association in Canada, Victoria, December 6, 1984.

Earlier this year, I wrote that stronger Canadian government involvement in United Nations issues could be a catalyst for the security and development the world longs for in the dangerous decade of the 1980s. Since then, I have spent the fall at the UN, representing Canada at the First Committee which is responsible for disarmament and related matters. This experience has made me realize how true are the words of the Throne Speech on the opening of Parliament November 5: "Patience and perseverance we will need, for in this endeavour even the smallest progress is worthy of the greatest effort."

In its *mélange* of hopes and frustrations, the United Nations reflects the anxieties of the modern world. These anxieties are heightened by the unchecked nuclear arms race. People everywhere want the promise of life to prevail over the suffocating threat of death. More and more, people want a "fast" solution. But it is my view that the solution will be slow.

Canadians should understand that a realistic role for Canada to play involves a long series of steps, not reliance on a "quick fix" to make the world a safer place. A commitment to the long haul, in which sometimes it is necessary to take one step back in order to take two steps forward, is the surest route for Canada to make a lasting contribution to peace with security and freedom and justice.

Determination is not the least of the qualities Canada needs in the search for peace and disarmament. We must constantly use our influence to reverse the nuclear build-up and reduce the danger of destruction. This determination — as the Right Honourable Joe Clark expressed it to the United Nations on September 25 — "will be a constant, consistent, dominant priority of Canadian foreign policy".

Let us examine how Canada pressed that determination in disarmament work at the UN this fall.

First, it should be recalled that, in his speech to the General Assembly, the Secretary of State for External Affairs put Canadian international security policy squarely within the UN context: "Our government is committed strongly to the United Nations...a dynamic United Nations system is essential for countries like Canada — and equally for the superpowers. Precisely because more communities are looking inward more often, we must strengthen global institutions which bring us together."

"Bring us together": this phrase is key. In UN parlance, it is known as consensus-building. With consensus, the United Nations is a powerful force for peace, and with consensus, the United Nations has achieved many victories. Indeed, it was a "historic consensus" achieved at the first Special Session on Disarmament in 1978 that brought forward the 129-paragraph Final Document which set out a com-