

Disarmament for Survival

On November 9, 1962, during the debate on the report of the 18-Nation Committee on Disarmament, the following statement was made to the First Political Committee of the United Nations General Assembly by Lieutenant-General E. L. M. Burns, the representative of Canada:

... The most important and urgent task which faces the international community today, as all speakers so far, I think, have agreed, is to reach agreement on disarmament. To put it in stark terms, if civilization is to survive, the nations of the world must disarm.

Recent events show how real and how imminent is the possibility of nuclear war. As the Prime Minister of Canada said on 5 November,

To all who know how close we were to war and what war today would mean, it is evident that the nuclear arms race must be halted. The logic of the aftermath is grim but clear and permits of no other conclusion than that, if the nations of the world do not take effective steps, the next crisis may not permit the world to stop short of the abyss of war.

So the crisis which the world has just faced must give a new and a strong impetus toward general and complete disarmament and other measures which will reduce international tensions and sources of conflict.

President Kennedy wrote to Chairman Khrushchov on 28 October:

I agree with you that we must devote urgent attention to the problem of disarmament as it relates to the whole world and also critical areas. Perhaps now, as we step back from danger, we can together make real progress in this vital field . . . We should work hard to see if wide measures of disarmament can be agreed to and put into operation at an early date. And Chairman Khrushchov, in his letter to President Kennedy of 28 October, emphasized the wish of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to eliminate the tense international atmosphere and to continue efforts to achieve progress on complete and general disarmament and other matters leading to the relaxation of international tensions.

We think that everyone recognizes that to advance towards general and complete disarmament and to get agreement on measures preliminary to disarmament which could reduce tension and the danger of nuclear war will require intense effort and the most painstaking negotiations. Canada maintains the view that the best place for detailed and comprehensive negotiations on a disarmament programme is the conference of the 18-Nation Committee on Disarmament.

Representative Character of Committee

The 18-Nation Committee on Disarmament, endorsed by Resolution 1722 (XVI) of 20 December 1961, is, in our view, well suited to the tasks. The conference has several advantages as a negotiating forum. I refer, as so many others have done, to the role of the eight non-aligned countries: Brazil, Burma, Ethiopia, India, Mexico, Nigeria, Sweden and the United Arab Republic. The representative of the United Arab Republic, in his statement in this Committee on 5