

No. 55/14

DISARMAMENT

Statement by the Minister of National Health and Welfare, and Chairman of the Canadian Delegation to the tenth session of the United Nations General Assembly, Mr. Paul Martin, made in the Disarmament Commission, October 21, 1955.

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I had, and I still have very considerable doubts whether it is a good idea or whether it was a good idea to suggest at this time a meeting of the Disarmament Commission, particularly when the report of the Sub-Committee of this Commission has just now become available, as of 8 o'clock this morning and when the members of the Commission cannot possibly have had time to study it carefully, to assess its implications and to obtain instructions from governments.

Now, I would not want this observation in any way to be interpreted as an indication that we do not welcome in this Commission and in the Assembly of the United Nations a full-scale debate on disarmament. Like other members around this table, my Government attaches the greatest importance to this particular matter and we recognize that the time will come when a general discussion in the General Assembly will perhaps be made desirable but certainly we have little hesitation in saying that this moment has not yet arrived. On the contrary, all members of the United Nations are keenly interested in disarmament and I am confident that the views of all members of the organization not represented in the Sub-Committee should be fully ventilated on the subject. But again, it is a point whether it is fair to put the voluminous record of the Sub-Committee before them and to expect delegations to express a considered opinion, almost without notice and certainly without an opportunity for the kind of deliberations which the very nature of the subject demands. And from my six weeks' acquaintance with Mr. Sobolev, for whom personally I have the highest regard, I cannot really believe that he seriously thinks that it is possible for us to do otherwise.

I can therefore support with full understanding and sympathy the points of view expressed by the Representatives of New Zealand, of Belgium and Peru. We, the members of the Sub-Committee of the Disarmament Commission have already had ample opportunity to express our views on this subject and it is surely a primary purpose of a meeting of the Disarmament Commission to give an adequate opportunity to the members of the Commission not on the Sub-Committee to express their considered views on this immensely important subject. And so, I must agree strongly with the statements made here to the effect that this sudden calling of the Disarmament Commission on the very day on which the vast documentation of the Sub-Committee has been made public does not give the members of the Disarmament Commission anything like a fair opportunity to express their views. I would also add that in my opinion the meeting is premature for another reason, and that has been mentioned by several speakers this morning. I refer of course to the fact that there is to be a meeting in Geneva of the Foreign Ministers of France, the Soviet