



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 55/32

Statement by the Minister of National Health and Welfare, and Chairman of the Canadian Delegation to the tenth session of the United Nations, Mr. Paul Martin, made in Plenary Session of the General Assembly, September 26, 1955.

Monsieur le Président, *

En ma qualité de participant à ce débat général qui n'en est encore qu'à ses débuts, permettez-moi de vous présenter, au nom de la Délégation du Canada, nos plus chaleureuses félicitations à l'occasion de votre élection à la présidence de la dixième Assemblée générale des Nations Unies. Je désire aussi vous assurer de notre entière coopération dans l'accomplissement de vos difficiles et importantes fonctions. Il y a trois ans, le distingué Secrétaire d'Etat aux Affaires extérieures, l'honorable Lester B. Pearson, avait le privilège d'occuper le siège de président de la septième Assemblée. Grâce à cette expérience, nous sommes en mesure de savoir combien cette charge peut être onéreuse tout en étant reconfortante.

Par votre intermédiaire, M. le Président, je tiens à rendre un témoignage de reconnaissance à votre compétent prédécesseur, le Dr. Van Kleffens, qui présida avec si grande autorité nos débats de l'an dernier.

I am sure that every member of this Assembly was grieved to learn over the past weekend of President Eisenhower's sudden illness. We welcome today's news that he is progressing satisfactorily and we join the American people in wishing him a complete and speedy recovery. As the great leader of a peace-loving nation, President Eisenhower symbolizes all that is best in the ideals of this Organization. Despite the enormous burden of responsibility which he must carry, his far-seeing wisdom and sober council have been a constant source of encouragement to all peace-loving peoples. I know that I speak for every delegate to this Assembly when I express the fervent hope that President Eisenhower will soon be restored to sound health.

(Translation)

As one who is participating in this debate at a comparatively early stage, may I offer the warmest congratulations of my delegation on your election to the high office of President of this tenth General Assembly. May I also assure you of our complete co-operation in carrying out your difficult and important task. Three years ago, at the seventh Assembly, Canada's distinguished Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Hon. L.B. Pearson, was privileged to occupy the Presidency and, for this reason, we have special reason to know how onerous, yet satisfying, these duties can be.

Through you, Mr. President, I should also like to acknowledge our great debt of gratitude to your able predecessor, Dr. Van Kleffens, who presided with such distinction over our deliberations last year.

All of us gathered here are, I know, acutely aware of the extraordinary importance of this tenth session of the General Assembly. Ten years ago the golden gates of San Francisco, where we signed our Charter of Peace, seemed to open on the bright vista of a future free from conflict. And then the gates to that future suddenly narrowed and a war-weary world has had to live through a decade of division and difficulty.

But once again, ten years later, we are given a fresh opportunity to establish here, on this Island of Manhattan, a new beach head of hope.

So much has been said here and elsewhere about the new atmosphere and the new spirit abroad in the world that I hesitate to speak of it again. Indeed, there is perhaps a danger that the vitality will be squeezed out of this so-called Geneva spirit if it becomes no more than a stale phrase, a muddy conception trotted out to bemuse us, to befog the hard issues we still face, or to cover a multitude of sins -- whether of omission or commission.

This would be a pity, because I believe there is something which can come alive if it is only nourished. If it is too early to say that confidence has been re-established -- or perhaps one should say "established", for international confidence would be something quite new in the history of the world -- one can at least say that there is evident a search for confidence, a struggle for mutual understanding which did not exist before.

It seems to my delegation that, in the dark years through which we have passed, it was not so much the matters at issue which created a sense of frustration and despair but the absence of any real anxiety to solve them. What encourages us most now is not that the issues have been solved -- although the gaps are closing -- but that the leaders of the great powers in particular now seem to be seeking to define the issues and to understand and, if possible, to meet each other's objections.

This may seem to be little enough in the way of progress, but it is a beginning in the right direction. Our very processes of thought have become corrupted by the deadening spirals of propaganda and counter-propaganda in this forum and in lesser councils. So deeply have we been mired, that this evidence of simple honesty and sincerity in our dealings with one another seems in the nature of a fundamental regeneration.

Confronted by the appalling spectre of disaster, the world has sobered up in the nick of time.

at least, we trust that it has. We cannot yet be sure. The test is whether those who bear the chief responsibility for debauching international relations by the manipulation of truth for their own purposes and the denial of civilized ethical traditions have finally renounced their old habits and methods. Unhappily, during the brief history of this organization, appeals to the mind and conscience of the peoples of the world, which is the rightful work of the United Nations, have too often become a sordid effort to trick and seduce mass opinion.

This is no time for recrimination. However it is still a time for caution. I do not suggest that one state or one group of states bears the full responsibility for lowering the standards and frustrating the achievements of the United Nations. Propaganda has inevitably been matched by counter-propaganda which has mistakenly aped the technique of the opponent.

It seems to us that the most hopeful augury for this session then is the fact that both here and in such important organs of the Assembly as the Sub-Committee on Disarmament there is evident the desire to state as straightforwardly as possible positions sincerely held rather than to establish propaganda positions or to score debating points. If we carry on in this way, there is no limit to what we can achieve in the United Nations.

What I have said is, I assure you all, said in humility. There is no cause for smugness on the part of any member or group of members. Nor is it just for us to blame all our errors on the great powers and simply demand that they change their ways. It is the great powers themselves, and particularly those at their summit who met last July in Geneva, who have set us an example and who have given us cause to talk about a new spirit and to hope that it may extend. We must all acknowledge as we do, I'm sure our great debt to those leaders who, have looked squarely at the appalling, brute facts of life and decided that man must not be allowed to extinguish himself when he could be saved by the use of human intelligence.

This, it seems to my delegation, is the challenge of the present Assembly.

The great powers have pointed the way to the relaxation of tension. It behooves the General Assembly to respond to that situation. We must match their moderation and restraint with moderation and restraint. We must seek to match their realism with constant recognition of the complexity of the problems we face, of the fact that truth is unfortunately not revealed to one of us alone, and of the infinite amount of patience which progress requires.

Disarmament

There is no doubt that the question of the reduction of armaments and the control of their use is the subject on which the achievement of peace and the dissipation of tension most depend. Here we are more hopeful than at any time in the past ten years, although by no means unaware of the enormity of the problem yet to be solved.

As a nation associated with the Big Four in the work of the Disarmament Sub-Committee, I feel that my country in a sense speaks not for itself alone, but for many other nations within and outside this organization. From the outset, we have been particularly conscious of the terrifying responsibility which rests on the great powers on whom the peace of the world primarily depends. One wrong decision for them could mean disaster not only for them but for us all. I say this in recognition of the awesome potentialities of present nuclear weapons and without any reference to the even more frightful possibilities the future may hold. We must remember too, of course, that the longer we delay in reaching agreement on disarmament, the greater will be the encouragement to nations not now in possession of nuclear weapons to begin their manufacture.

It is well for all of us to realize then the solemnity of this obligation when we complain or castigate. This is not to say that other powers should refrain from criticism or suggestion. We certainly have not in the past refrained from doing so, on many occasions and we intend to continue criticizing when we think it is justified and making suggestions when we think they might be useful. We trust that during this session all members will have a free opportunity to express their views on a subject which is of as much concern to them as to the major powers. However, we hope, that these contributions will be as constructive as possible and will bear directly on the dilemmas which I believe the great powers are striving with determination and imagination to solve.

I realize that all of us in this Assembly are fully aware of the difficulties to be surmounted in reaching a general agreement on major reduction of armed forces and conventional armaments and the prohibition of atomic weapons. The reductions and prohibitions must be so co-ordinated and scheduled that no nation, at any stage in the process, will have genuine cause to fear that its security is endangered. In the course of our Sub-Committee meetings progress has been made towards an agreed position on this most important question of the timetable or schedule of reductions.

However, the whole question of an effective arrangement to guarantee the fulfilment of any undertaking to prohibit atomic weapons must now be considered in the light of the fact, admitted by all concerned, that secret evasion of any agreement for total prohibition of atomic weapons would in the light of present knowledge be possible, however stringent the control and inspection might be. It was partly in order to meet the difficulties on this key problem of control and inspection that a number of new proposals were advanced at the Geneva meeting.

Premier Faure of France suggested a plan involving budgetary checks on reduction in defence expenditure and the use of savings resulting from disarmament for assistance to under-developed countries. Prime Minister Eden of the United Kingdom, with his great experience in international matters, suggested a preliminary pilot project which would give us useful practical experience in the mechanism of inspection and control. Premier Bulganin of the U.S.S.R. put forward a plan in almost the same terms as a proposal made by the Soviet delegation in the Sub-Committee. This Soviet plan incorporates some important advances on the question of control, although in the view of my Government the Soviet provisions for inspection and control are still inadequate.

Finally, at Geneva, President Eisenhower suggested a step, which might be taken immediately, a step taken to eliminate the possibility of a major surprise attack and to prepare the way for a general disarmament program. Such an agreement would certainly be more easily attainable if we could first remove the overhanging threat of surprise attack. My Government has expressed its great interest in this plan; a plan put forward by the President of the United States for the exchange of military blueprints and for mutual aerial inspection. To us that plan is a gesture of faith and imagination typical of a great man and of his country. We in Canada know the Americans well and, although we often disagree with them, it never occurs to any of us to doubt the fundamental goodness and sincerity of their intentions. And so we were particularly happy to hear Mr. Molotov's tribute to President Eisenhower and we assure Mr. Molotov, as people who know, that his confidence in the sincerity of this American proposal is not mistaken.

I noticed with regret, however, that Mr. Molotov, in his statement in the General Debate on September 23, seems to have misunderstood a comment made by Mr. Dulles the day before on the inevitable connection between a sense of insecurity and fear, on the one hand, and a possibility of disarmament on the other. I would recall to the Soviet delegation that a thought very similar to that expressed by Mr. Dulles occurs in the proposals made by the U.S.S.R. on May 10 of this year in the United Nations Disarmament Sub-Committee.

In the Soviet proposals of May 10, which have now been circulated to all members as a General Assembly document, we read the following paragraph:

"On the other hand, the cessation of the 'cold war' between States would help to bring about a relaxation of international tension, the creation of the necessary confidence in international relations, the removal of the threat of a new war and the establishment of conditions permitting a peaceful and tranquil life of the peoples. This, in turn, would create the requisite conditions for the execution of a broad disarmament programme, with the establishment of the necessary international control over its implementation."

And so I say to the Soviet Delegation, is it not clear from this paragraph that the U.S.S.R. also sees the inevitable connection between insecurity and threat of war and the prospects of disarmament?

We think that the President's plan as well as the other proposals made at Geneva are not necessarily inconsistent with the proposals which have already been advanced in the Sub-Committee and on which, after long and difficult negotiations, some degree of general agreement may be in sight. None of these proposals, in our view, need be mutually exclusive. There is no reason why they might not, all of them, -- modified perhaps, become steps along the road to disarmament.

And as we see it, it is essential that we start quickly on this road, admitting that there must inevitably be experimental phases while we search for the trust and confidence without which disarmament would be impossible. This search will not be successful unless prior agreement on a system of control has been worked out. This will require an enormous amount of careful study and discussion by our technical and constitutional experts before it can be formulated. It would be unwise, therefore, to expect too early decisions.

I have been the representative of my Government in the Sub-Committee talks since their resumption in New York on August 29th and I would not want to conclude my comments on this subject without a reference to the friendly and co-operative spirit exhibited by all delegations on the Sub-Committee in their relations with one another and in their work on the Committee. It would seem that the members of the Sub-Committee have all seriously determined to reach a practicable and mutually acceptable agreement on disarmament.

Atomic Energy

Atomic energy seems to come more and more to the front in our discussions. This is not surprising. A revolutionary source of energy has been tapped and the consequences are yet incalculable. The new power at the disposal of man holds the promise of a changed and perhaps easier relationship with his surroundings and the implications of this extend into almost every field.

This Assembly will have to deal with a number of items relating directly to atomic energy. In the first place, there is the report of the Secretary-General on the International Conference on the Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy held in Geneva from August 8 to August 20. This conference has been widely and quite properly acclaimed as a great success, and I think it is a matter of satisfaction to us all that such a conference was organized by the United Nations. I should like to pay a word of tribute to the Secretary-General personally for his part in making the conference a success. In this, as in so many other things, he and the Secretariat have demonstrated their efficiency and imagination. The conference was, indeed, a fitting implementation of the unanimous resolution on international cooperation in developing the peaceful use of atomic energy adopted in the ninth General Assembly. I am confident that this conference will not be a unique and isolated event but that it will be followed by other meetings and developments which will build on the foundation now established for international cooperation in the peaceful development of atomic energy.

Perhaps I may be permitted to recall at this point that Canada has played a not inconsiderable role in the dramatic search that has led to the harnessing of the restless energy of the atom. I will take occasion later when the appropriate items are being discussed in committee to report on our activities in developing industrial and agricultural uses of radioactive isotopes and such medical applications as the use of Cobalt 60 Beam Therapy in the treatment of cancer as well as what we are doing in the field of radiation detection and its health aspects.

The extensive work which Canada has done on the peaceful uses of atomic energy has made it possible for us now to extend assistance abroad. We have recently arranged to provide the Government of India with an atomic reactor. It has been a source of satisfaction to my country to be able to share our resources in this way with a country to which we are so closely tied in bonds of friendship and partnership. We are happy also that this reactor will benefit our other friends in Asia by reason of the intention of the Indian Government to allow scientists from neighbouring countries to use their facilities.

It is our desire in Canada to co-operate insofar as possible with the great evolutionary movements in South and Southeast Asia. Our admiration for the peoples of these countries has been constantly strengthened by our personal association in the United Nations and the Colombo Plan and more recently with the International Supervisory Commissions in Indochina. I should like to say here a special word for the peoples of Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam for whom so many Canadians have come to have a deep respect and affection in the past year and who, we sincerely hope, will soon be able to take their rightful places in our councils. It seems to us quite wrong that so many of these Asian countries have been arbitrarily prevented from joining us here in the United Nations.

If anyone were to doubt the role which the countries of Asia can play in this Assembly he should study the proceedings of that great conference which took place at Bandung last spring. It was an impressive assembly of distinguished representatives of two continents which brought great credit to those who had initiated that conference. It may not be that we would agree with all of the conclusions of the conference, but we pay tribute to the wisdom and the moderation of men who have preserved their perspective and their proportion through times of

revolutionary change and passionate conflict. It was a great source of encouragement to those of us who believe deeply that the East and the West can work together for our mutual good.

Admission of New Members

There are, I believe, twenty-one outstanding applications for membership in our organization and it is the view of my delegation that the continued exclusion from the United Nations of so many nations of the world is a great handicap. I know that in the minds of many delegates there are great difficulties of a legal and constitutional character which hinder the reaching of any practical solution of this problem. We too are concerned and troubled by these difficulties, but we recognize that the political realities must be faced if we are to break the long deadlock on this question.

I am aware that the Great Powers, because of their world responsibility, may show some concern over the application of this or that particular candidate or group of candidates. I am convinced, however, that this should not necessarily lead them to oppose the desire of what I believe is a substantial majority of members of this Assembly for as quick and as broad an advance towards universality of membership as may be possible.

The basic political reality which we cannot ignore is that if this organization is not truly representative of the great majority of the countries of the world it will be unable to make its full contribution to settling the problems of the world.

In the view of my delegation, we should all be prepared to examine carefully the possibility of the admission at the same time of a very large proportion of the outstanding applicants. There are, of course, particular difficulties with reference to the admission of countries temporarily divided, but we believe that serious consideration might be given to the early admission of the other applicants.

(At this point I should like to question Mr. Molotov's mathematics. In his address on Friday he referred to 16 applicants. According to the figures compiled by my delegation, if we exclude the divided applicants, there remain 17 candidates. So I say with respect but with much confidence, we hope that Mr. Molotov will look into this question again and find it possible to make this essential correction.)

A particular question which under the terms of the Charter comes now to our attention is whether a conference should be convened for the purpose of reviewing the Charter.

Charter Review

Unless there appears to be a general desire to hold a Charter review conference at this time we are inclined to think that there would be no particular advantage in pressing for it. On the contrary, there would probably be considerable advantage in convening that conference after the political differences which divide us have to some extent become reconciled. We might well ask ourselves, at this stage, whether the relaxation in tension would be stimulated as a result of a Charter conference. We do not think that the Charter is a perfect instrument, but we do think that, in a better political climate, we can construct on its solid foundation a more effective instrument than we now have.

Whether we decide to review the Charter or not, the Assembly as we see it should consider the useful and timely proposals put forward by the Secretary-General in his Annual Report on the Work of the Organization concerning the greater

use which might be made of United Nations machinery in the effort to bring about the relaxation of international tension. These suggestions are clearly consistent with the improved atmosphere in which we meet.

Colonial Questions

At this session we have on our Agenda many of what have come to be called the colonial issues. Some of these were referred to last year by my colleague, Mr. Pearson, as "hardy perennials". And as he so aptly observed, "to insist on discussing the same question seven times in seven years does not necessarily bring us seven times nearer the solution." Of course, some of these items, have more recently made their appearance on the Assembly Agenda.

My country doesn't claim any particular competence in discussing colonial matters, but from past experience we have come to the conclusion that the debates in this Assembly on colonial issues do not always produce useful results and in some instances, I fear, have had harmful effects.

The last thing I want to suggest is that discussion should be stifled to avoid an objective airing of legitimate grievances. Canada has frequently in the past asserted its belief that the Assembly should be allowed to discuss any matter of international concern. We do recognize, however, that there are times and circumstances in which discussion may be neither wise nor helpful.

Many of us I think in this room are politicians and proud, I hope, of our craft and our profession. However varied our experiences, we have all learned that politics is the art of the possible. Much of our art is that of timing. We know that there are some political measures which are not right or wrong in the absolute sense. They are so often right only if they come at the right time. I wish to make this point clear so that we will not be accused of a reactionary attitude towards change and progress or of lacking sympathy for those who challenge the existing order of things. For the fact is that in a great many cases we do not quarrel with proposals for change which come before the Assembly, we question only the time chosen. And our opposition is not absolute or timeless either. We do not want to see the United Nations become like the so-called Holy Alliance which set its face against all reforms by arguing that they were never timely.

Assistance to Materially-Underdeveloped Nations:

Among those subjects which can be most usefully discussed at this Assembly are those which are part of the economic and social work of the organization. We have in mind, in particular, questions concerning materially under-developed areas of the world. This is surely a field in which the work of the organization is progressively becoming more efficient and more effective. And we, speaking for Canada do not wish to see this creative work curtailed for there can be no lasting peace so long as ignorance, sickness and poverty are allowed to go unheeded anywhere. We are more than ever convinced that no nation can remain healthy and prosperous in a diseased and bankrupt world. But our dilemma is that some assurance of peace and security is required if all member countries are to make a full contribution to combatting economic and social ills. Nations which want to assist in the development of less fortunate countries often find that for their own security they must limit that assistance in accordance with the burden of national defects which they must also bear.

This is one more reason why we hope that progress in disarmament will continue to a point where more substantial resources can be released for the great international co-operative project of bringing a better life to all citizens of the nations of the world.

Dependent Peoples and Self-Government:

Perhaps the most complex problems which face us each year concern the progress of the dependent peoples towards self-government and independence. Our responsibilities in this field as an organization are an essential part of our Charter. The Charter envisages an orderly advance in the direction of the desired goals. This is in keeping with the Canadian concept, a concept which is based on our own historical development.

We have learned from our own experience that the art of self-government can best be acquired by the peoples of any race in partnership and collaboration with other established states. It is not in Canada's interest, in the interest of the countries of the United Nations, nor, as we see it, of the administering powers themselves to delay unnecessarily any peoples from enjoying the fundamental rights to which the charter refers, and we agree that the interests of the dependent peoples should not be sacrificed to those of the governing power. We believe on the other hand that it is not in the best interests of the peoples concerned that the achievement of these worthy aims should be brought about precipitately.

We must also recognize the complications which international tension imposes on the orderly development of dependent peoples. There is no doubt in our mind that as international tension decreases, the progress of the dependent peoples towards self-government and independence will increase likewise. It is all the more important, therefore, that our intervention in this field should contribute to the easing of tension rather than its prolongation.

Conclusion:

These are some of our thoughts on how we might in specific cases meet the challenge of the tenth session of the Assembly. We trust that no one will consider our suggestions unduly restrictive or detrimental to the aims and aspirations of nations which do not consider themselves immediately concerned with the problems to be solved by the great powers.

If we are to agree that the future of the United Nations is inextricably bound up with the achievement of a lasting world peace, we must surely also agree that no effort should be spared and no opportunity lost by the United Nations, both as an organization and as individual member states, to advance the cause of peace. If the great powers can find ways of bringing about an end to the tensions of the past nine years, if they can agree on programmes for disarmament, for greater international co-operation, then all of us should be prepared to move forward in the same direction.

If those aims are achieved -- and today our hopes are high -- and if both sides involved in other international disputes have concurrently followed the example of the great powers, the prospects for this world organization will be unlimited. There could then be, it seems to us, the real hope of attaining the objectives which have been assigned to the United Nations and which are so much a part of man's universal

aspirations. We need more good deeds of the kind already displayed at this Assembly by our Brazilian colleagues when they offered to accept the Korean prisoners who have so long been in the care of the Indian Government.

We have assumed, and I suppose at one time or another most of us have argued, that the United Nations could only be made to work effectively if great power agreement, one of the basic assumptions of the Charter, could be realized. Today we see signs of hope in that direction. It is, however, as my Government sees it, not sufficient for the United Nations to sit back and wait for the great powers to produce the desired results. The new and encouraging situation in which we find ourselves requires, on the part of every member country a sense of responsibility, a willingness to accept international discipline, and an approach to international issues in a moderate, peaceful and co-operative spirit. Perhaps never before in the short history of this Organization have these requirements been so urgent.

Let me therefore, in full consciousness of the responsibility which is placed upon all of us, urge every delegate to this Assembly to join in seeking the broad objectives I have mentioned and in making the United Nations response to the improved situation which faces us a whole-hearted and substantial contribution to further improvement.

I will conclude by recalling that, two weeks ago this very afternoon, I had the pleasure of visiting the Canadian community of Cobourg in the Province of Ontario and of dedicating a Cairn of Peace erected in commemoration of the first World Ploughing Match held there two years before. I mention this little incident because atop the cairn was a golden plough bearing the finely-wrought inscription: "that man may use the plough to cultivate peace and plenty". A miniature of this trophy, emblematic of the world's ploughing championship, travels annually from one country to another as a messenger of peace and a harbinger of hope and abundance for all mankind. What better symbol could be found for our common hope and for our united determination to help bring about the fulfilment of the ancient Biblical prophecy:

"They shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. And nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore."