

It was in a resolution on disarmament, co-sponsored by Canada and passed by the Assembly in late November, that a proposal was advanced for private talks to be held by the powers principally involved. The President expanded this suggestion with the proposal that more than the mere reduction of atomic materials for military purposes be sought. Specifically, he proposed that governments possessing stockpiles of uranium and fissile materials should make joint contributions of such materials to an international atomic energy agency. The United States Secretary of State, Mr. John Foster Dulles, has since held private talks on this question with the Soviet Ambassador in Washington. The private talks have special interest for Canada because of the prominent role this country has had in the development of atomic energy for peaceful purposes. The Prime Minister has welcomed President Eisenhower's imaginative and constructive approach to what is perhaps the greatest problem of the day.

It would be unrealistic to suggest that the United Nations is a perfect instrument. Like all things contrived by humans, its Charter must be examined periodically to see whether it is capable of improvement. Canada had an influence at San Francisco in arousing support for revision arrangements which came to be embodied in Article 109. This Article stipulates that, if a conference to review the Charter has not been held before the tenth annual session of the Assembly, the question of holding such a conference is to be placed on the agenda of that session. In anticipation of such a conference, a number of member countries of the United Nations, including Canada, have felt that some preparatory work is desirable. At the Eighth Session, the Canadian Delegation co-sponsored a resolution, calling upon the Secretary-General to compile unpublished San Francisco documents and to prepare a study of the practice of U.N. organs in preparation for the possible review of the Charter.

There is no doubt that the Charter requirement calling for consideration of this question in 1955 will cause the record of the United Nations in the first ten years of its existence to come in for careful examination. Serious study of the Charter and of the record of the United Nations cannot, in itself, reduce international tensions, but it is bound to have a beneficial effect in deepening public understanding of the issues with which the United Nations is grappling and public appreciation of what the United Nations has accomplished. At the same time, it should be remembered that no amendment to the Charter can be effected without the unanimous support of the five major powers. In other words, the veto can apply to any proposed revisions of the Charter. It should be remembered, also, that we cannot know at this early date what the international climate will be in 1956--the earliest year in which it is at all likely that a conference to review the Charter would be held.

When one examines the record of the United Nations it is easy to see the failures, the frustrations, and the futilities; it is, unfortunately, just as easy to overlook the successes, the solid achievements, the positive accomplishments of the United Nations. It should not be forgotten that, while this bold adventure in united world action is only eight years old, the massive problems with which the U.N. must come to grips are almost as old as human life. Setting aside extravagant and unwarranted expectations,