

External Affairs  
Supplementary Paper

No. 53/46

DISARMAMENT

Text of a statement on disarmament recorded by the Permanent Representative of Canada at the United Nations and member of the Canadian Delegation to the eighth session of the United Nations General Assembly, Mr. D.M. Johnson, for the United Nations radio programme "On the Record", and broadcast by the Columbia Broadcasting System on November 14, 1953, and by the Trans-Canada network of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation on November 15, 1953.

I do not know whether you have thought very much about the fact that with the new weapons at his disposal man now has it within his power to destroy not only himself but, as Mr. Dulles reminded the General Assembly in his opening statement two months ago, "man also has the power to wipe life off the surface of this planet". However, it is only during the past week that the Assembly has reached the item directly concerned with this fact - namely, the disarmament item. I should like to tell you briefly how that debate has been going.

Canada, along with thirteen other countries who are or will be next year members of the Disarmament Commission, with the sole exception of the Soviet Union, sponsored a resolution on disarmament. It was, in our view, a reasonable resolution which we certainly did not intend to be provocative or controversial. Its chief purpose was to ask the members of the Disarmament Commission, and particularly the principal powers concerned, to make a further effort to break the deadlock which has prevented any agreement in this field since the United Nations first took up the subject in 1946. Since then Canada, because of our special interest in atomic energy matters, has been a permanent member first of the Atomic Energy Commission, and now of the Disarmament Commission. The other members are the members of the Security Council.

A new feature in our resolution this year was that we were able to adopt in modified form an Indian suggestion that the principal countries concerned - the United States, the United Kingdom, France, the Soviet Union and Canada - should, when the Disarmament Commission saw fit, hold private talks to see whether we could not make more headway than we have so far made in public. Our idea was that removed from the immediate pressure which accompanies negotiations carried on in a glare of publicity, we might explore a little more freely and informally the possible lines on which a compromise agreement could be built. For we all realize that in present circumstances it is absolutely essential that some new effort be made.

Unfortunately, far from indicating a more flexible approach to this question as we were trying to do, Mr. Vyshinsky has stuck fast behind his old formula "prohibit the bomb and then we shall discuss controls". It is true that this year he said that this prohibition would not take effect legally until the control system went into operation, but as I pointed out to him in the committee, he still refused to discuss in any detail what kind of controls the Soviet Union would be prepared to accept. Before he can do that, he says, we must agree to a declaration prohibiting the bomb.

Now, as we on the western side have been quick to point out, it is simply no good pretending that there is sufficient confidence between both sides to suppose that we in the west could for a minute consider depriving ourselves of our strongest weapon before we knew very exactly indeed what kind of international inspection and control system the Soviet Union was prepared to accept, and indeed until they had accepted it and put it into operation. Moreover, we must continue to insist, for the security of our peoples depends on it, that the atomic problem cannot be isolated from the disarmament problem as a whole. It would be most unwise for the west to agree to prohibit the bomb unless at the same time the Soviet Union had agreed to a general balanced reduction of armed forces and armaments, the whole programme to be under completely airtight international control to ensure that the agreement was really carried out.

Before the Disarmament Commission begins its work next year, I am sure that all of us on the Commission profoundly hope that the Soviet Government will take the advice of Mr. Moch, United Nations delegate of France, and agree to discuss with us the technical means by which the whole world could be assured that such a disarmament programme would be carried out in good faith by all the powers. If Mr. Vyshinsky will talk with the rest of us about ways and means, then I feel sure that we for our part will be ready to re-examine very carefully our position to see whether we cannot somehow reach agreement. Anyone who heard Mr. Vyshinsky's truly disheartening speech on Friday would find it hard to be optimistic about the success of our efforts. I can only say as Mr. Moch said in his reply to Mr. Vyshinsky, "I do not give up my hope in human understanding and human reason".

Note: Disarmament is being discussed at the eighth session of the United Nations General Assembly, New York, under agenda item 23 - "Regulation, limitation and balanced reduction of all armed forces and all armaments - report of the Disarmament Commission (resolution #704 (VII) of April 8, 1953). The subject is being discussed in detail in the First (Political) Committee and as with other agenda items, final decisions on it will be made in plenary meetings of the Assembly.

LIBRARY E A / BIBLIOTHÈQUE A E



3 5036 01046045 2