

OTTAWA, Ontario
May 9, 1958.

When I first learned of your Government's announcement regarding nuclear tests, I ventured to hope that this step would lead to a disposition to move towards agreement on other disarmament problems. It has, therefore, been all the more disappointing and disturbing to me to observe the attitude which your Government has adopted in the recent Security Council discussions. Personally, I am at a loss to reconcile the Soviet attitude and argument in these meetings with the conciliatory tone of your message to me.

Dear Mr. Chairman,

I have given careful study to your letter of April 4. I can assure you that the subject matter - the question of nuclear weapons testing - is of grave concern to the Canadian Government. It is in this spirit that I reply to your message.

You will, I know, be aware of the public statements already made by the Government of Canada since your Government announced its decision, subject to certain reservations, to stop the testing of atomic and hydrogen weapons. You may have observed that the Canadian reaction to this announcement has been cautious and that a sense of uneasiness has modified the satisfaction we were tempted at first to entertain.

Shortly before your letter was delivered, the Canadian Government issued a statement explaining our reservations about a unilateral gesture of this kind following on intensive series of Soviet nuclear tests. We considered that while the suspension of the Soviet nuclear testing programme was to be welcomed in the context of the radiation hazard, it justified no more than the faintest hope that progress on disarmament was at last near at hand. For it is axiomatic that disarmament, to be significant in these times, must be the product of negotiation and agreement among nations. The world can hardly be expected to repose confidence in the potential results of a decision which could be reversed overnight and without consultation, by your Government.

It is because of the compelling need to erect, at whatever cost, some tangible and reliable foundation of mutual trust that I feel justified in asking you to clarify your position with regard to the establishment of an international system for the verification of nuclear tests. Assuming that you are willing to exchange views on this problem with other governments, I should be interested to know what type of practical measures you have in mind to ensure that tests of nuclear weapons were not being conducted anywhere in the world. I should further like to know whether you are prepared to negotiate seriously on this issue in the immediate future through the United Nations or diplomatic channels, or whether you insist on delaying discussions on these matters until a summit meeting has been arranged.

These questions spring from a conviction that governments, whether or not they dispose of nuclear weapons, have a right, indeed a duty, to work unceasingly for peace now, for the alternative is the possible obliteration of the human race. This is a matter of such profound significance to mankind that unilateral and conditional decisions to suspend the testing of nuclear arms are not a tolerable substitute for international agreement.