



## STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION  
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS  
OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 53/19

### DISARMAMENT

Statement by the Permanent Representative of Canada to the seventh session of the United Nations General Assembly, Mr. David M. Johnson, made in the First Committee, March 20, 1953.

For those of us - and I am sure they include the great majority - who still hold to the conviction that the primary role of our organization is to conciliate differences between nations, it is distressing to see how often and how easily the undertow of the cold war pulls our debates down to the propagandist level.

Under this item we are not attempting to "prove" anything. We are not attempting to score points off those delegations which disagree with us. We are simply considering the very objective and factual report of the Commission which has not been able to do what it was asked to do at the last Session of the Assembly. We naturally have drawn our own conclusions, as I shall explain later, as to why the Disarmament Commission was not able to do more. But as we wish the Disarmament Commission to continue the process of negotiation, no matter how frustrating the task and how unpropitious the climate, I see no point at this stage in asking those delegations which have not taken part in this difficult process in the Commission to approve or disapprove by means of a formal resolution the proposals which one side or the other has so far presented. That explains why the resolution my delegation is co-sponsoring is couched in rather general terms.

The very nature of the problem of disarmament gives each of the great powers a more effective veto than they possess in the Security Council. Although there is no rule specifying that the great powers possess a veto in the Disarmament Commission, it is obvious that, unless all the powers are agreed, no disarmament can take place. We have already - and to our cost - made two experiments in unilateral disarmament, and it would be flying in the face of history and experience to try it again. If there is not general disarmament including all the great powers, there will be no disarmament. There must be general agreement as to how disarmament can take place so that it will be effective without imposing greater risks on one side than on the other at any given time during the process of disarmament. That is to say, there must be no disequilibrium which might be dangerous to world peace during the process of disarmament. Disarmament must be not only general; it must be balanced.

Even to begin that process, however, seems to require a far greater degree of confidence than exists at the present time between the powers. While the Korean fighting continued, it is difficult to see how any system of disarmament,

no matter how perfect on paper, could be put into effect. The armaments race - for that is obviously what it is - therefore continues, and with fighting actually going on in Korea there is always the appalling risk that a general conflagration might begin. The peace we have today is not the peace to which we pledged ourselves in the Charter - the peace of mutual co-operation and trust - but a peace based on fear.

As the Canadian Prime Minister, Mr. St. Laurent, has said, our objective and the objective of those nations with whom we are most closely associated - is "to prevent a third world war, not to win one". We have already given our views during the debate on collective measures on the subject of collective security. The resources which the Canadian Government and people have reluctantly decided must be devoted to increasing our military strength are a sacrifice on our part to the cause of peace and freedom. Earnestly as our people desire disarmament, we realized that we should have to give up living in the illusion that we could negotiate from weakness and see what we could do in the future through negotiation: from strength. Our logic may not appeal to the Soviet representative, but it seems perfectly rational to me, bearing in mind always that our goal is negotiation and a peace based on confidence rather than military strength as an end in itself.

The strength which the free world has been building during the past four years, by sacrificing more pleasant and more productive things, does not constitute a threat to the Soviet Union and the countries associated with it, despite the bogies which they are continually raising about the "aggressive designs of the North Atlantic bloc." Whether or not we have reached that position of strength which we hoped would be sufficient to produce a change of policy on the part of the Soviet Union, we do not know. We can only continue our course steadfastly until we have some concrete evidence that serious negotiations are possible.

Unhappily, we have no such evidence from the work of the Disarmament Commission thus far. But we must not become discouraged and give up. This door to negotiations must not be closed, however depressing the record of the past year.

It may be, of course, that negotiations which could eventually lead to disarmament might begin over some quite different subject. Apart from Korea there are many other questions, on which the Soviet Union could demonstrate its desire to achieve an easing of tension. It could do so, to take a still simpler example, by refraining from its virulent "hate campaign" against the United States, of which the germ warfare charges are merely the crudest example.

Wherever the vicious circle of fear can be broken by any agreement no matter how tentative and small, the results may in time be felt in the Disarmament Commission. In the meanwhile it need not be wasting its time. It has before it a rather formidable technical task, which can be pursued usefully, although within limits, even in the present state of affairs. The ground can in other words be cleared of certain technical problems and the way prepared to hasten the conclusion of a Disarmament Agreement, perhaps by many months, as soon as the will to agree exists not merely on one side but on both. For in this field, as I have said, it takes two to make an agreement.

Although we should, I believe, temper our debate by looking more to the future than to the past, we cannot and should not in all candour ignore the Disarmament Commission's record during the past year. I should like for a moment to turn to what the Disarmament Commission has been doing and state as simply and objectively as I can, and without rancour or bitterness, the essential positions on both sides as I see them.

I think I can do this best by taking the proposals of the Soviet Union as a starting point. As reiterated yesterday, they are disarmingly simple; but that is the only disarming thing about them. I must confess... that I was disappointed in the Soviet representative's statement. To my mind one of the most discouraging features of the Disarmament Commission's work last year was the inability of any Western delegation - and my delegation among others tried on several occasions - to get concrete answers from the Soviet representative as to what his government meant by the slogans in which it had expressed its proposals during the Assembly's debates on disarmament in Paris when the Disarmament Commission had been set up. Yesterday he said that the Soviet position was perfectly clear and then went on to repeat word for word proposals that we have heard on every occasion when disarmament has been discussed since 1947. As far as my delegation was concerned... we would have been very glad to have devoted more time to discussing the Soviet proposals in the Disarmament Commission last year. There was ample room under the agreed plan of work for a full discussion of them. But there is a limit to the amount of discussion that is possible when every time you try to elicit information on a point which seems unclear, the only reply you get is a repetition of the same all too carefully worded formula. It was for this reason that there was very little discussion of the Soviet proposals. From our point of view there was very little to discuss.

Without wishing to impose upon this Committee a technical review which I feel more properly belongs to the Disarmament Commission, I should like, in view of the Soviet statement yesterday, to explain some of the points on which we need further clarification from the Soviet representative, either here or in the Commission, if any further progress is to be made or indeed if there is to be any real discussion - as distinct from repetition - of the Soviet proposals. I hope I am not being unfair to the Soviet position if I summarize it in the following way, using as far as possible the language employed by Soviet spokesmen.

In the first place, they think the Assembly should proclaim the unconditional prohibition of atomic weapons and the establishment of strict international control over enforcement of this prohibition, it being understood that the prohibition of atomic weapons and the institution of international control should be put into effect simultaneously.

In the second place, they propose that the permanent members of the Security Council should reduce their armaments and armed forces by one-third within one year.

In the third place, they say that all states should within one month submit complete official data on their armaments and armed forces including atomic weapons and foreign military bases.

And finally, they propose that an international control organ established within the framework of the Security Council should conduct inspection on a continuing basis but should not interfere in the domestic affairs of states.

Although there are a number of difficulties in these superficially simple proposals, the most fundamental objection which we have to them concerns the Soviet concept of inspection.

Now ... whatever disarmament plan could ever be arrived at would inevitably require a system of safeguards which would give both sides the maximum possible warning and protection against violations and evasions of the provisions of the disarmament agreement. The key to any such system of safeguards is inspection.

At the present stage at least, inspection seems to me to be the nub of the technical problem as distinct from the more general political problem - the problem of confidence to which I have already referred. The Soviet Delegation's position in the Commission has been, in the words I have quoted, in favour of strict international control and of inspection on a continuing basis. That sounds promising. But then this is qualified and perhaps undercut entirely by the insistence of the Soviet Delegation that inspection should not interfere in the domestic affairs of states.

Another possible escape-clause in the Soviet proposals of June 1947, which the Soviet representative re-read yesterday, is the unexplained formulation that they will agree "to study production operations", as they say, "to the extent necessary for the control of the use of atomic materials and atomic energy".

We have not been able to find out what the effect of these qualifying phrases means. We simply do not know how far the Soviet Union will go on the question of inspection. As things stand at present they will not go very far. They have not, as I understand it, been able to agree to continuous inspection but only to inspection "on a continuing basis". The best we have been able to find out about the meaning of this phrase is that it does not include the right of international inspectors to be stationed all the time in atomic installations, for example. We consider this an essential component of any plan covering the inspection of atomic energy. The Soviet Delegate says that this would be interference in their domestic affairs. If I am wrong about this, I hope he will correct me and explain his position more clearly.

The fact of the matter is ...that any form of international inspection can be interpreted as interference in the domestic affairs of states. Certain forms of co-operation require less stringent measures of inspection, others more. Are we to take the mere say-so of the Soviet Government on matters of such vital concern to the future of the peoples for whom we speak? If they were able to do so, there would be no problem. We should not be faced with the problem of rearmament and increasing international tensions and the risk of war. The whole point is that neither side trusts the other. Both may be able to trust the United Nations. We would. Would they?

United Nations inspectors must be permitted to go anywhere at any time in any of the major countries . . .

of the world. The international control authority must be so constituted as to be impartial and the impartiality of its agents must be trusted. This is a field of policy in which no country can afford to make mistakes and no people can risk being duped, for the stakes are their survival as free men.

Whether the proposal is to prohibit the atomic weapon unconditionally or to cut the armaments and armed forces of the great powers by one-third this year, the question comes back to whether it is possible to agree on effective inspection. As I understand it, the Soviet Union still go no further than saying that they will permit agents of an international control authority to inspect places they choose at times of their choosing, but they will not have United Nations inspectors stationed permanently anywhere, and they will not give them the right to go wherever they think necessary whenever they wish. This means that their kind of inspection would amount to no more than continuing periodic visits to selected plants - in other words the international inspectors would be allowed to go where it was safe to take them and they would see what it was safe to show them. Again I ask the Soviet representative to correct me if I misrepresent his position.

We must all agree that this kind of inspection would mean a minimum of interference in the domestic affairs of states; but it would not be effective inspection. No disarmament plan can ever be based on this kind of inspection. That must be very clearly understood and appreciated by all. Atomic weapons or bacteriological weapons can be declared prohibited tomorrow and agreement reached to cut the forces of the great powers by any fraction you like, but with inspection as so far defined by the Soviet Delegation there is no guarantee whatever that these decisions would be faithfully carried out. Let us hope that either during the present discussion or at any rate during the Disarmament Commission's meetings between now and the next Session of the Assembly, the Soviet representative will come forward with more detailed and more realistic proposals concerning the kind of inspection which his government would be prepared to agree to as part and parcel of a comprehensive disarmament programme. Such proposals would immediately give the Disarmament Commission's work more reality and more hope.

As the report of the Disarmament Commission shows, detailed proposals have been submitted by the Western powers covering several basic elements of such a comprehensive programme. These proposals include not only an elaboration of the principles basic to any disarmament agreement - principles elaborated from the Assembly's resolution No. 502(VI) establishing the Disarmament Commission - but cover disclosure and verification of armed forces and armaments, and the proposals for the limitation and reduction of all armed forces. The latter paper, dealing with the limitation and reduction of armed forces, proposes in effect that the armed forces of the Soviet Union and the United States should be cut not by one-third but, according to our estimates, by more than one half their present strength as part of a balanced limitation and reduction of forces on both sides. Again it is of the essence that any reduction or limitation should not be a shot in the dark but should proceed from known and verified facts. We come back again to the necessity for fully effective inspection - a necessity which the Soviet Union has continued to sidestep or ignore.

As Canadian representative on the Disarmament Commission, I announced the acceptance by the Government of Canada, as part of a general disarmament plan, of the ceiling which the tripartite proposals concerning the limitation and reduction of armed forces would impose on Canadian armed forces, i.e. either less than 1 per cent of population or less than current levels. I then welcomed, as I do now, the initiative of the Western powers in presenting to the Commission detailed constructive and forward-looking proposals, seriously presented as component elements in the comprehensive disarmament plan which it is their intention to develop if there seems any hope of the Soviet Union being interested in such a plan.

Although the Soviet representative on the Commission said on May 14 that his government was ready and anxious to give serious consideration to any proposals for the reduction of armed forces, he made it plain almost as soon as the Western proposals on this subject had been introduced in the Commission a few weeks later that his government would not consider them seriously. Since that time the Soviet Delegation has not only confirmed that they would not even take the tripartite proposals as a basis for discussion, but had failed to provide the Commission with equally specific alternative proposals of its own.

Finally ... I should like to refer briefly to what the Soviet representative said on the subject of bacteriological warfare. He tried to confuse the issue by asserting that the Disarmament Commission refused to give a hearing to Soviet proposals concerning the prohibition of bacteriological weapons. This is not what the Disarmament Commission did at all. I was Chairman of the Commission at that time and what I ruled out of order, as the records of the Disarmament Commission for March 28 last year show, was not any discussion of proposals for the prohibition of bacteriological or any other weapons. My ruling was simply - and I quote - "This is not the proper forum to consider or debate specific charges of bacteriological warfare". No attempt was made at any time to prevent any member of the Commission from making proposals to prohibit bacteriological or any other weapons but charges of a specific character are of course quite out of place under the terms of reference of the Disarmament Commission as established by the General Assembly in Paris last year.

When, as Canadian representative on the Disarmament Commission, I commented on the present report, while it was being considered in the Commission, I expressed my regret at the meagre results achieved by the Commission. A Canadian paper, the Telegraph Journal of Saint John, New Brunswick, commented editorially, on October 1 last, that, although "regret" is the language of diplomacy, "heartbreak" would have been a more appropriate term.

The heartbreak. ... is that although the Soviet Union say that they stand for peace, for disarmament, for the prohibition of the atomic bomb and bacteriological warfare, and at the same time they make it perfectly plain that they have no intention of making any of these things possible. Categorically and explicitly, we are in favour of the elimination and prohibition of weapons of mass destruction, including atomic and bacteriological weapons. We are in favour of a balanced reduction of armed forces, commencing with a reduction of the forces of the great powers to approximately 3,000,000 men on each side, as part of a

comprehensive disarmament plan. But when we start asking direct questions about whether the Soviet Union means anything like the same thing as we do by the kind of inspection which would be necessary in order to carry any of these things into practice our questions go unanswered. Certainly they were not answered yesterday. Even the questions are, it seems, an interference in their domestic affairs.

... We must endeavour during the weeks ahead to find out whether we are entering a period in which serious negotiations with the Government of the Soviet Union are possible. The Disarmament Commission is one of a number of places in which we shall have an opportunity of finding out whether this is the case. With this in mind, as the Canadian Delegation has already suggested on several occasions, the Disarmament Commission might occasionally try meeting privately in closed session. At any rate ... let us hope that by the next Session of the General Assembly we shall have more evidence from the Disarmament Commission of a readiness on the part of all members to negotiate outstanding questions than we have at the present time. The record of the Commission shows that if the Soviet Union wish to negotiate, they will be met more than half way.

S/C

---