

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES



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Canada at the Geneva Disarmament Table

Statement to the Eighteen-Nation Disarmament Committee in Geneva on March 26, 1964, by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Paul Martin.

Mr. Chairman, I should first of all like to express to you my gratitude for the very generous words which you used in extending a welcome to me at this table this morning, and I am particularly grateful that you called my attention to the contribution which General Burns and his colleagues representing Canada on this Committee have been able to make to your deliberations. I also thank Mr. Thomas -- as one who apparently attends these deliberations much more often than I, unfortunately, have a chance of doing -- for joining in extending a welcome to me. I should like to say to my colleague the Foreign Minister of Brazil that I am very much honoured that he should be here this morning. I read his statement of Tuesday with great interest. I regard it as a positive contribution to our deliberations, and I must say that I am happy to see him here this morning, because Brazil and Canada have shared some common experiences, and notable among these is our collaboration in the peace-keeping operations of the United Nations in the United Nations Emergency Force.

There is a great temptation for me this morning -- and I am not going to escape it -- to be a little nostalgic. Mr. Butler said, either in open committee or to someone when he was here in January, that the last time he was in this room was in 1939. The last time I was in this room, until this morning, was in 1938. When one thinks of all that has happened since that date -- a great war, all the discussions that led to the establishment of the United Nations and all the discussions that we have had in the field of disarmament, which happily are at any rate continuing --, one can appreciate the importance and the significance of our work in this Committee.

My own associations with disarmament discussions go back to 1953 when, on behalf of three members of the Five-Power Sub-Committee, I carried on some talks with Mr. Vishinsky that led to a reactivation of the Sub-Committee of the Disarmament Commission. While the agreement that we were able to effect was simply on a procedural point, the extent of the deterioration of East-West relations at that time perhaps is symbolized by the recognition that a mere agreement on a procedural point represented a major triumph. So, when we come to estimate and calculate the work of this Committee, we may possibly look upon what has happened, and what has been achieved since that time, and place it alongside the comparatively unimportant achievement of merely resuming discussions, as was done following the talks between Mr. Vishinsky and myself as the spokesman for three other members of the Sub-Committee at that time.

Committee's Record

Two years ago, the Eighteen-Nation Disarmament Committee held its first meeting in this historic room. Since then there have been periods of disappointment — sometimes of great discouragement — when progress has seemed painfully slow in the light of the urgency of the problems of peace and disarmament. But I should like to say to you that I think the Committee's achievements are not without some noteworthy aspects, and certainly the world has been watching its work and has reasons, in spite of the frustrations, to feel that there is some justification for encouragement; because last year we saw the direct communications link established between Washington and Moscow, the decision not to station or orbit weapons of mass destruction in outer space and, above all, the agreement to stop nuclear-weapon tests in three environments.

Those are the first steps which have been taken since the last war to curb the senseless arms race, and they were the result of long, and at times very difficult, preparatory work that was done here. This demonstrates, I think, the truth of what I said at the last session of the General Assembly — that the Eighteen-Nation Disarmament Committee is the most effective forum for disarmament discussions which has yet been established under the auspices of the United Nations. Canada, which has participated in disarmament negotiations since the beginning in the United Nations (and I need not emphasize this), will continue to support wholeheartedly the work of this Committee.

At the moment, my main concern — and I am sure it is shared by all of you — is that the impetus created by the agreements reached last year must not be lost, for a breakthrough was effected last year, and it is our responsibility to make sure that we follow up those first steps with further advances this year towards slowing and then halting the arms race.

This morning I should like to limit myself to the discussion of a number of issues on which my Government believes that real progress towards agreement is possible in the near future. Of course, Canada continues to regard the negotiation of a treaty on general and complete disarmament as the main objective of the Eighteen-Nation Disarmament Committee. But I believe that the Committee's detailed examination of the disarmament problem has convinced all members that the way to general disarmament must be prepared by agreement on what are called collateral measures.

Nuclear-Weapon Vehicles

The crucial problem of how to reduce, and finally eliminate, nuclear-weapon vehicles from the arsenals of the nations has been long and vigorously debated. Unfortunately, no agreement has been reached so far, but it would be wrong, I think, to say that the discussion has not yielded some results. The work the Committee has done on that central problem has given us all a better understanding of the basic difficulties involved; and it has led one of the major military powers — the Soviet Union — to make significant amendments to its original proposals. Canada hopes that further negotiations here will serve to increase the area of common ground on this issue. However, there still remain great differences in the views of the two sides on how nuclear-weapon vehicles should be reduced in number and finally abolished. In the absence of agreement

the great military powers are adding continually to their stocks of such armaments. We cannot fail to observe this, and, in my view, it shows us very clearly that we must explore the possibility of checking the arms race in this particular field by adopting certain collateral measures that are before the Committee.

Proposed Collateral Measures

My Government believes that the Conference should select from among the following collateral measures those which, either taken singly or in combination, are most likely to lead to early agreement, and should concentrate its attention upon them during the next period of its work:

First, the freeze of strategic nuclear-weapon vehicles proposed by the President of the United States;

Second, the destruction of a number of long-range nuclear bombing aircraft proposed in different forms by the Soviet Union and the United States;

Third, the non-dissemination of nuclear weapons;

Fourth, the cessation of production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and diversion of existing stocks to peaceful uses;

Fifth, the establishment of a system of observation posts to prevent surprise attack;

Sixth, a comprehensive test ban; and

Seventh, the strengthening of the United Nations capacity to keep the peace.

U.S. and Polish Proposals

First, I should like to devote special attention to the proposal which President Johnson submitted to the Conference in his message at the beginning of this year - that there should be a verified freeze of the numbers and characteristics of strategic nuclear-weapon vehicles. The adoption of that proposal would, my Government believes, greatly facilitate the subsequent reduction of these, the most costly and potentially dangerous of all armaments. Let us agree to halt the present upward spiral in the numbers of strategic missiles and bombers; let us agree to stop where we are now. That would help us to find an agreed method to reverse the process, to begin disarmament in this field. Canada firmly believes that the Committee should devote the most careful attention to this proposal for a freeze of these means of delivering the weapons which both sides now hold in such devastating quantities.

We are all aware of a proposal which, while it is not formally before this Conference, the Government of Poland has recently circulated for another kind of "freeze" -- of nuclear bombs and warheads in a certain area of Central Europe. My Government will be replying in the near future to the memorandum it has received on this subject. I shall say no more now than that we welcome every sincere effort by any nation, and especially by any nation represented at

this table, to find solutions to the problems of how to begin disarmament. We recognize the constructive part often played by the representatives of Poland in disarmament discussions. We do find objections to the Polish "freeze" proposal, of which we shall be informing the Polish Government in our reply. However, I should like to say that some elements of that proposal are worthy of further study in this Committee with a view to finding a combination of measures preliminary to disarmament which would be acceptable to both sides as mutually advantageous.

There are other proposals submitted by the Soviet Union and the United States which, if adopted, could have an immediate effect in reducing the dangers created by the enormous aggregations of nuclear-bombing aircraft and nuclear-headed rockets. Last week the representative of the United States presented in some detail, as the Committee knows, the proposal of his country for beginning the destruction of certain types of bombing aircraft now. There is also before the Conference a counter-proposal by the Soviet Union for the destruction of all bombers. My Government warmly welcomes that offer by both those countries to begin the disarmament process with the actual physical destruction of some major armaments. One of the best features of that proposal is that it would involve only the simplest sort of verification. An early agreement to send to the scrapheap some of the major means which the great powers now have of delivering nuclear weapons to their targets would reassure a sometimes sceptical world that the great powers were really serious about disarmament. It would also ensure that those aircraft — obsolescent by superpower standards — would not be sold to lesser powers, in whose hands they threaten neighbouring countries.

Bomber Reduction

It would be an outstanding achievement if the Eighteen-Nation Disarmament Committee could report to the coming session of the General Assembly that the powers had agreed on the destruction of a large number of bombers. In my view, this Committee should try to reach an arrangement which would cover many bombers as is feasible at the moment, but it should not invite delay or failure by trying to extend it too far. Once the process of actual physical destruction has been set in motion, we could consider the possibility of bringing the scope of this measure to include other types of nuclear-weapon carriers, including some missiles, as I note was suggested by Mr. Thomas. We, therefore, hope that the Eighteen-Nation Disarmament Committee will pursue vigorously the prospects for early action which these proposals offer.

While neither side has been prepared up to the present time to accept in their present form any of the collateral measures proposed by the other, we believe that a number of the proposals could be related in a way which would assist in the reconciliation of views. For example, if the Soviet Union has misgivings that a freeze of strategic nuclear-weapon vehicles would not ensure halting the over-all arms race, it might be convinced if an agreement on the freeze were combined with an agreement to undertake simultaneously the physical destruction of certain types of bombers on the lines of the United States proposal.

Reduction of Military Budgets

Then, the Soviet Union has urged that there be an early agreement on a reduction of military budgets. I think that all nations would welcome a reduction of military expenditures, and the unilateral moves which have been made in this respect by the United States and the Soviet Union have received world-wide commendation. In passing, I may say that my own country has made a reduction in its defence spending this year. I think that all countries represented here would certainly be anxious, given the proper conditions, to see a reduction everywhere of military expenditure. In this connection, I have noted that, in the view of the Soviet Union, while the stopping of production of strategic nuclear-weapon carriers would immediately produce significant savings in one sector of the military expenditures of the greater powers, there is a danger that the resources so liberated might be used to increase the numbers of short-range missiles and conventional weapons. Perhaps this could be prevented by introducing a verified system of budgetary limitation.

Limiting Spread of A-Arms

My country welcomes the importance which this Committee is giving to the vital matter of preventing the wider dissemination of nuclear weapons, that is to say, preventing an increase in the number of states with an independent capacity for waging nuclear war. We are glad that both the Soviet Union and the United States have included this item in their lists of collateral measures. The partial test ban is a first step to check an increase in the number of nuclear powers, and this Committee has been enjoined by a resolution of the eighteenth session of the United Nations General Assembly [1910 (XVIII)] to continue its search for a comprehensive test ban. We must now, therefore, seek to agree on further guarantees against the grave dangers which the spreading of nuclear weapons would present both to the prospects for disarmament and to the peace of the world. The basic position of my country in this respect is governed by the terms of the Irish resolution [1665 (XVI)] adopted unanimously by the General Assembly in 1961. We continue to support the terms of that resolution, which call for the conclusion of an agreement which would contain certain provisions:

"...under which the nuclear states would undertake to refrain from relinquishing control of nuclear weapons and from transmitting the information necessary for their manufacture to states not possessing such weapons, and provisions under which states not possessing nuclear weapons would undertake not to manufacture or otherwise acquire control of such weapons".

At the same time we recognize that, even without such a universal agreement as is called for in that resolution, there are important steps which can and should now be taken to help prevent wider dissemination. The United States has among its proposals a number of specific suggestions for early action. The most far-reaching of those proposals involves the cessation of production of fissionable material for weapon purposes and the transfer of agreed quantities of such materials to peaceful uses. Not only, of course, is that measure directly relevant to the solution of the non-dissemination problem but its implementation would mean that the first all-important step had been taken towards actual nuclear disarmament.

Controls over Peaceful Transfer

My country, as one of the states with a highly-developed atomic industry, is particularly interested in another of President Johnson's proposals, which is related to non-dissemination, and that is the application of appropriate safeguards over transfers for peaceful uses of fissile materials and related equipment. This is a question of special concern to us, since we have been actively associated recently in a number of important projects to assist other countries in the development of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Therefore we warmly welcome the progressive development of the International Atomic Energy Agency safeguard system and have been greatly heartened by the growing co-operation which has taken place in the extension of an effective safeguard system. In this context, we believe that the recent proposals of the United States Government, involving as they do the progressive acceptance by the great nuclear powers of safeguards, are a great step forward. The application of such safeguards would yield experience highly relevant to the problems of controlling nuclear disarmament. Therefore it is a matter of concern to this Committee that it deserves its close attention.

Observation Posts

I listened with great interest this morning, as I am sure we all did, to what Mr. Thomas said on the subject of observation posts, and we shall look upon the paper which is an annex to his interesting statement as a positive contribution on this particular subject. We welcome the presentation of the working paper because we think it will assist the Committee in focussing its discussion both on how a system of observation posts could lessen the danger of surprise attack and on the practical problems involved in the establishment of such a system. The representative of Nigeria pointed out recently that measures to prevent the risk of war (although both sides have made proposals in this regard) have not yet received the attention which he thought they deserved at this session of the Eighteen-Nation Committee. With the submission of the United Kingdom report, the Canadian delegation looks forward to the opening now of constructive discussion on this subject, both at the co-Chairmen's meetings and in the Conference. Since both the Soviet Union and the Western powers have made suggestions with respect to observation posts in the context of measures to reduce the danger of war, this subject seems to us a promising collateral measure for discussion at this time. And, as so many delegations observed at the last session of the General Assembly we hoped — and I continue to hope — that we shall reach agreement on this subject before too much time has expired. A system of observation posts, by providing assurance against surprise attack, would in the Canadian view result in a significant decrease in East-West tension. Canada believes that the establishment of an appropriate system of such posts would lead to progress in disarmament negotiations, and, indeed, perhaps to progress on the main political problems dividing East and West.

Adequate Peace-Keeping Machinery

There is one other subject that I should like to mention. It is the development of adequate peace-keeping machinery. I do not think I need to remind the members of this Committee of the importance which my country attaches to this subject. Canada, as is known, has recently been intimately associated with the problems of United Nations peace keeping, as a result of the tragic happenings

Cyprus. I am sure that my colleagues here will understand when I say that Canada takes pride in the role it has assumed over the years in a series of situations where the United Nations has been called upon to fulfil its Charter responsibilities to preserve the peace. In the Suez crisis, in the Congo, in the Yemen and, most recently, in Cyprus, Canada has met what it regards as an obligation to contribute to the efforts of the United Nations to preserve international peace and security. Outside the context of the United Nations, Canada has participated, together with India and Poland, for nearly ten years now in the International Supervisory Commissions in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. My Government places a high value on the efforts of those bodies to preserve peace and stability in Southeast Asia. As a result of those experiences, we have become convinced that better organization of United Nations peace-keeping forces is a most important objective.

At the last session of the General Assembly, my Prime Minister made specific suggestions on what states could do to enable the United Nations to respond more effectively and promptly when a force was required to assist in the re-establishment of peaceful conditions. As recently as 21 March, Mr. Pearson said on this matter:

"For years now at the United Nations Canada has taken a lead in advocating a permanent international force which will be organized and equipped and available to move in swiftly to keep the peace in these danger spots. How long are we going to have to improvise, to rely on a few members of the United Nations to carry the burden and do the job which should be done by the United Nations as a whole?"

He was, of course, influenced in making that observation by the haphazard, unprepared arrangements that attended the situation which led to the establishment of the international force in Cyprus. He continued:

"I still hope to see the day when we will have an organized, equipped and genuine international force under the national control of the members but available for use at a moment's notice."

The Canadian Government believes wholeheartedly in the peace-keeping role of the United Nations and we will support all moves to increase its ability to perform that role with increasing effectiveness.

I mention this question now because the development and strengthening of peace-keeping machinery and methods for the peaceful settlement of disputes have a direct relation to the negotiations on disarmament in this Committee. The longer-term relevance of peace keeping to disarmament is demonstrated by the fact that the disarmament plans of both the United States and the Soviet Union include provisions for the development of peace-keeping methods. As nations in the course of disarmament give up the means which they now have to preserve their national security, it is essential that alternative methods of preserving that security should be progressively established. It is clear, therefore, that the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament has a responsibility to discuss the development of adequate peace-keeping machinery in the context of disarmament.

But, besides the long-term problem -- how to solve international disputes and keep the peace in a disarmed world --, we have the problems of peace keeping of yesterday and of today, that is, before the process of disarmament has begun. We must be prepared to cope with the same kind of problems until that process begins. The lessons of recent experience should guide us in planning for the long-term goal, and, in planning peace-keeping methods and machinery for the nearer future, we should have that long-term goal in mind. I believe that study of these long-term problems in this Committee can usefully complement the continuing efforts in the broader forum of the United Nations to lay firmer foundations for the organization's peace-keeping function.

Canada's Faith in the Committee

Finally, I should like to reaffirm my faith and that of my Government in the work of this Committee as a negotiating body which can make real progress in the months ahead towards the solution of disarmament problems. We attach great importance to the institution of the co-Chairmen. That arrangement encourages informal bilateral discussions, in which we have always had strong belief. The Moscow-Washington "hot-line" arrangement was a by-product of those discussions, and I hope that there will be further achievements and agreements as a result of these bilateral discussions. May I say that the presence on this Committee of the uncommitted nations has, in our judgment, strengthened these discussions. World opinion is practically fully represented on this Committee as a result of the present composition of the Committee as a whole. The proposals which have been submitted, particularly in the field of collateral measures, provide ample material for constructive negotiation at this time. I have pointed out some of the proposals which, taken either singly or in some combination, do, I believe, hold out good prospects for agreement in the near future.

There has been much discussion in the past few months about whether a détente in East-West relations exists. While there is an improvement in our relations, we note that the major political problems continue to be unresolved. However, we feel that there is very strong evidence of a real improvement in East-West relations, and undoubtedly that has been made possible by the measure of limited agreement which began last August, in particular, with the initiation by the three great powers of a test-ban agreement and the subsequent action of over 100 other countries which joined in support of that agreement. Therefore, some limited agreement by this Committee within the foreseeable future would have a tremendous effect in keeping up the momentum that began last August.

It is my earnest hope that the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament will concentrate its efforts wherever it seems most likely that an advance can be made and that, having done so, the Committee will be able to report to the next session of the General Assembly of the United Nations that we have moved closer to our goal of a disarmed and peaceful world.