

The atomic energy debates which preceded the Assembly had, therefore, stalled at dead centre. Little or no improvement in this situation can be recorded to the credit of the Fourth Session of the Assembly. Yet the undercurrent of urgency was never stronger. As a result of the discussions, the overwhelming majority of the United Nations has put itself on record as supporting the principles of the majority plan approved by the General Assembly in Paris in 1948, and has condemned by implication the alternative proposals of the U.S.S.R. which, the great majority obviously believes, offer no hope for genuine international security. But the Soviet Representative did not budge from his position.

Throughout the United Nations discussions of atomic energy, since the establishment of the Atomic Energy Commission in January 1946, it has been difficult for the majority to get any precise and detailed statement of the Soviet plan from the various representatives of the U.S.S.R. In his major speech on this subject at the meeting of the General Assembly on November 23, 1949, Mr. Vishinsky added only a few footnotes to the Soviet proposals but forward on June 11, 1947, before he turned with greater relish to the usual theme of Soviet statements on atomic energy -- denunciations of the majority plan for the prohibition of atomic weapons and the control of atomic energy for peaceful purposes. The Soviet position continues to be based on the premise that a loose system of inspection is the only form of international control that is needed to give those nations which possess atomic weapons sufficient confidence to destroy their existing stockpiles.

The position which is being worked out by the majority is very different. As the Secretary of State for External Affairs said in his main statement on atomic energy to the Ad Hoc Committee of the Assembly on November 7, 1949.

The Soviet proposals for control admit only of fixed periodic inspections, and even that inspection is merely of such facilities as the national governments concerned may choose to declare to an international authority. The Soviet proposals also include special investigation, when there is evidence of illegal activity. But how is such evidence to be obtained? If we had enough confidence to convince us that it would be given automatically by every national government to an international agency, then we would have so much confidence we would not need any international control at all.....

Our position is that the only kind of inspection which will be adequate to convince people that international control plans and policy are observed is that which gives far-reaching powers to the inspectors, while providing against the abuse of those powers. They, the inspectors, will be the agents of the international conscience and the international community, and no government which is sincere in this matter of international control of atomic energy, as we all are, would want to restrict or restrain them so that they could not discharge their duties efficiently.