

CANADA AND THE UNITED NATIONS

General Progress Report

The General Assembly, on December 15, completed the consideration of the agenda of its Fifth Regular Session, with the exception of four items which still remained on the agenda of the First (Political) Committee. The work of this Committee was suspended, pending the submission of a report by the Cease-Fire Committee on the result of its efforts to bring the fighting in Korea to a halt. It was anticipated that this report would be available in the early part of January, at which time the Political Committee was scheduled to resume its deliberations.

Merging of Atomic Energy and Conventional Armaments Commissions

In recognition of the fact that any effective system of armaments control must comprehend weapons of all kinds, including atomic weapons, the General Assembly approved a resolution aiming at the eventual merging of the Atomic Energy Commission and the Commission for Conventional Armaments. The resolution, which was adopted by a majority of 47 to 5, with 3 abstentions, provides for the establishment of a committee of twelve, consisting of the representatives of the members of the Security Council on January 1, 1951, together with Canada, to consider and report to the next regular session of the General Assembly on ways and means whereby the work of the two existing commissions may be co-ordinated and on the advisability of their functions being merged and placed under a new and consolidated disarmament commission.

A Soviet proposal to instruct the United Nations Atomic Energy Commission to resume its work and to proceed immediately with the preparation of simultaneous draft conventions for the unconditional prohibition of the atomic weapon and international control of atomic energy, was rejected by the General Assembly by a vote of 32 in favour, 5 against, with 16 abstentions.

Prisoners of War

The General Assembly adopted, by a majority of 43 to 5, with 6 abstentions, a resolution calling upon all governments still having control of prisoners of war to act in conformity with recognized standards of international conduct, which require that these persons be afforded an immediate and unrestricted opportunity of repatriation. Governments concerned are requested to transmit to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, before April 30, 1951, information concerning the names of all prisoners of war still held by them, the reason for their continued detainment and the places in which they are being detained.

The original resolution, jointly sponsored by Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, was based on a specific complaint of failure on the part of the Soviet Union to repatriate or otherwise account for prisoners of war detained in the Soviet territory. As a result of a series of amendments put forward in the Social Committee, however, the scope of the item under discussion was broadened to comprise measures for the peaceful solution of the problem of prisoners of war in general. The Canadian delegation, like many others, would have preferred to see the resolution adopted in its initial version as more adequately responsive to the realities of the situation in respect of prisoners of war not yet repatriated to their homes. However, inasmuch as the original sponsors were prepared to accept the majority of the amendments submitted, the Canadian delegation supported the resolution in its amended form.

The resolution, as finally adopted by the General Assembly on December 14, further provides for the establishment of an Ad Hoc Commission composed of three