



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 62/12

A STEADY HAND ON THE UN TILLER

Statement by Mr. Howard Green, Secretary of State for External Affairs of Canada, in the General Debate at the Seventeenth Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, September 25, 1962.

Mr. President,

It gives me great pleasure to join with others in offering you congratulations on your election to the Presidency of the General Assembly. Your outstanding qualifications and wide experience in diplomacy, international law and in United Nations affairs will, I know, prove to be of great value at this important session.

Your appointment is a well-deserved tribute to you and also to your country - Pakistan. Last week, the people of Canada were delighted to receive the President of Pakistan as a distinguished and highly respected visitor. His visit served to re-emphasize the excellent relations which Pakistan and Canada have always enjoyed.

I also wish to extend a very warm welcome to the four new members who were admitted to the United Nations last week. In Rwanda and Burundi the United Nations played an important role in bringing about the transition from trusteeship to independence. Canada had the honour of serving on one of the United Nations Commissions during the preparatory period. Aided by a common bond of language, we now look forward to developing with these two countries the same close relationship which links Canada with the other French-speaking countries of Africa.

The achievement of independence by Jamaica and by Trinidad and Tobago is an event of special significance and of interest for Canada not only because of our Commonwealth association but also because of the historic ties which have existed for centuries between Canadians and the people of the West Indies. I am confident that these good neighbours of ours -- the first new members, incidentally, from the Western Hemisphere -- have a valuable contribution to make to the United Nations.

Last year when I spoke in the general debate, the United Nations was facing many grave issues, some of which actually threatened its survival. The atmosphere in the Assembly, as those representatives present today who were here a year ago will remember, was one of tension and anxiety. The whole future was uncertain -- the future of this organization and the future of the world. May I suggest that the events of the past 12 months have not dispelled all the difficulties; but neither have they fulfilled the pessimistic prophecies of a year ago. We are living in a world when it pays to be optimistic. I do not believe that the pessimists will ever settle the problems that face the world and I believe that clearly, in this session of the General Assembly, we have a good deal more reason for hope than a year ago.

Laos

Here I should like to point out that there have been some gains in the complex international endeavour to strengthen the peace. For example, at the beginning of 1962, the situation in Laos seemed far from settled. By July, international agreements providing for a unified, independent and neutral Laos had been signed in Geneva by the 14 nations attending that conference. Those nations included governments which did not recognize each other but which shared a common determination to face reality and find a solution. The result was a positive step toward peace and stability in Southeast Asia.

Canada was one of the signatories of the Laos Agreements and, as a member of the International Commission, Canada was charged, along with India as chairman and Poland, with the task of seeing that the agreements are carried out. We intend to fulfil these responsibilities with fairness and diligence. I emphasize, however, that ultimate success in Laos will depend on the continuing support and co-operation of all the governments concerned. I think we can make Laos an example for the settlement of problems in other parts of the world.

A significant factor in the successful negotiations on Laos was the businesslike procedure evolved. In particular, the device of co-chairmanship proved its worth and the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union deserve much of the credit for the result. I pay tribute to them today for their work as co-chairmen of that conference.

Disarmament

There is, furthermore, another area in which there has been some progress. After a year of inactivity, steps forward were also taken in the field of disarmament. The United States and the Soviet Union reached accord on a Joint Statement of Agreed Principles and laid it before the General Assembly on September 20, 1961. This was followed by another advance -- which I think should be considered a major advance -- the establishment of the 18-Nation Disarmament Committee which began its deliberations in March of this year in Geneva.

This Committee has two important advantages over previous disarmament forums. First, following the precedent of the Laos Conference, it has the United States and the Soviet Union as permanent co-chairmen and they meet together frequently to arrange agenda and try to resolve differences. I do not suppose that ever before have Americans and Russians spoken together on so many occasions and for such a long time as these co-chairmen have been doing in Geneva. And, of course, these great powers are the key to the whole problem of disarmament. If there is to be a settlement it must be reached primarily by these two nations. Secondly, the Committee has as members eight non-aligned nations - Brazil, Burma, Ethiopia, India, Mexico, Nigeria, Sweden and the United Arab Republic. By their impartial and constructive approach to the intricate problems of disarmament, these eight nations have helped to advance the work of the conference. In the opinion of the Canadian Delegation, these eight nations have made a magnificent contribution at that conference.

For the first time since nations began to debate this all-important question of disarmament, the two major powers have put forward comprehensive treaty proposals. The Committee has been examining these proposals for the past five months. One thing shown conclusively is that the dangers caused by the vast array of modern armaments cannot be removed at one stroke or by adopting some simple formula. To reach agreement on general and complete disarmament requires the greatest effort and the most painstaking negotiation.

The fundamental problem, of course, is the distrust and suspicion which have sharply and tragically divided the world since the end of the Second World War. Negotiating governments must make greater efforts to overcome this distrust and suspicion.

The Committee in Geneva should play its part in this transformation. The Canadian delegation at Geneva has repeatedly emphasized that there are common elements in existing proposals which can be developed into significant measures of disarmament. What is required is a renewed endeavour to achieve acceptable compromises.

Soviet Draft Treaty

Canada welcomes the announced intention of the Soviet Union to modify its proposals for eliminating nuclear weapons vehicles. In our view, this may help to remove the block to negotiations in Geneva which was created by the incompatible positions of the two sides on this particular question. Of course, we must reserve our final opinion on this modified Soviet position until we see the detailed amendments to the Soviet draft treaty; and, in addition, agreement on this key disarmament question will inevitably require careful examination in Geneva of all the related factors.

Early in the Geneva conference, a committee of the whole was set up to deal with measures which could be put into effect quickly and would help to relieve international tension and create mutual confidence pending agreement on general and complete disarmament.

Among the subjects this Committee has before it are: First, measures to prevent further dissemination of nuclear weapons; second, the reduction of the possibility of war by accident, miscalculation or failure of communications. In order to stop the arms race spreading to outer space, Canada has proposed in this Committee that immediate action should be taken to prevent the placing of weapons of mass destruction in orbit. We urge that, when the Disarmament Committee resumes its work, redoubled efforts be made to reach agreement on the important questions which are before this collateral measures committee.

Force of World Opinion

This Assembly should bring to bear the full force of world opinion to ensure more rapid progress in disarmament. To achieve this we must, first of all here in New York, avoid propaganda exchanges on the question of disarmament. The whole issue could become a propaganda battle here in this Assembly, and this would be a tragedy. We must also assess the possibilities for compromise on important points which are still in dispute. Finally, we must recommend as forcefully as possible - I would hope recommend with one voice - that the Disarmament Committee in Geneva renew its efforts at the earliest possible moment.

The Commonwealth prime ministers meeting in London a few days ago recorded their unanimous conviction in this sense. That statement by the Commonwealth conference was very significant, because the 15 nations there represented all the continents of the world. I quote from the communiqué:

"The Prime Ministers agreed that the need for disarmament had been intensified by the steady development of ever more powerful weapons. They re-affirmed the principles laid down in their statement on disarmament on March 17, 1961, and expressed their conviction that the 18-Nation Disarmament Committee at Geneva should continue its efforts towards a treaty for general and complete disarmament in accordance with these principles. They noted that discussions on the cessation of nuclear-weapons tests had also been taking place in Geneva and expressed the hope that these efforts would be successful in bringing into being an effective treaty to eradicate this source of fear and danger to mankind."

The 18-Nation Committee is responsible for detailed negotiations and only through its continued efforts in Geneva can progress toward disarmament be realized. That is why we must, as the distinguished representative of Norway stated here a few days ago, "...give encouragement and guidance to the negotiating nations in Geneva". I point out that all members of the United Nations have a fundamental obligation to assist in every way in ensuring that agreement on this vital subject is reached without delay. The world simply cannot afford the risk of failure.

Nuclear Tests

In the disarmament talks at Geneva and in this General Assembly, it has been made very clear that the problem of nuclear-weapon tests is of the gravest concern to all members of the United Nations. My Government maintains its firm opposition to all nuclear-weapon testing, for two reasons.

First, we are convinced that continued testing poses an ever-increasing danger to human health. Of this I shall say more presently. Second, the ultimate security of mankind is weakened, not strengthened, by further testing. No matter what considerations may lead the major powers to undertake nuclear tests, their effect can only be to accelerate and to make even more perilous the race in nuclear armaments. The powers concerned must not ignore the fact that the arms race itself gives rise to fears which in turn become a factor in intensifying competition in armaments.

I believe that these fundamental points are not in dispute. But the tests have still not been stopped. The proposals submitted by the eight uncommitted countries at Geneva, and the new technical data advanced recently by the United States and the United Kingdom, have opened new opportunities for agreement.

The Canadian Government strongly supports the proposal, originally made by the Mexican delegate to the 18-Nation Disarmament Committee, that a target date, January 1, 1963 (and I wish it could have been earlier), should be set for the cessation of all tests. This date has been accepted in principle by the United States, the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union.

As a minimum first step, agreement could be reached immediately on the final cessation of nuclear tests in the atmosphere, under water and in outer space. To have a comprehensive treaty, of course, underground tests must be included. The question barring agreement on such a treaty is whether the parties shall be obligated to permit inspections on their territories when other means of determining whether there has been an underground nuclear explosion fail to give a definite answer. This is a difficult problem, involving dangers to the security of the nations concerned, but the dangers which result from the lack of solution are immeasurably greater.

If the great powers cannot reach agreement on this issue, prospects for general and complete disarmament will be dim indeed. They can and must resolve their differences in this field if they are to fulfil their obligation to mankind. The General Assembly should clearly express itself in this sense.

Radiation

I revert now to the hazards to human health created by nuclear testing. The second comprehensive report to the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation brings out the danger very clearly in the following statement (and I quote from this scientific report):

"As there are no effective measures to prevent the occurrence of harmful effects of global radioactive contamination from nuclear explosions, the achievement of a final cessation of nuclear tests would benefit present and future generations of mankind."

That is the objective language of a scientific report tabled just a few months ago. The dangers involved are immediate. They affect us now and, what is even more important, they will affect future generations.

In order to assess these dangers properly, the Assembly must continue to insist on a co-operative world-wide study. Last year's resolution on the subject reaffirmed the desirability of continuing full international co-operation through the Scientific Committee. The latest report of the Committee constitutes an authoritative and up-to-date assessment of the exposure of mankind to radiation and of its harmful effects.

In the resolution of last year, the General Assembly called for a study of a world-wide synoptic reporting scheme of atmospheric radiation levels. I have been greatly encouraged by the progress made by the World Meteorological Organization in preparing such a scheme. It is our hope that its implementation on a world-wide basis will soon be initiated.

Problem of Want

Now I come to another question. Disarmament deserves high priority in our deliberations because it seeks to remove the means of waging war. The Acting Secretary-General has emphasized in his Annual Report the need to eradicate the basic causes of war -- poverty, famine and disease. The economic and the social work of the United Nations goes along so quietly that it does not always receive the public attention it deserves. And yet success in raising living standards in the less-developed areas and in expanding and stabilizing world trade may, in the long run, determine the question of war and peace.

The role of the United Nations in providing an effective framework for economic and social development is well established. There will, I am sure, be no disagreement over the importance of the various assistance programmes. These essential activities must be adequately supported. In the "Decade of Development", we should strive to make increasingly effective use of existing institutions. For its part, the Canadian Government will continue to support these United Nations efforts and at the same time to maintain our bilateral aid programmes.

The promotion of sound trading conditions is at least as important as the provision of aid. In fact, the recent Commonwealth Conference considered that question, and they had this to say: "...Improved opportunities and conditions for trade are even more important than financial aid". That was the unanimous opinion of all the countries represented.

Canada has sought, in the United Nations and outside, to promote international arrangements and institutions (for example, the General Agreement on Tariff and Trade) which would encourage the expansion of trade on a multilateral and non-discriminatory basis. This will be our attitude in examining the Economic and Social Council's recommendation for a Conference on Trade and Development in 1964.

Such a conference will provide one opportunity for a discussion on strengthening the world trading system. While some problems can be dealt with only in a world-wide forum, other aspects of trade can be examined usefully by countries whose trading systems - and hence trading problems - are most alike. For example, at the recent Commonwealth meeting Canada proposed an early conference of a group of countries to discuss their common trading problems. Such a conference would, in fact, help to prepare the way for wider, non-discriminatory tariff negotiations on a most-favoured-nation basis.

Commonwealth and New Nations

I should like to say a few words now about the Commonwealth and emerging nations. In London we welcomed four countries that had joined this family of free and independent nations within the last year - Sierra Leone, Tanganyika, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago. This brought the number of nations participating fully in the Commonwealth Conference to a total of 15. All but four - those four are the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand and Canada - have become independent since the Second World War and in each case they have chosen, of their own free will, to become members of the Commonwealth. In addition, there were representatives present from other territories such as Uganda, Kenya and British Guiana, which will shortly obtain independence and will in all probability choose to join the Commonwealth and, of course, the United Nations. I believe Uganda will be gaining independence in a matter of weeks.

The Commonwealth of today is an inspiring example of friendly association of nations of diverse races, cultures, creeds and political institutions. Its members may be divided in their approach to some questions, but they are solidly united in their dedication to the cause of peace and to the promotion of better understanding.

Great credit for this outstanding achievement in international co-operation and for the successful launching of these new nations must be given to the United Kingdom. All other nations of the Commonwealth - including Canada, although it is a long time ago in our case - were at one time colonies, and in their progress to nationhood the United Kingdom has given generously and wisely of its aid and guidance.

Unfair Accusations

This being the case, I find it very hard to understand the bitter and sometimes unfair attacks which, from time to time, are made against the United Kingdom on the subject of colonialism. We all know that there are difficulties to be overcome in some territories, but surely the United Kingdom's record of past accomplishment in this field justifies confidence in its intention to guide these peoples to independence.

Unhappily, from this very rostrum and in debates in many other United Nations bodies, the Soviet Union has painted quite another picture of these colonial developments. Soviet spokesmen have chosen to disregard peaceful evolution in the Commonwealth, where freedom and independence have become a living reality for 600 million people since the Second World War.

Canada's own part in developing the Commonwealth prompts us to reject the Soviet Union's criticisms and its claim to be the champion of freedom and independence for subject peoples. Sometimes I marvel at the nerve of the Soviet Union representatives in making this claim.

We urge that the United Nations should view the Soviet attack in proper perspective. In 1960, the Prime Minister of Canada reminded the General Assembly about the position of subject peoples within the Soviet empire. Many millions there cannot today exercise the right of self-determination which the Soviet Government demands for others.

The denial of human rights and fundamental freedoms casts grave doubts on the Soviet Union's whole position on colonialism. When the United Nations is examining situations in many other areas of the world, it should not ignore the areas under Soviet rule. The Charter principles on human rights and self-determination are clearly intended to be universal in their application.

Peace-keeping Operations

I have been dealing with some of the main issues before this Assembly. I turn now to a set of problems which vitally affect the future of this organization.

Of fundamental importance are the United Nations peace-keeping operations in the Middle East, in the Congo and now in West New Guinea. Canada contributes men and resources to all these operations and regards this contribution as a prime responsibility of membership.

In the Congo, the United Nations has assumed its heaviest responsibility. The Secretary-General's programme for national reconciliation there has been favourably received by the parties principally concerned and Canada is encouraged to hope that this plan will go forward smoothly. The elements of success in this difficult situation are a willingness on the part of the Congolese themselves to resolve their difficulties and a readiness on the part of all other states to support the programme.

In this connection, the Commonwealth prime ministers had this to say (and I think it is important coming from that conference): "They took note, in particular, of the proposals relating to the Congo which were recently put forward by the Acting Secretary-General of the United Nations, and they expressed the hope that these would prove to be the basis for a speedy and constructive settlement."

The task which the United Nations undertook in the Congo was one which it simply could not shirk. Members of this Assembly need hardly be reminded, however, that one consequence has been a financial crisis verging on bankruptcy. Canada has supported ad hoc measures for meeting immediate financial needs, but we have also consistently sought to place the financing of United Nations peace-keeping operations on a solid foundation. We have urged that the basis should be collective responsibility.

For this reason, the Canadian Government welcomed the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on July 20, which confirmed that the costs incurred for the United Nations Emergency Force and the Congo Force were "expenses of the organization" within the meaning of Article 17 of the Charter. This authoritative opinion should be endorsed by the General Assembly and should form the basis for financing peace-keeping operations. After all, advisory opinions of the Court ought to be fully respected in the interests of establishing international rules of order.

Basing ourselves on the principle of collective responsibility, we must find a formula for apportioning peace-keeping costs, because this organization has to be in a position to fulfil its Charter purposes.

Stability in the UN

It is equally clear that the chief executive of this organization should have whole-hearted support in the discharge of his responsibilities. Our distinguished Acting Secretary-General has shown great courage, great patience and great wisdom during the course of his interim term of office - which, remember, began at a time when confusion reigned in United Nations affairs. During the past year he has given leadership which has restored confidence in the organization.

The underlying need in United Nations affairs is for stability. In these turbulent times, governments require a steady base for international co-operation and for quiet diplomacy. Most people of the world look hopefully to the United Nations to point the way and provide the means to these ends.

A significant element in achieving stability and a capacity to act effectively is to develop orderly procedures. Our distinguished Past President has made some interesting and useful suggestions for improving Assembly procedures. I welcome the decision to inscribe an item on this subject, and I hope some solution will be worked out.

The greatly increased membership of the Assembly and the length of recent sessions give added urgency to the need for the most efficient working methods. The speed and the efficiency with which we carry out our work is an important factor in determining the degree of public support for the United Nations.

In conclusion may I express my firm conviction that the United Nations has emerged from the uncertainty which clouded the sixteenth session. Confidence and stability are being restored. The atmosphere in the present Assembly is favourable for constructive work.

We now have an opportunity to respond to the improved situation by dealing firmly with the main issues before us. We must take encouragement from the recent progress, however gradual, toward peace. We must maintain a steady United Nations course in that direction, conscious of the undercurrents of danger in our troubled world but confident that we can control them.

We live in an age in which there have been several very important developments. First, there has been the greatest spread of self-government in the history of mankind. Second, there has been the greatest interest in helping developing nations. Most of that interest is idealistic and unselfish. I admit that there is some selfishness in it, but primarily it is idealistic and unselfish. Third, there is the greatest friendliness and understanding among peoples. What a great thing it is for a foreign minister to come here and be able to talk to 30 or 40 other foreign ministers, as well as distinguished representatives of other grades. Never has there been such an understanding of

problems and views of other nations. Fourth, we live in an age in which there has been the most widespread desire for peace of all time. Each of these four developments has been brought about largely by the work of the United Nations -- by the work of this organization. If we keep this fact in mind and retain our optimism and our hope, this session will be the best in the history of the United Nations.

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