



Signals of Hope: Canada and the International Year of Peace

Following are excerpts from an address on the theme of the International Year of Peace made by the Canadian Ambassador for Disarmament, Mr. Douglas Roche, in Edmonton on March 10.

“What is meant by the United Nations proclamation declaring 1986 as the International Year of Peace (IYP)? And what does it mean to Canada?”

IYP is essentially a challenge to the governments and peoples of the world to focus more clearly on the multi-dimensional nature of peace — conflict resolution, economic and social development, human rights, elimination of racial discrimination, as well as the traditional issues of arms control and disarmament.

Peace can no longer be defined as the absence of war, though the avoidance of nuclear war must be the chief priority.

Peace requires more than a reduction of arms, though disarmament measures are essential.

Peace demands the attaining of true human security so that people everywhere can live free of the threat of war, free of violations of their human rights, free to develop their own lives to attain economic and social progress.

Peace, then, is a multi-splendoured goal.

No one expects that this goal can be achieved by December 31, 1986. That is not the idea behind the International Year of Peace. Rather, IYP highlights the broad international agenda that must be advanced as the world continues to evolve into a global community with increasingly closer relationships among all peoples.

This growing recognition that the planet is a place of common ground, with common vulnerability and common opportunity, is the real message of IYP. It establishes peace as a system of values.

This is clearly an advance in global thinking. And this advance constitutes a signal of hope to a humanity that has for too long been fractured and frustrated in the attaining of enduring human security.

All this is a subject critical to Canada's interests in the modern world as was indicated by Canada's co-sponsorship of the IYP resolution at the United Nations.

It seems as if the world has two political axes — East-West and North-South.

The East-West axis has been characterized by 40 years of tension, of escalating armaments and declining understanding. East-West relations have come to be defined in terms of the nuclear arsenals of overwhelming destructive potential possessed by the two superpowers.

The North-South axis is characterized by decades of deprivation, famine, homelessness and disease. North-South relations have come to be defined in terms of the stark disparities in resources and opportunities which exist between a privileged minority of the world's population, who enjoy great prosperity, and the vast majority afflicted with utter destitution.

The management of these two sets of relationships is the starting point on the route to peace. East-West relations focus on the negotiated limitation and reduction of arms and the building of confidence and trust; North-South relations focus on the sound economic development of the most impoverished nations in the world.

The UN's 1985 *Report on the World Social Situation* reveals how far we have to go to achieve these goals:

— in 1984, global military expenditure was \$800 billion — approximately \$130 for every man, woman and child in the world. This is equivalent to more than the average income of many developing countries;

— in 1980, military spending by developed countries represented more than ten times the amount spent by developing countries on health programmes;

— the cost of a single nuclear submarine equals the annual education budget of 23 developing countries with a total of 160 million school children.

The field of arms control is itself highly complex, technical and, above all, political. It is easy to advocate ridding the world of nuclear weapons; numerous proposals have been put forward since the Baruch Plan of 1946, but it has been very difficult to find a way of negotiating them down to acceptable levels on the basis of equality and equal security.

A significant step was taken in this direction at the November 1985 Summit meeting between General Secretary Gorbachev and President Reagan. In their joint declaration, the leaders agreed that 'a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought.' As well, they identified several areas in which the USA and USSR had a common interest in progress. These included:

— accelerated work at the nuclear and space talks which began in March 1985;

— the further enhancing of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT);

— accelerated global efforts to conclude an effective and verifiable convention banning chemical weapons;

— agreement to work for positive results at the Vienna Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction talks and the Stockholm Conference on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures and Disarmament in Europe.

Establishing and sustaining political dialogue at the highest level in order to build on the common ground between East and West is a step of fundamental importance.