

There are several reasons why this conference has an unprecedented opportunity to make rapid progress toward agreement.

"First, there is now an agreement on the basic principles of disarmament unanimously endorsed by the UN General Assembly. For the first time, there is a common understanding about the objective to be reached, and the guidelines [that] should be followed in working toward it. As a result, we are in a position to move quickly from a general exchange of views to a detailed consideration of measures [that] will actually stop the competition in armaments and bring about substantial reductions from the present levels. In my personal opinion, the problem of stopping the development of more deadly weapons is perhaps more important than that of bringing about measures of disarmament, although of course both problems are of vital importance.

"Second, the new negotiating committee is representative of all major geographical areas of the world. This reflects the fact that disarmament is not the concern only of the great powers but of all countries.... The presence at this table of the representatives of eight additional countries is, in my opinion, a major advantage. They will, I am sure, play a valuable role in avoiding the stalemates [that] have so often developed in past disarmament conferences....

"Third, we had, just 10 days ago, the unanimous finding of the UN Committee on the Economic and Social Consequences of Disarmament that general disarmament, far from producing adverse economic effects, would be an immense contribution to the advancement of human well-being. There can surely be no doubt that the reallocation of even part of the enormous resources now devoted to expenditure on armaments would open up unlimited possibilities for the improvement of living standards in all the nations, whatever their social system or whatever their stage of development.

"Fourth, past experience has made us fully aware of the grave consequences [that] will follow if we permit these negotiations to fail or even to lose momentum. It is now almost two years since the work of the Ten-Nation Committee was broken off. This period has been marked by renewed international tension and a nuclear arms race of increased intensity, of which the resumption of nuclear testing is the most serious aspect....

"Finally, the increasingly devastating power of modern weapons has placed a new responsibility on the representatives who are gathered here. The very fact that all of us around this table fully recognize the immeasurable catastrophe [that] would result from a conflict involving such weapons in itself provides new motives for meeting the challenge [that] faces us. We cannot allow another failure to establish an effective system of disarmament. If we do not succeed on this occasion, the world may not be given another chance.

"As far as my delegation is concerned, we have come to Geneva with the firm intention to continue working without interruption until a comprehensive system of general disarmament has been agreed.... [W]e should at once start to search for common ground. This is a case where, as we say in Canada, time is of the essence....

"Two principal documents are available to the Committee. There is the program of disarmament put forward by the United States on September 25, 1961. Canada participated in the drafting of this plan, and fully supports it.