

At the United Nations last fall it was very clear that the delegates from every nation were far more interested in the question of disarmament than in any other question. They had witnessed a lessening of tension across the world. There had been a visit by Prime Minister Macmillan and Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd to the Soviet Union, and while we were in New York, Premier Khrushchov came to the United States. The two leading speeches in the opening debate at the United Nations were made by Mr. Selwyn Lloyd and by Premier Khrushchov, and both dealt with disarmament; each speaker put forward a plan for disarmament. Thus, I repeat that at the United Nations there was tremendous interest in this question of disarmament, and I suggest that right around the world today there is a realization in the minds of millions of people that a nuclear war would be a catastrophe and that it would probably end civilization as we know it.

In these circumstances it was to be expected that the United Nations would fall in with the proposal of the four big powers that this Disarmament Committee should carry on the work on the question of disarmament. Something happened which had never happened at the United Nations before, I believe, when all 82 nations co-sponsored the resolution which provided United Nations facilities for the meetings of the 10-Power Committee. That resolution contained these words:

"The question of general and complete disarmament is the most important one facing the world today."

The Canadian Government realized from the start the vital role Canada could play in these disarmament deliberations, hence the appointment of Lieutenant-General E.L.M. Burns as Canada's representative at these discussions. I do not need to tell anyone in this House of the wonderful record of General Burns in two wars, as Deputy Minister of Veterans Affairs, then as Chairman of the Truce Supervision Body in Palestine and finally, as Commander of the United Nations Emergency Force. He is a man respected not only from coast to coast in Canada but by delegates from every member state in the United Nations. We were able to persuade Mr. Hammarskjold, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, to release General Burns from his important command in the Middle East because the Secretary-General felt--and so did General Burns--that he could make an even greater contribution as a member of this Disarmament Committee.

In addition, Canada has opposed from the beginning any delay in the actual commencement of the work of the Disarmament Committee. We did this for several reasons, but principally because we were afraid that if there were not an early start there might be an increase in tension, and around the world people might become discouraged again and decide they would have to pay more attention to arming, with the result that the impetus gained by the friendly actions taken in 1959 might be lost. There was some inclination in some other countries to postpone the calling together of the Disarmament Committee until after the East-West summit meeting had been held. This is not to be held until the middle of May.