

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION

DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 53/48 REPORT OF THE DISARMAMENT COMMISSION

Statement given on November 10, 1953, by the Canadian Representative, Mr. D.M. Johnson, in the First Committee of the eighth session of the United Nations General Assembly, New York, on Agenda Item 23 - Regulations, limitations and balanced reduction of all armed forces and all armaments.

Note: The text of the resolution passed by the First Committee on November 18, 1953, on this subject is included at the end of the Canadian statement.

The distinguished representative of the Soviet Union covered a good deal of ground in his statement to the Committee last Friday, November 6. He gave us a full account of the position of his government, particularly as regards the vital questions of prohibition of atomic weapons and their control. He also referred, as have others in this debate, to certain paragraphs of the Soviet resolution which is to be considered under our next item.

As regards the 14-power resolution which my delegation is co-sponsoring, I was glad to hear Mr. Vyshinsky say that his government would consider it very carefully. I earnestly hope that his government will be able to support our resolution in its entirety, despite the differences between our approach to the problem of disarmament and that of the Soviet Union.

I am encouraged to hope that the Soviet Delegation will be able to give our resolution its support by two facts. In the first place it cannot be denied that we have tabled a mild and at the same time forward-looking resolution. In the second place the Soviet Delegation voted for almost every part of the Assembly's resolution No. 704 of March 17 last. Specifically, the Soviet Delegation voted for that part of the resolution which required the Disarmament Commission "to continue its work for the development by the United Nations of comprehensive and co-ordinated plans providing for:

- (a) The regulation, limitation and balanced reduction of all armed forces and armaments;
- (b) The elimination and prohibition of all major weapons including bacteriological, adaptable to mass destruction;
- (c) The effective international control of atomic energy to ensure the prohibition of atomic weapons and the use of atomic energy for peaceful purposes only; the whole programme to be carried out under effective international control in such a way that no state would have cause to fear

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that its security was endangered;"

If the light of pure reason and the improvement in the international atmosphere in recent months are any guide, I see no reason why our resolution should not be adopted unanimously. That, together with the end of the fighting in Korea, would give the Disarmament Commission a propitious start on what I hope and believe will prove to be a new and productive phase of its work. But Mr. Chairman, I must confess that I was perplexed by some of the statements Mr. Vyshinsky made and by the terms of the resolution his delegation has tabled, for they seem to me to imply a position which would be retrogressive from the point of view of reaching agreement on the question which, as Mr. Vyshinsky said himself, is "the most important in the world".

Let us look for a moment at the relevant paragraphs of the Soviet resolution to be considered under the next item. It asks this Assembly to declare ".....atomic, hydrogen and other types of weapons of mass destruction to be unconditionally prohibited". That is what the Soviet resolution proposes, "with the object of averting the threat of a new world war and strengthening the peace and security of nations". This declaration would be accompanied by an instruction of the Security Council - not the Disarmament Commission - "to take immediate steps to prepare and implement an international agreement which will ensure the establishment of strict international control over observance of this prohibition". In discussing the Disarmament Commission's report Mr. Vyshinsky went further and said that the Assembly could not expect results from the Disarmament Commission until its terms of reference were changed. He wanted us to instruct the Disarmament Commission to reach agreed decisions concerning both prohibition of atomic weapons and control over this prohibition, and to report for the consideration of the next session of the General Assembly.

Now let us look at this proposition and examine it in the light of what Mr. Vyshinsky has told us about the "declaration" or "decision" which Soviet representatives have been urging the Assembly or the Disarmament Commission to take for several years. What would it mean?

It would mean, as I understand it, that if we were to declare now at this Assembly the unconditional prohibition of atomic, hydrogen and other types of weapons of mass destruction as the Soviet resolution asks us to do, then and only then would the Soviet representative on the Disarmament Commission be prepared to discuss with us the practical arrangements which would be necessary if we were to have an agreed system of safeguards through international inspection and control. Mr. Vyshinsky in the Assembly and Mr. Malik in the Disarmament Commission have made a great play of the so-called Soviet "concession" of simultaneity - that is their proposal that the prohibition of atomic weapons would come into effect legally only with the entry into operation of the control system. In the meantime, Mr. Vyshinsky has told us that declaration such as he now proposes we subscribe to would have what he calls "moral and political significance". He

says his government for one would abide by it, even before it became legally binding, as I understand it, if others were to do likewise. But surely the whole problem, at least from our point of view, is how are we to know that atomic plants behind the iron curtain are not, during this period, increasing their stock piles?

May I suggest to the Soviet representative that our more immediate need, if we are to make any headway here, is for the Soviet representative to be prepared to discuss with us simultaneously both the question of prohibition and the question of inspection and control. So far, he and his colleagues have virtually refused to discuss anything except the declaration or prohibition. Until they are prepared to talk, about the practical arrangements envisaged under their control system, the work of the Disarmament Commission will continue to be deadlocked and sterile.

Even if we were to agree tomorrow on a political decision in principle to prohibit the atomic bomb when the control system covering the atomic and conventional fields was working, it would still take us a long time, with the best will in the world, to work out the details of an agreed control system. Why cannot we start this work now, and clear the ground as soon as possible of the very considerable amount of technical work that will in any case have to be done before disarmament could begin to become a fact?

I think I have said enough to show that the Soviet proposals need clarification, to say the least. There is ample opportunity for this to be done in the Disarmament Commission where we have a competent body already in existence. There is no dispute over its composition, or the time and place when it should meet. In view of the Soviet acceptance of the problem before the Disarmament Commission, as embodied in the second section of resolution 70⁴ which I read at the beginning of my statement, we can say that there is in fact no fundamental difference of aim. And as it is the means that we must talk about in the Commission, it is in our view essential for the Soviet Government to refrain from merely reiterating its demand for some kind of general "declaration" and refusing even to discuss the ways and means of achieving the ends which all those who desire peace and hate war have in common.

As regards the Indian amendments my delegation is giving them its sympathetic consideration and may comment on them in greater detail at a later stage. I have only this to say at present. Before the Indian amendments were tabled my delegation came to the conclusion, in view of the eloquent statements of the distinguished representatives of the Netherlands, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru on Monday, supported by statements of the representatives of Argentine, Venezuela and Egypt today, that we would be well advised to leave the economic aspects of this debate to the Second Committee where they belong. This would mean withdrawing from our resolution the fourth paragraph of the preamble which was largely borrowed from a resolution of the Economic and Social Council. This paragraph was intended to have an appeal which it is clear from the debate it does not possess. So far as the Canadian Delegation is concerned, we should be glad to see this paragraph dropped.

Sponsorship -

Canada shared in co-sponsoring, in company with 13 other nations, the 14-power resolution on disarmament (agenda item 23) that was adopted by the First Committee on November 18, 1953. The sponsors were: Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Denmark, France, Greece, Lebanon, New Zealand, Pakistan, Turkey, United Kingdom and the United States. Eleven of the sponsors are at present members of the Disarmament Commission, and the three others -- Brazil, New Zealand and Turkey--will join the Commission on January 1, 1953, replacing Chile, Greece and Pakistan.

Voting -

The resolution was adopted by the First Committee, by a vote of 54 in favour (including Canada) to none against, with 5 abstentions (the Soviet bloc countries). Text of the resolution as adopted in the First Committee is as follows (UN Press Release GA/PS/594 of Nov. 18, 1953):

Resolution -

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY;

REAFFIRMING the responsibility of the United Nations for considering the problem of disarmament and affirming the need of providing for

(A) the regulation, limitation and balanced reduction of all armed forces and armaments;

(B) the elimination and prohibition of atomic, hydrogen and other types of weapons of mass destruction;

(C) the effective international control of atomic energy to insure the prohibition of atomic weapons and the use of atomic energy for peaceful purposes only;

the whole programme to be carried out under effective international control and in such a way that no state would have cause to fear that its security was endangered;

BELIEVING that the continued development of weapons of mass destruction such as atomic and hydrogen bombs has given additional urgency to efforts to bring about effectively controlled disarmament throughout the world, as the existence of civilization itself may be at stake,

MINDFUL that progress in the settlement of existing international disputes and the resulting re-establishment of confidence are vital to the attainment of peace and disarmament and that efforts to reach agreement on a comprehensive and co-ordinated disarmament programme with adequate safeguards should be made concurrently with progress in the settlement of international disputes,

BELIEVING that progress in either field would contribute to progress in the other,

REALIZING that competition in the development of armaments and armed forces beyond what is necessary for the individual or collective security of member states in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations is not only economically unsound but is in

itself a grave danger to peace,

CONSCIOUS of the continuing desire of all nations, by lightening the burden of armaments, to release more of the world's human and economic resources for peace,

HAVING RECEIVED the third report of the Disarmament Commission of 20 August 1953, submitted in accordance with General Assembly resolution 704 (VII) of 8 April 1953,

ENDORING the Commission's hope that recent international events will create a more propitious atmosphere for reconsideration of the disarmament question, whose capital importance in conjunction with other questions affecting the maintenance of peace is recognized by all,

1. RECOGNIZES the general wish and affirms its earnest desire to reach agreement as early as possible on a comprehensive and co-ordinated plan under international control for the regulation, limitation and reduction of all armed forces and armaments, for the elimination and prohibition of atomic, hydrogen, bacterial, chemical and all such other weapons of war and mass destruction, and for the attainment of these ends through effective measures;

2. RECOGNIZES that, whatever the weapons used, aggression is contrary to the conscience and honour of the peoples and incompatible with membership in the United Nations and is the gravest of all crimes against peace and security throughout the world;

3. TAKES NOTE of the third report of the Disarmament Commission;

4. REQUESTS the Commission to continue its efforts to reach agreement on the problems with which it is concerned, taking into consideration proposals made at the eighth session of the General Assembly, and to report again to the General Assembly and to the Security Council not later than 1 September 1954;

5. CALLS on all member states and particularly the major powers to intensify their efforts to assist the Disarmament Commission in its tasks and to submit to the Commission any proposals which they have to make in the field of disarmament;

6. SUGGESTS that the Disarmament Commission study the desirability of establishing a sub-committee consisting of representatives of the powers principally involved, which should seek in private an acceptable solution and report to the Disarmament Commission as soon as possible in order that the Commission may study and report on such a solution to the General Assembly and to the Security Council not later than 1 September 1954.

7. FURTHER SUGGESTS to the Disarmament Commission in order to facilitate the progress of its work to arrange for the sub-committee when established, to hold its private meetings as appropriate in the different countries most concerned with the problem."