



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
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Canadian Disarmament Policy

Extracts from a General Statement on Foreign Policy to the House of Commons by Prime Minister Diefenbaker on February 11, 1960.

... What we believe in is that there should be an agreed Western position to serve as a point of departure in the negotiations with the U.S.S.R. in the 10-Power talks which start next month in Geneva, and this is what we are aiming at; to make a contribution by the submission of proposals and comments which will assist in bringing about a plan for international disarmament which will be realistic, negotiable, and at the same time not imperil national security.

... These are views expressed in summary which I think represent the thinking of Canadians as a whole on this matter. First, Canada's policy should be directed to the achievement of maximum disarmament and the reduction of armed forces which can be verified and controlled without endangering the security of the nation against aggression.

Second, whatever is done cannot be achieved overnight and will require to be done by steps or stages. To that end I suggest that immediate consideration and priority might be given to the control of missiles designed to deliver nuclear weapons of mass destruction and also to bring about an agreement whereby the location of missile sites should be designated.

Third, at the conference at Pugwash much was said regarding biological and chemical weapons. I believe the time has come that the nations should agree that the manufacture and use of biological and chemical weapons should be banned.

Fourth, we come to the problem which transcends all these problems, namely that of outer space. If we are to preserve the future of mankind I believe that outer space should now, before further advances are made in its exploration, be declared banned to other than peaceful purposes and that the mounting of armaments on satellites should be outlawed. These are several suggestions that I think represent initial steps, for if there is any desire on the part of the nations to bring about disarmament those principles could be accepted and I think should be accepted.

Now then you say, what about the production of fissile material for weapons? I think that was one of the questions asked. I would think that a major course leading to disarmament would be a declaration that the production of fissile material for weapons should be ended and that existing stocks should be transferred to peaceful uses as soon as a practical plan can be agreed upon. You say, what about the interim? You proceed by stages. What will you do in the meantime? How do you preserve the security of your state?"

That brings me to one further step, and it is not a new one. It has been advanced since the 1600's that an international military force should be begun whose capability would be the restraining of nations from aggression. I digress for a moment to answer a statement made this afternoon by one hon. member who was filled with remorse, horror and shock that the government had not placed before the U.S.S.R. its willingness to set aside the Arctic areas of Canada to mutual inspection provided a like right was granted by the U.S.S.R. I first direct the attention of the House to my remarks on August 22, 1958. I do not want to spend long on this but I have to point out the fact that on that occasion I said, as found at page 3944 of Hansard:

"For our part I can give unqualified assurances that to the extent that the control arrangements which may be agreed upon might be applicable to Canadian territory, we are prepared to co-operate in setting up control stations and inspection of the kind outlined in the report of the experts."

Apparently this was not read or, if read, not understood.

"Indeed on more than one occasion Canada has agreed unreservedly to her northern areas and Arctic regions being made available for inspection in order to ensure that surprise attacks will not take place."

These views have been communicated to Mr. Khrushchev on two occasions. The first was on January 18, 1958 when I wrote him and said this:

"I give assurance that in the context of a disarmament agreement the Canadian Government would be willing to open all or part of Canada to aerial and ground inspection on a basis of reciprocity. It seems to me that this is the type of proposal which should prove attractive to both our countries since we are neighbours across the Arctic. I have in mind in particular the kind of proposal Canada joined in sponsoring last August involving a system of inspection in the Arctic regions. We were willing then and are willing now to take such action in order to provide assurance against the fear of surprise attack."

This was turned down by Mr. Khrushchev in a subsequent letter or at least he did not deal with the matter because he said we would have to have it as part of a world agreement. On May 9, 1958, I wrote to him in part as follows:

"If you are really anxious about developments in the Arctic and if you wish to eliminate the possibility of surprise attack across the polar regions, I find it hard to understand why you should cast aside a proposal designed to increase mutual security in that area. Let me repeat here, Mr. Chairman, that we stand by our offer to make available for international inspection or control any part of our territory, in exchange for a comparable concession on your part. I would hope that you would accept some arrangement along these lines not only as an indication of our good faith but as part of a first, experimental step in building a system of international safeguards against surprise attack. When there is, by your own admission, a danger of nuclear war breaking out by accident or miscalculation, it is difficult for Canadians to comprehend your refusal to engage even in technical discussions intended to explore the feasibility of an international system of control."

That was Canada's stand.

... Going on from there, and I hasten to conclude, I think that if the nations really desire to bring about disarmament and peace there is one field that could constitute an initial step, a course alongside one or other of the courses to which I have referred, and that is the acceptance of the jurisdiction of an international court of justice, the predecessor of which was the Permanent Court of International Justice. All through the years the stand that we have taken is that the principle of compulsory arbitration under law among nations would be effectual in the settlement of international disputes.

Of the 85 states that are parties to the statute today, 38 accept compulsory jurisdiction of the court but only 13 do so unconditionally or subject to the condition of reciprocity; nine do so subject to reciprocity or with respect to those disputes which arose after the declaration came into being or when other means of peaceful settlement have been employed by the parties; 16 apply more restrictive reservations. So far as Canada is concerned at the present time she reserves from the jurisdiction of the court only those disputes between members of the Commonwealth of Nations, those arising out of World War II, and those that are of purely a domestic nature, the nature of which is decided upon by the Court.

So far as the Communist states are concerned, none of the Communist states has accepted, nor have they given any indication that they will accept, compulsory jurisdiction. It is of

interest too, that the new states that are arising and coming into existence in Asia and Africa are following the same course. I believe that if we were able, among the nations of the world, with the will to achieve peace, to make stronger and more effective the international court of justice, giving it a compulsory jurisdiction and the right of compulsory decision, many of the problems we face today would be dissolved. There are difficulties in the way.

I think there are 16 members, and naturally nations are not given to trusting the courts that are set up. None the less if we in Canada, the United Kingdom, which has taken a very pronounced step forward in this regard, and the United States, which through the President has indicated that some additional powers should be given to the Court, would lead in this direction I believe that ultimately the judgments of that Court would commend themselves to the wisdom of mankind and we might well make a forward step toward the achievement of peace.

As a further step, I think that international action needs to be taken in respect of outer space. I mentioned that a moment ago. The principle is still in effect that each nation owns all the air above it. This principle was first declared in 1914 and re-declared in 1919. The principle has no efficacy today in this age, when even at the present moment several of these interstellar rockets are in circuit around the world. The existent principles of space law are out of date by reason of the scientific breakthroughs. We have gone a very considerable way in Canada in our willingness to bring about the attainment of an agreement on jurisprudence in outer space. The U.S.S.R. and other Communist states refused to participate in the earlier committee. They are participating in the present one. I believe that if we could bring about international jurisdiction over space we would have gone a long way toward the preservation of mankind, not only in this generation but in the future. As a matter of priority we should have a declaration that would seem to be in keeping with reason, a declaration that no part of outer space or any celestial body may be appropriated by or may be subject to the jurisdiction of any particular nation....

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