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### DISARMAMENT

A statement by Mr. Sidney E. Smith, Secretary of State for External Affairs, and Chairman of the Canadian Delegation, in the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly, on Monday, October 20, 1958.

... The Canadian Delegation has listened with great interest to the statements made in this Committee on the subject of disarmament. It seems to us, Mr. Chairman, that there is universal awareness, expressed by all the speakers, of the appalling threat which the possibility of war presents in a nuclear age, and the need for disarmament as a condition of human survival. Against this sombre background, it must seem to those who are, in all countries, following our discussions, that a great effort is demanded of the United Nations to reach some measure of agreement as to our objectives. This Committee cannot, by its own direct action, bring about disarmament, but we can, I believe, powerfully influence the outcome.

I think, Mr. Chairman, that there has been, during the last few days, a growing tendency in the Committee to try to find some common ground on the means of attaining our objectives, particularly over testing of nuclear weapons. There are, as we all know, a number of resolutions relating to this subject before the Committee, and indeed it is dealt with in the resolution which we ourselves, along with sixteen other governments, are co-sponsoring. For our part, we very much welcome this trend in the Committee towards a search for a unanimous approach to this problem, a trend which has found expression in various forms in a number of recent speeches from representatives of countries in many parts of the world. It is very understandable that sober opinion in this Committee should not wish to see our discussions end in an atmosphere of disunity. It is particularly important, it seems to us, in connection with the forthcoming meeting in Geneva of October 31, to consider the question of nuclear testing.

In this context, there has sometimes been too much emphasis on matters of semantics during recent discussions here. We have had a good deal of play on words in connection with this question of nuclear testing: such terms as "cessation", "discontinuance", "suspension", and "halt". Of course, these shades of meaning may represent different approaches to the problem. Yet I believe it is our duty to seek what is common in our aims and not to underline our differences. This, if I understood him correctly, was the object of the distinguished Foreign Minister of Sweden in his statement, and I was sorry that the Representative of the Soviet Union took occasion in his remarks of October 17 to give the impression that he was analysing away the possible grounds of compromise which Mr. Unden appeared to be indicating. Nevertheless, it seems to us that that common ground does exist, and it has become increasingly apparent during our discussions. Unless I am mistaken, most of the members of this Committee who have spoken (this includes the representatives of the great nuclear powers) have expressed themselves in favour of the objective of the discontinuance, under sufficient control, of nuclear testing for weapons purposes. There are important differences as to timing and as to the relationship of test discontinuance to other aspects of disarmament. But agreement as to the acknowledged goal remains.

Certainly, Mr. Chairman, the Canadian Delegation has no desire to foster an illusion of unity where none exists. On the contrary, we believe that a practical and realistic approach which faces all facts is the only one which offers any hope for progress towards disarmament. But we think that, if there is a measure of agreement as to our aims, this fact should find expression.

When we turn from words to deeds in this matter of test explosions, we are faced with an obscurity in the Soviet position which gives ground for real concern. One of the most promising auguries for the success of the forthcoming Geneva negotiations has been the willingness of the Governments of the United States and the United Kingdom to suspend all test explosions for one year from October 31, the date from which these negotiations begin. When is the Soviet Union going to match this offer? For what purpose is the Soviet Government keeping us all in suspense while awaiting an answer to this question. The equivocal statement made by Mr. Zorin on this subject on October 10 can hardly be considered adequate. Members of the Committee may be more interested in this practical question than in score cards of past nuclear explosions.

So far, Mr. Chairman, I have been dealing with questions relating to nuclear testing, but although this subject has been in the forefront of our discussions here, and although my Government attributes great importance to it, we must, I believe, all agree that it is not the heart of the matter.

Let me make our viewpoint clear. What we want is total disarmament as soon as possible. We do not like nuclear weapons and we want to rid the world of them. We do not, however, subscribe to the thesis that it is only nuclear warfare that is wicked, with the apparent conclusion that if we could get rid of it we could go back to nice clean wars like the last one. The existence of nuclear weapons in the first place was made necessary by the existence on a larger scale of conventional weapons of destruction. The refinement of nuclear weapons after the Second World War was made necessary by the accumulation and the threatening use of huge conventional armaments by the U.S.S.R. and its allies -- coupled, of course, with their own stockpiles of weapons and missiles. It is not stubbornness or malevolence which causes us to insist on the connection between nuclear and conventional disarmament. We cannot tackle one aspect of disarmament without tackling the other.

I am no more happy than other speakers that peace should be maintained by a balance of the forces of destruction. That is why Canada wants to move forward through stages of disarmament to healthier international relations. This is a hard world, however, and the transition from a balance of forces to something better is precarious. Those who insist on the immediate abolition of nuclear weapons without regard to any other factors, should ask themselves whether they are sure that the unhealthy balance of power which would result in the world would guarantee peace for any country. Would it, for instance, safeguard the countries on the expanding perimeter of the Communist empire? It has been with conventional forces and the threat of conventional forces that those countries have been threatened or subjugated in the past. We do not yet live in the ideal world of the philosophers and we dare not talk here as if we did.

Having insisted thus on the fundamental importance of balanced disarmament, I wish to make clear that Canada recognizes that we can proceed to our goal only by stages. We do not object to taking a first step, if that step is valuable in itself and equitable in effect. In particular, we strongly endorse the suspension of nuclear tests as an initial measure. We do so because we believe that suspension can soon become permanent cessation. Such a measure, we hope, would encourage greater mutual confidence. The essential control feature, although not an end in itself,

could become a first great experiment in international scientific collaboration. It would point the way to a solution of the complex problems ahead in controlling more difficult aspects of disarmament -- because no progress in disarmament is possible without control. The establishment thus set up might also carry on positive scientific programmes in the spirit of the International Geophysical Year.

The immediate suspension of tests would have many desirable results. Nevertheless we should realize that serious risks are involved for those countries which have sought to turn their manpower to productive purposes and are forced to rely on modern arms for their security. The offer of the United States and the United Kingdom should not be underestimated. It is a daring step in a perilous international situation.

For our part, we have always pressed in this Assembly for the cessation of nuclear tests as urgently as possible. Those of us who are impatient, however, should all take stock of the extent to which the United States and the United Kingdom have changed, in the interest of reaching agreement with the Soviet Government, conditions considered only a few months ago as necessary accompaniments of the suspension of tests. No power can be expected to rush into moves of this kind without caution. If this programme is accepted by the U.S.S.R., it can lead us to the total cessation of tests, which we are all united in wanting. The U.S.S.R. is on record with offers which should make such a programme possible. There is no question, therefore, as has been suggested in this debate, of the United States and the United Kingdom attempting to impose something by marshalling a majority vote of the Assembly. Given good will and good faith, there is no reason why there should be a single test explosion after October 31, ten days from now.

Whatever declarations we might extract from the Great Powers, I do not believe we can expect any of them to scrap completely and immediately their capacity to develop and test nuclear weapons, because it will take time to establish and prove the worth of an agreement. Whether we call it a cessation, a suspension, or a discontinuance of tests, the fact is that it will of necessity be tentative until all parties concerned are assured that the control system is operating effectively.

I realize that there are those who honestly doubt that the Western Powers are in earnest and that they are seeking to provide a means of escape from any agreement on discontinuance of nuclear tests. For my part, I can say that I am by no means certain of the good intentions of the U.S.S.R., but I am prepared to accept the declarations

they have made before us and at Geneva, in spite of the attempts they have made here to cloud the issue. As for the United States and the United Kingdom, I know much more of their intentions. I am convinced of their determination to strive earnestly for a situation in which the cessation of tests will be achieved.

The stand of my own Government was put on record last April when the Prime Minister, Mr. Diefenbaker, stated in an address: "My hope is that the nations of the free world will announce in the immediate future their desire and willingness to discontinue nuclear tests, except for the application of known explosive techniques to peaceful purposes, provided that there is suitable international supervision."

In my country we do not make or possess nuclear weapons. Our considerable atomic energy industry is devoted to peaceful uses. It is tempting to make a virtue of this fact and commit thereby the all too common sin of those of us who are not great powers. Canada is linked for reasons of defence with those who do possess nuclear weapons, and we do not question their justification for doing so under present circumstances. All of us here would do more for the cause of genuine disarmament if we would recognize the terrible dilemma which faces the great powers today, and not treat their problems as if they were miasmas which could be exorcized by rhetoric.

Nothing I have said is intended to give the impression that we in Canada view the development of nuclear weapons with equanimity. I think we should all be grateful to the distinguished Foreign Minister of Ireland for bringing to our attention, here and now, the danger involved in the spread of nuclear weapons. I share his grave anxiety at the uncontrollable anarchy which could result from the wide dissemination of these dangerous instruments. The main danger, as we see it, lies in an extension of the capability of making nuclear weapons, and I join heartily in Mr. Aiken's appeal to all those not now engaged in making nuclear weapons to refrain from doing so. The indiscriminate spread of nuclear weapons by transfer is something which we should also like to discourage. Nevertheless, to forbid absolutely their transfer, before relevant disarmament measures are agreed upon, might not contribute to the good cause which Mr. Aiken has in mind.

As I stated in the General Assembly, we are deeply concerned over the stalemate that has been reached in United Nations machinery to deal with disarmament. The Disarmament Commission has been rendered inoperable by the demand for "parity". Parity, it seems to me, is one of the most reactionary principles yet propounded in the United Nations and would quickly destroy our institutions if it were

accepted. Any country, which has the best interests of the United Nations at heart, must struggle to maintain the necessary flexibility for movement and growth. It must frustrate efforts from all quarters to force member states into two or more camps. The principle of "parity" would freeze us into a strait-jacket of alignments, so rigid and so unnatural that paralysis would quickly set in. I fully agree that the many various schools of thought in the Assembly should be represented, and I admit that the proportions in United Nations bodies dealing with disarmament and other subjects have not always been justifiable. It was for this reason that my Delegation last year took a lead in seeking a more equitable distribution of seats in the Disarmament Commission. We see no reason, however, why we should distort the world to suit the Soviet Union. Adjustment of the balance of interests is one thing, but this so-called "parity" is something quite different. For our part, we could not agree to the principle of "parity", whether it was put forward by the Soviet Union or by any other great power.

It may be that the time has come for a new approach to the whole question of disarmament machinery in the United Nations. The Secretary-General, in his memorandum, has suggested the new responsibilities which will have to be accepted, if, as we trust, positive results are achieved in Geneva. We may be moving from a largely deliberative phase to a phase in which the United Nations will have administrative, along with deliberative, functions. If progress begets progress, then both aspects of our work may be much greater than anything previously undertaken. For this purpose we may well need new and different bodies. Countries participating in these bodies will have to be chosen for functional as well as geographical reasons. It seemed to me there was a creative idea in Prince Wan's suggestion that the Disarmament Commission might remain a consultative body with sub-committees composed for purposes of negotiation, in accordance with the function to be performed. These are questions which must be considered urgently, whether in accordance with the interesting suggestion made by the Foreign Minister of Mexico, or in some other way. We are not ourselves disposed to let old forms and traditional attitudes stand in the way of new measures to suit the times.

As for the Soviet resolution on the diversion of expenditures from defence to economic assistance, I shall be brief. The basic conception is an admirable one which we have been advocating for years. There seems to be widespread doubt, however, whether in its present form it is intended to be taken seriously. The less-developed countries have had little enough from the Soviet Union except tracts

and bad advice. We are pleased that somewhat belatedly the Soviet Union has begun to supplement this kind of intervention with economic and technical assistance, although it has been notably reluctant to divert much of this through even-handed agencies like the United Nations or other non-partisan organizations. It seems to me that it is incumbent upon the Soviet Union to begin correcting the enormous disproportion between its defence expenditures and its meagre contributions to needy countries outside its orbit, before calling on other countries with far better records to do likewise.

Mr. Chairman, there are always sound grounds for discouragement about the progress of disarmament. This debate has itself produced good cause for anxieties. Nevertheless, I still believe, as I said in my opening statement in the plenary session, that there are hopeful prospects. The reason I believe prospects are somewhat better than they have been is that we are coming closer to reality than we have in the past. Too often our debates on disarmament in this and other bodies have seemed more like the bandying of fine phrases and a contest for favourable repute, rather than an effort to adjust the gross facts of international life in the direction of disarmament. For this reason I have confined my remarks today to what seem to me to be the concrete issues facing us right now, rather than Utopian visions which have their rightful place in our thinking, but which have too often beguiled us from getting down to business.

As I have said, it is not unrealistic even to be optimistic about the trend of this debate. The Canadian Government, for its part, welcomes the fact that in spite of obvious differences there is a wide measure of basic agreement among us.

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