



Statements and Speeches

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NUCLEAR CONTROL -- OR NUCLEAR DISASTER

Statement in the First Committee of the Thirtieth Session of the United Nations General Assembly by Mr. W.H. Barton, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Canada to the Office of the United Nations at Geneva and to the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament, New York, November 4, 1975.

This is the thirtieth anniversary of the beginning of the nuclear age and the half-way point in the "Decade of Disarmament", but we must admit that we have made conspicuously little progress in achieving even a minimal advance towards arms limitation, let alone disarmament.

If the great powers persist in the belief that the path to security is to accumulate an ever-greater capacity for "overkill", then sooner or later disaster will result. The consequences of nuclear war will not respect national boundaries. It seems incredible that we should be expected to face the reality that, for the foreseeable future, the nuclear powers should have the capability to wage a conflict that could obliterate us all. Moreover, we continue to face the danger that nuclear weapons may spread to additional states. Despite the efforts of literally thousands of dedicated people for more than a quarter-century to negotiate practical measures of arms limitation and disarmament, the results can at best be described only as peripheral.

Fifteen years ago the United States and the Soviet Union presented us with a joint statement of accepted principles on the goal of disarmament negotiations. The first of these principles was to ensure that disarmament was general and complete and that war was no longer an instrument for settling international problems. The conduct of the negotiations was entrusted to the Eighteen-Nation Disarmament Committee. In the intervening years, the Committee's membership has grown from 18 to 25 and now to 31, and it has changed its name. But it has seemingly given up in despair on general and complete disarmament, and in recent years has occupied itself with a series of so-called "collateral" measures. Without gainsaying the value of such measures, experience has shown that, even there, little can be accomplished if proposals cut across the freedom of action of the major military powers to do what they wish in areas they deem to be of military significance.

Over and over again, this Assembly has called for action to limit
