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CANADA AND THE UNITED NATIONS

(Statement by Prime Minister John G. Diefenbaker in the General Assembly of the United Nations, New York, on September 23, 1957).

Mr. President, may I, not in a perfunctory manner, congratulate you on behalf of the Canadian Delegation on your election, and offer you our best wishes. Having known you throughout the years, I realize that the General Assembly's action was an expression of its faith in you as a man uniquely qualified for this high office by reason of your long and devoted service to the United Nations. At the same time, may I also pay the tribute of Canada to your predecessor, Prince Wan Waithayakon, who presided over a session of great length and stress with wisdom and skill.

In the last few months there has been a change of government in our country, but I hasten to assure the Assembly at once that, as in all democratic countries dedicated to peace, this does not mean that there has been any change whatsoever in fundamental international principles or attitudes. I say that because I have been asked on a number of occasions where Canada now stands with regard to the United Nations. My appearance here gives public evidence of Canada's stand. Indeed, it is the first time in twelve years that a Prime Minister has been present with our Foreign Minister, which is evidence of the fact that we stand on this question now where Canada has always stood since April 1945, and, I emphasize this, with the support of the party which is now in power. So far as Canada is concerned, support of the United Nations is the cornerstone of its foreign policy. We believe that the United Nations will grow stronger because it represents the inevitable struggle of countries to find order in their relationships and the deep longing of mankind to strive for and attain peace and justice.

We believe, too, that countries like Canada, acting in consultation with other friendly nations, can exert an influence far stronger than would be possible outside the United Nations. Indeed, our views of the value of this organization

are epitomized by the Secretary-General in the introduction to his annual report for 1956-57, in which he stated: "If properly used, the United Nations can serve the diplomacy of reconciliation better than other instruments available to the member states. All the varied interests and aspirations of the world meet in its precincts upon the common ground of the Charter."

The Commonwealth

Canadians have a special pleasure, too, in welcoming Malaya, the newest member of the Commonwealth, as a member of the United Nations. Last year another member of the Commonwealth, Ghana, was elected to membership. We believe that the emergency of these new nations is an indication of growth and expansion of the concept of self-government and of the manner in which nations, one after another, attain independence but still remain members of that association of free nation which is known as the Commonwealth, which represents many different areas, colours and cultures, which has no rules or regulations and no constitution, which is a unity forged by the sharing of a heritage of common ideals and a love of freedom under law.

Over the last years, hundreds of millions of people in Asia and Africa have achieved independence and sovereignty, for which the credit must go to the statesmen of the United Kingdom. It is incredible that the British should be described here on occasion as "imperial and colonial masters", in view of this far-seeing policy which grants self-government so widely, and I am confident that our friends from Ghana and Malaya would be glad to invite comparison with what has happened to Hungary and to many other freedom-loving nations which have been subjugated by the U.S.S.R. in the past four decades.

Relations with United States

But our membership in the Commonwealth, while fundamental to our destiny, does not detract in any way from the closeness and neighbourliness of our relationships with the United States. We are joined with our neighbours in the United States by what I have called before our "built-in stabilizers" for unity, our traditional respect for the rights of man and our unswerving dedication to freedom. I think it is clearly established and is irrefutable that, if the United States was aggressive and sought territorial advantage and fomented war, as its enemies contend, Canada would not have maintained its existence as an independent nation.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization

Then there is another phase of our policy - Canada's membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, which in our opinion constitutes a major bulwark against the forces of aggression and to which Canada will adhere regardless of threats from whatever source they may emanate.

If the notes delivered by the U.S.S.R. since July 4 to our friends in the Federal Republic of Germany, Turkey, the United Kingdom, France and Norway are indicative of any new trend in Soviet policy, then in our opinion there is more need today than ever before for the maintenance of the unity of NATO. The repetition of spurious propaganda by the U.S.S.R. that the existence of NATO is a threat to world peace and that the existence of NATO is the reason why permanent peace has not been established is a travesty of reason. Canada wants peace, and if NATO had aggressive designs anywhere in the world, Canada would not remain a member of that organization. Believing as we do, we intend to continue to support it with all the power at our command.

Disarmament

Now I intend to say a few words with regard to the question of Disarmament, because it is a matter of first importance to this Assembly. After nine years of stalemate after San Francisco, in 1954 Canada joined in co-sponsoring resolutions to get resolutions on disarmament before the Disarmament Commission of the United Nations. If that was necessary then, it is more necessary today, when the total amount being expended for war materials for defence, mobilization and manpower totals some \$85 billion per year.

What mankind fears today more than anything else is that war will come about suddenly and precipitately, without warning and without there being any opportunity for defence. The whole question of surprise attack is of pre-eminent importance to people everywhere in the world. Until the Second World War took place, a surprise attack was almost impossible. No nation could conceal the mobilization of its forces, but today, when a nuclear attack could be mounted in a few hours and secrecy maintained until the atomic bombers appeared on the radar screens, the danger of a secret and surprise attack is one of the things that all mankind fears. And the danger of a secret and surprise attack has been multiplied with the potential development of the intercontinental ballistic missile.

The fear of surprise attack is the cause of the major tension of these days. For that reason there is a sombre urgency about the work of this General Assembly. Experience has taught us that no country ever possesses a monopoly of any device. What one country has today, the

other nations will have tomorrow, and the day is not far distant, if this continues, when there will be armouries of these rockets. While a few years ago a new era was introduced by the development of nuclear weapons, today an even more frightening and awful time faces mankind. That is why I say that it is a matter of sombre urgency that this Assembly should act, and act effectively, if we are to bring about the control of the use of this dread menace, the ultimate engine of destruction.

While it is only the great powers that can afford the vast expense to build these earth-spanning missiles, small nations are concerned. Canada is vitally concerned, for we are the closest neighbour of the United States and the U.S.S.R. Our strategic position in the world, embracing as it does the Arctic area in which Canada owns and exercises sovereignty over great areas, makes Canada one of the most vulnerable nations in any future war.

I do not intend today to deal in any detail with the terms of the disarmament proposals that were put before the Sub-Committee of the Disarmament Commission by the four Western powers, but I feel it well to refer for but a moment to the question of suspension of tests of nuclear and atomic weapons.

The suspension as provided for in the Western proposals would be for a year, conditional on a convention on disarmament being entered into, and this would be renewable for a second year if satisfactory progress had been made towards a cessation of the production of nuclear weapons. But there are well-intentioned people -- many people -- who believe that a ban on atomic tests is a panacea for all the ills of mankind. In all the clamour there has been over this, some have lost sight of the fact that the suspension of tests is not going to stop the stockpiling of nuclear weapons or the atomic armaments race. The only way to do this is to divert fissionable material from the manufacture of weapons to peaceful uses, and the Western proposals very sensibly linked an agreement to do this with a continuation of the suspension of the tests.

While treating the suspension of nuclear tests as a matter for immediate action, the 11-point Western proposals made such suspension dependent on the establishment of nuclear watching posts in the territories agreed on of the United States, the United Kingdom, the U.S.S.R. and other countries. It must be admitted too that the need for inspection is not fully understood by many well-meaning people, largely because of a popular view that atomic or hydrogen explosions can be detected anywhere in the world. According to the scientific opinions that I have had, that is not so.

As far as we are concerned in North America, the danger of surprise attack on or from North America would be through the Arctic regions. Canada and the United States have no aggressive designs against the U.S.S.R. or any other nation. We have nothing to fear from inspection of the Arctic regions, and I speak now for Canada when I say that. We unequivocally render and will continue to render available for inspection all our northern and Arctic areas.

In addition to inspection, the other Western proposals also included in the first stage a limitation on the size of armed forces; a ban on the use of nuclear weapons except in the case of defence; and "international supervision" to ensure that the production of fissionable materials should be for peaceful uses only.

We believe that these proposals are eminently fair and workable, but for some reason the U.S.S.R. has cavalierly and contemptuously refused to consider them seriously. Surely they must realize that in the climate of distrust and fear which exists paper declarations, however pious their purpose, are not acceptable and that a prerequisite to disarmament must be an adequate system of inspection and control. The promise to disarm and to control the use and production of nuclear weapons without effective inspection to ensure that the promise is kept makes a caricature of reality.

We believe that disarmament unsupervised by inspection will be dangerous to those nations which have the habit of keeping their pledged word.

Believing that inspection is the essence, I issued at the time of submission of the Western proposals a statement including the following:

"... The Canadian Government has agreed, if the U.S.S.R. will reciprocate, to the inclusion of either the whole or a part of Canada in an equitable system of aerial inspection and will do its utmost to ensure that the system works effectively. We consider that a useful start in providing safeguards against surprise attack could be made in the Arctic areas".

On the other hand, the U.S.S.R. has produced a multitude of propaganda plans for disarmament but always on its terms and always on the basis that effective inspection is out of the question. It generates hope in mankind; it refuses on its part, though, to co-operate in any way except on its terms.

The Western nations have gone more than half-way on the subject of disarmament from the beginning of the meetings of the Sub-Committee. For some reason the Soviets have refused to give any ground and insist on its

programme. And I say with all the sincerity that I can bring to my words that we in Canada, in the strategic position in which we are, are willing to go to the utmost limit of safety and survival to bring about disarmament. What value is there in the undertaking of the Soviets not to use atomic or hydrogen weapons for a period of five years unless full inspection is possible and provided for?

Disarmament proposals without inspection are, in our opinion, meaningless. Inspection is the key, and I ask this simple question because I think the proposition is as simple as this. I ask the representative of the U.S.S.R.: Why do you oppose effective inspection? If you have nothing to hide, why hide it? I think in general that that represents the thinking of free men everywhere.

There were hopes expressed in the month of June last and earlier that the disarmament talks would be effective. They ended without agreement, but they did not entirely fail. The positions of both sides were brought closer. I think that that Sub-Committee must continue to operate. There have been suggestions that the Sub-Committee membership should be broadened. We would be in accord with any suggestions that its membership be broadened providing that that step would lead or even give hopes of leading to a quicker and better solution of this grave problem. And we go further than that. Canada is prepared to withdraw from the Sub-Committee. It has worked on it from the beginning. It will do anything at all, take any stand whatever short of its safety and its survival in order to bring about what must come if mankind is to continue to live -- and that is a measure, and a considerable measure, of disarmament.

We consider that a salutary effect might be achieved by adding other powers; they may be capable of rendering assistance with the processes of seeking agreement that we have not been able to achieve. But let me say this: That Geography alone should not be the basis for choosing additional members, for all members are not equally equipped to contribute towards the agreement for which we all devoutly hope. We recognize the anomalies of our own status as a permanent member of this Sub-Committee. We know that, because of the fact that we are unable to produce, we have not stood on equal terms with the other members, for we lack that responsibility and direct interest which should be of the essence of membership. I will say no more of that.

United Nations Emergency Force

I do want to say something, however, in connection with one other matter that is of vital importance today -- the United Nations Emergency Force. United Nations Emergency Force has had a stabilizing and tranquillizing influence in

the mideast. I am not a newly convinced convert to such a force, for I brought the suggestion for it before the House of Commons of Canada in January of 1956. I argued at that time, that such a force could prevent the outbreak of war in the area in question, which today is served by that Force.

The Canadian Government is naturally deeply gratified that United Nations Emergency Force has had so large a measure of success in its endeavours, and Canada is willing to continue its contribution as long as it is considered necessary by the United Nations.

Canadians have a special pride in the fact that a Canadian, General Burns, has done his duty in so superb a manner as to have earned the approval and praise of the most objective of observers. He has done his work at personal sacrifice. My hope is that he will be able to continue to serve as commander even though his own personal interests, which he has always placed in the background, might otherwise dictate.

Canada is not unaware of the fact that Canadian troops make up some 1,200 of the total personnel of 6,000. I repeat what I said a moment ago: Canada will continue to be a strong supporter of the continuance of United Nations Emergency Force until its work is done.

We then come to the question of expenditures. The question of providing the necessary monies for the continuance of the Force suggests that an assessment among all nations of the United Nations would be in keeping with the service to peace to which this Force has contributed so much and with the declarations of the Charter of San Francisco.

I go further and say that out of the experience of United Nations Emergency Force it should be possible to evolve a system by which the United Nations will have at its disposal appropriate forces for similar services where ever they may be required. The creation of United Nations Emergency Force has provided a pilot project, if I may use that expression, for a permanent international force. Malignant diseases, however, are not cured by tranquillizers, and for that reason I still hold the view that only by the establishment of a permanent United Nations force -- and I realize the uncertain and faltering steps that must be taken to achieve this -- can many of the hopes of San Francisco be achieved.

United Nations Must Succeed

I now wish to comment on the United Nations itself. I was present in a humble capacity at San Francisco in 1945. I believe in the United Nations, not because it has always succeeded but because it must succeed; it must go on from strength to strength or we perish. But that does not mean that bringing before the Assembly weaknesses now shows any desire to undermine or corrode it. I believe that we do not serve its high purposes by pretending that all is well when it is clear to everyone that all is not well. I do not take the cynical view that the United Nations is a failure. There have been many successes in its endeavours to keep the peace. But the major question today is whether we have had enough success for the terrifying needs of this age. We have had successes and we have had failures, but it is questionable whether, under the shadow of the dread menace of the latest nuclear weapons, we can afford any more major failures.

I spoke of the work of the last session. Much solid work was done at that session, and many new members deployed their forces in the cause of peace. But the United Nations found itself incapable of finding a solution to the Hungarian question. That was not because of the Charter; that was in spite of the Charter. The ineffectiveness of the action taken last year by the Assembly to assure justice to the Hungarians arose because of the existence of double standards in the United Nations membership rather than from any weakness in the Charter. But there are no double standards provided for in the Charter. Double standards are found not in the Charter but in the performance of some of its members. Some abide by the decisions; others do not. And there is no use in pretending that in all cases we, through the United Nations, can force recalcitrant members to behave as the Charter dictates. It is equally foolish to believe that we would have such power if the Charter were amended.

I believe that if the United Nations is to maintain its capacity to exercise an ameliorating influence on the problems of mankind it must be a flexible instrument. The United Nations must not become frozen by the creation of hostile blocs, which will have the result of stultifying efforts to find real and sensible solutions. There has been at the present session, I think, quite a movement against the bloc system, particularly in the votes that are being cast. It is healthy that member states should group together on a basis of common interest, consult with one another and, at times, adopt common policies. That is common sense. With an expanding membership, there is much to be said for like-minded nations adopting like-minded positions and putting them forward, provided that the groups do not become blocs which would strangle the

independent thinking of their members and prevent the solution of problems on considerations of merit. For blocs tend to create counter-blocs and, in the end, defeat their purposes.

I am not accusing any bloc. But it is a fact that new groups have been formed in the United Nations which are perhaps the inevitable result of older blocs that were created earlier.

As far as Canada is concerned, it is the firm determination of my delegation to resist the trend towards bloc development. Canada is a party to many associations, all of which we value highly -- with our colleagues in the Commonwealth, with our allies in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, with our neighbours in the Americas and across the Pacific. We shall work together with these nations when we share common views or policies. But we will not be a party in any way to any bloc which prevents us from judging issues on their merits as we see them.

In conclusion, I profess the profound hope that we in the United Nations will dedicate ourselves anew to the high purposes and hopes of twelve years ago.

The United Nations will be true to the principles of the Charter when every nation, however powerful, does not permit itself the luxury of violating its principles or flouting its decisions. I remember as yesterday the inscription over the doorway to the hall at San Francisco where the United Nations had its beginning: "This monument eloquent of hopes realized and dreams come true", which mankind hoped would be the achievement of its supreme task -- the establishment of a just and lasting peace. That is still the responsibility of the United Nations. Past failures or frustrations or cynicism must not be permitted to impede us in bringing about disarmament and an end to the suicidal armaments race. Past Assemblies have earned names descriptive of their major activities. There was the "Palestine Assembly", the "Korean Assembly". Mankind would breathe easier if this Assembly might be known in future years as the "Disarmament Assembly".

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