



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
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THE PROBLEM OF DISARMAMENT

Statement made in the Security Council, on October 14, 1949, by Mr. L. B. Pearson, Secretary of State for External Affairs, and Chairman of the Canadian Delegation to the Fourth Session of the United Nations General Assembly.

The draft resolution which we have before us, submitted by the representative of the U.S.S.R. has the merit of brevity. It states only:

"The Security Council recognizes as essential the submission by States both of information on conventional armaments and information on atomic weapons."

This resolution is, I assume, intended to be disarming, at least in the sense that it is ingenuous and naïve. But, our need for disarmament and security is too serious for ingenuousness or naïveté. Nor is this matter one for propaganda or even psychological warfare. It is, therefore, I think, important that the Security Council should recognize that what we need now is not mere assurances but the submission of information which can be verified and substantiated, and that this information must itself be but a step toward effective disarmament and the effective organization of collective security for all people.

During the 1930's humanity learned the hard way that unsubstantiated declarations or unenforceable promises on armaments or other matters are inadequate, often give a false sense of security, and indeed, may be dangerously misleading in that sense. The subject of disarmament and collective security is vitally important, and it would be, in our opinion, irresponsible for the Security Council to mislead public opinion on such matters by giving the weight of its support to the thesis that, in present circumstances, value can be attached to unilateral assurances which cannot be verified. Such assurances can only be of value in an international atmosphere of trust and mutual confidence. It would be idle to pretend that we have this now. If we had, the Security Council would not be having this kind of discussion.

It is our view, therefore, that verification of information concerning armaments is essential. This is particularly the case, I believe, regarding information which is put out by régimes which are not responsive, as are free democratic governments, to the internal checks of a free and informed public opinion. Such régimes attempt to deny to the public opinion of their own territories and of the world the facts on which to judge of their true domestic and international policies. That, I submit, is very different from the position in the free democracies, where every man has the right to untrammelled expression, information from a free press, including the right to purchase and read the press of other nations, or to listen to the

radio broadcasts of other nations.

It is perhaps significant that the governments where this situation of freedom exists and which are represented in the United Nations Commission for Conventional Armaments have all approved the working paper submitted on the initiative of the Government of France, which provided for the submission by each nation of information in this field and for the necessary surveys and checks to substantiate such information put forward by themselves and by other countries. The Soviet Union and Ukrainian representatives in this Commission have opposed this proposal for substantiation of information. And that is disturbing, if not, perhaps, surprising. These representatives have denounced the plan for such surveys and substantiation as a scheme to make of the United Nations a branch of what is called an "Anglo-American Intelligence Service". As recently as October 11 in this Council, the representative of the Ukrainian S.S.R. repeated these baseless charges. If this attitude persists, it is difficult for us to see what progress can be made in the limitation and reduction of armaments.

This Soviet Union opposition to the plan for surveys adopted by the Commission in response to the instruction of the General Assembly is justified by an insistence on what is, in our view, an outmoded and old-fashioned concept of unrestricted national sovereignty which would make international progress in this field of disarmament and, indeed, in other fields practically impossible.

So far as the Canadian Government is concerned, we favour the fullest possible interchange of information on armaments and verification of such information. Our French colleague has submitted an alternative proposal to the Soviet Union resolution, and this provides for such verification. I hope that our Soviet Union colleague can prove the sincerity of his resolution by supporting this alternative and by agreeing that any information which his Government may give in this field shall be subjected, like that given by other governments, to impartial international investigation.

Turning now for a moment to the question of information on atomic weapons, it is our opinion that what we need here is a free pooling of substantiated information and, indeed, of facilities and activities in this vitally important field as part of, and this, I think, is essential, a co-operative international effort to control nuclear forces and ensure their use for peaceful purposes alone and to ensure also the effective prohibition of atomic weapons and their elimination from national armaments.

It is a fact, borne out through years of intensive study in the United Nations Atomic Energy Commission and elsewhere, that effective verification of the amount of nuclear materials in being or in production, and the effective prevention of clandestine diversion to secretly stocked weapon can be accomplished, in the present state of our technical knowledge, only through international management and operation of plants handling dangerous quantities of atomic materials and through inspection of other phases such as mining and milling.

My government has long been prepared, and is now prepared, to accept the degree of international co-operation and the necessary limitations on national sovereignty which world security in this field requires. That being our view, we will not be in a position to support any effort to mislead the world on this important matter by pretending that in default of such controls, humanity need not fear the use of atomic weapons if, in fact, that is not the case. But we will certainly support every genuine and effective proposal to remove that fear.

I do not suggest that the Security Council can settle or even adequately consider this complicated question of the control of atomic energy in this discussion. The General Assembly has referred consideration of this question to the Atomic Energy Commission and has asked the six permanent

members of that Commission to consult together in an attempt to break the deadlock which persists in that Commission and which, in our opinion, is primarily due to the attitude adopted by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in respect of what constitutes rigid and adequate control. This matter, will, I think, be discussed before long in the General Assembly, when the issue can be squarely faced. The point, I think, to note here is that the problem which confronts the world regarding atomic energy is not merely one of hearing what governments have to say regarding atomic weapons but of being able to check the accuracy of such information and, above all, of accepting methods for effectively preventing the possession or use of such dread weapons by bringing atomic energy under international control. The Soviet Union, China, France, the United Kingdom, the United States of America and Canada have been consulting together on this matter, and the results of these discussions are likely to be made known shortly to the General Assembly. It would not, I think, be wise for the Security Council to try to by-pass these consultations by taking a hasty and patently inadequate decision in this field in the absence of complete information regarding the results of these consultations.

For these reasons, the Canadian delegation supports the first French resolution, which has been explained to us again this afternoon, calling for the Security Council to approve the working paper submitted to us by the Commission for Conventional Armaments and which provides for a carefully worked out system for the census and verification of national armaments and armed forces.

The Canadian delegation will not be in a position to support the Soviet Union resolution, since it is, as I have attempted to show, dangerously misleading and inadequate. We will, however, be glad to support the second French resolution, which amounts to a re-statement of the Soviet Union resolution in an improved form, making provision that the information submitted by governments shall be effectively substantiated, and recognizing that the essence of the problem of disarmament is effective international control.

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