

While I was in Geneva at the end of March, I attended a session of the Eighteen-Nation Disarmament Committee and reaffirmed Canadian support for its activities. May I add, the last time I had been in the room where that meeting took place was in 1938 when, with Mr. Lapointe, I had gone as one of the delegates from Canada to the last Assembly of the League of Nations. I could not help but think, as I sat in that room, of all that had happened since 1938, both in human and physical destruction in our world; I wondered whether our deliberations would lead to the beginning of a resurgence and of a new opportunity for mankind.

At that meeting I stressed the need to follow up the accomplishments of 1963 with further advances toward halting the arms race. While the negotiation of a treaty on general and complete disarmament is the main task of the Committee, discussions over recent months lead to the conclusion that the way to general disarmament must be prepared by agreements on more limited collateral or pre-disarmament measures.

Pre-Disarmament Measures: The Canadian View

I therefore took the opportunity to state Canadian views on a number of measures which have been proposed. I expressed Canadian support for President Johnson's recent proposal for a verified freeze on the numbers and characteristics of strategic nuclear-weapons delivery vehicles. It is a proposal of particular interest to Canada because those long-range weapons systems constitute the direct threat to North America. It is also consonant with our view that every effort should be made to arrest the ever growing qualitative and quantitative competitions in armament production. A verified freeze on strategic delivery vehicles would provide a practical means to that end. A halt in this most costly and potentially dangerous segment of the arms race would do a great deal to help us all find an agreed method to reverse the process and begin disarmament in earnest.

I welcomed also the proposal which has been made in differing form by both the United States and the Soviet Union for a "bomber bonfire". An early agreement to destroy some of the major means of delivering nuclear weapons would reassure a sometimes sceptical world that the great powers are really serious about disarmament. It would have the added advantage of ensuring that these aircraft, obsolescent perhaps by super-power standards but still potentially lethal, would not be disposed of to less militarily-powerful states which might use them in a way which would aggravate regional disputes.

On the question of non-dissemination of nuclear weapons, I voiced continuing Canadian support for an agreement based on the terms of the well-known Irish resolution of 1961 and for a comprehensive ban on the testing of nuclear weapons. I spoke in support of the progressive development of an international system of safeguards over the transfer of fissionable materials for peaceful uses. All these measures merit our continuing support as important elements in limiting the numbers of nuclear weapons in the world and the number of nations having independent national control of them.

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