

This Committee has two important advantages over previous disarmament forums. First, following the precedent of the Laos Conference, it has the United States and the Soviet Union as permanent co-chairmen and they meet together frequently to arrange agenda and try to resolve differences. I do not suppose that ever before have Americans and Russians spoken together on so many occasions and for such a long time as these co-chairmen have been doing in Geneva. And, of course, these great powers are the key to the whole problem of disarmament. If there is to be a settlement it must be reached primarily by these two nations. Secondly, the Committee has as members eight non-aligned nations - Brazil, Burma, Ethiopia, India, Mexico, Nigeria, Sweden and the United Arab Republic. By their impartial and constructive approach to the intricate problems of disarmament, these eight nations have helped to advance the work of the conference. In the opinion of the Canadian Delegation, these eight nations have made a magnificent contribution at that conference.

For the first time since nations began to debate this all-important question of disarmament, the two major powers have put forward comprehensive treaty proposals. The Committee has been examining these proposals for the past five months. One thing shown conclusively is that the dangers caused by the vast array of modern armaments cannot be removed at one stroke or by adopting some simple formula. To reach agreement on general and complete disarmament requires the greatest effort and the most painstaking negotiation.

The fundamental problem, of course, is the distrust and suspicion which have sharply and tragically divided the world since the end of the Second World War. Negotiating governments must make greater efforts to overcome this distrust and suspicion.

The Committee in Geneva should play its part in this transformation. The Canadian delegation at Geneva has repeatedly emphasized that there are common elements in existing proposals which can be developed into significant measures of disarmament. What is required is a renewed endeavour to achieve acceptable compromises.

Soviet Draft Treaty

Canada welcomes the announced intention of the Soviet Union to modify its proposals for eliminating nuclear weapons vehicles. In our view, this may help to remove the block to negotiations in Geneva which was created by the incompatible positions of the two sides on this particular question. Of course, we must reserve our final opinion on this modified Soviet position until we see the detailed amendments to the Soviet draft treaty; and, in addition, agreement on this key disarmament question will inevitably require careful examination in Geneva of all the related factors.