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MANKIND'S GREATEST PROBLEM - DISARMAMENT

The following statement was made to the 17-Nation Disarmament Conference in Geneva on March 19 by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. Howard C. Green:

"I begin my statement today on behalf of Canada by thanking the Acting Secretary-General of the United Nations for the excellent facilities which have been made available. The presence of his representative at this table is of great significance. It emphasizes that all members of the United Nations are vitally concerned with the problem of disarmament. In my opinion, we should never lose sight of this fact in the course of our negotiations. It is obvious that the main purpose of the United Nations is to keep the peace. Of course, under present conditions, that means that disarmament becomes the most important problem of the United Nations, and that forum will always have the main responsibility for bringing about disarmament. 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 United Nations General Assembly. For the first time there is a common understanding about the objective to be reached, and the guide lines which 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 which 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.

"Secondly, 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, however large or however small. 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 which have so often developed in past disarmament conferences. Also, the fresh perspective which they bring to the negotiations will assist materially in the search for early agreement. And may I suggest, Mr. Chairman, that the presence of these eight other nations has already been of deep significance as well as of great help to the opening phases of this conference.

ECONOMIC EFFECTS OF DISARMING

"Thirdly, we had just ten days ago the unanimous finding of the United Nations 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 re-allocation 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.