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STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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DISARMAMENT MEANS NEGOTIATION

A statement by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. Howard Green, to the United Nations General Assembly on October 11, 1960.

I do not need to remind this Assembly that disarmament is the most important question facing us; in that regard, I agree with the statement to that effect made by Premier Khrushchov. Nor do I need to emphasize my country's serious concern for the earliest possible solution to this pressing problem.

Canada's nearest neighbours are the U.S.A. on the south and the U.S.S.R. to the north; in other words, we happen to live between the two nations which would be the main antagonists in a nuclear war. We are directly and vitally affected by any increase in world tension.

Under these conditions, it will be easily understood by all delegations why Canada is anxious to see a thorough discussion of all the disarmament items on the agenda.

Premier Khrushchov said in his remarks that the representatives of the Western powers do not find time for discussion of disarmament. This, I submit, is not an accurate statement. I believe that every member of this Assembly stands ready to discuss disarmament now.

The immediate purpose of the Assembly, however, is not to enter upon a substantive discussion of disarmament today but to consider a procedural question raised in the draft resolution submitted by the Soviet Delegation in Document A/L/311. We are dealing here not with the merits of disarmament but only with the question of allocation. The U.S.S.R. is proposing that the UN General Assembly decide to allocate to plenary meeting the Soviet item on disarmament, which reads as follows: "Disarmament and the situation with regard to the fulfilment of the UN General Assembly Resolution 1378 (XIV) of November 20, 1959, on the question of disarmament".

The effect of the proposal now made by the U.S.S.R. would be to change the allocation made by the General Committee. After a thorough discussion, that Committee recommended, by a very decisive majority, that this item should be allocated to the First Committee. We believe such a recommendation to have been the correct one.

Negotiation the Key

In the discussion in the General Committee and earlier in the meeting of the Disarmament Commission which took place in mid-August, the Canadian Delegation drew attention to the basic truth - and I point out today that this is the basic truth - that, if the deadlock in disarmament is to be ended, negotiations must be resumed. The key to the situation is negotiation. I suggest that the main task of the fifteenth UN General Assembly is to bring about negotiations, not just speeches but negotiations.

The practical way to bring about a resumption of negotiations is by considering all the various disarmament items in the First Committee. Discussion there is more informal than in plenary session. Ideas can be more easily exchanged; questions can be asked and answers given spontaneously. The whole atmosphere is more conducive to reaching agreement.

Plenary Debate Mere Repetition

Moreover, a debate on disarmament in plenary would merely be a repetition of the general debate which has been under way for nearly three weeks; practically every speaker in that general debate has dealt with the question of disarmament. What useful purpose will it serve to begin another general debate after the debate that has been going on for three weeks?

It is interesting to recall that one of the main arguments used in the General Committee in support of allocating this item to plenary was that heads of state would be taking part in the debate and that it would be inappropriate for them to do so in the First Committee. I could never understand why they could not appear in that Committee, but that was the argument. It was never a valid contention, and it certainly is meaningless now, with the last heads of state departing.

By the end of this week I predict that there will be no more heads of state in New York than you could count on the fingers of one hand. But, if they want to come back later in this session to consider the results of the First Committee's deliberations, there is no reason why that could not be arranged.

Soviet Item Not Unique

Then it should be remembered that this Soviet item is not the only one dealing with disarmament. Premier Khrushchov mentioned no other item on disarmament, but his is not the only one. Yet an attempt is being made to single it out for discussion in plenary, leaving the others to the First Committee. Each one of these other items on disarmament is of equal importance. For example, the report from the Disarmament Commission of the UN contains the resolution adopted unanimously in that Commission less than two months ago, after a first-class discussion which lasted three days.

One paragraph in that resolution passed by the Disarmament Commission in August goes to the very heart of the problem now facing us in disarmament. That paragraph reads as follows: "The Disarmament Commission considers it necessary and recommends that, in view of the urgency of the problem, continued efforts be made for the earliest possible continuation of international negotiations to achieve a constructive solution of the question of general and complete disarmament under effective international control."

That is one key to the problem we are facing today. A third item connected with disarmament has been submitted by India, dealing with the suspension of nuclear and thermo-nuclear tests. Certainly, to all non-nuclear nations, including Canada, this resolution is of great importance. Our stand has been that there should be no more such tests.

The fourth disarmament item comes from Ireland, calling for the prevention of the wider dissemination of nuclear weapons. The aspect of the disarmament problem raised by that resolution has great urgency, for, if no agreement is reached on disarmament at an early date, it may be - it just may be - too late to stop the spread of such weapons.

Discussion Belongs in First Committee

It is our view that all four disarmament items, including the Soviet item, should be dealt with in the First Committee and should be the first business of that Committee. There is no reason why those discussions on disarmament should not start later this week. Such action holds the best hope of any progress being made on the disarmament question during the present session. I am sure that will be the case, because the Chairman of that Committee is our good friend and colleague, Sir Claude Correa.

Whether the four items are brought together under a single heading and discussed as a unit or remain separate items, I presume some latitude would be allowed in the discussion; for example, that a representative discussing the report of the Disarmament Commission would not be ruled out of order if he were to express his government's concern regarding nuclear tests. In any event, these four items are related - closely related. Their separation, at least for purposes of discussion, would be highly artificial - even though each item will probably give rise to a separate resolution - as has happened in other years. What would be the sense of discussing the Soviet item in plenary and the other disarmament items in Committee?

Canada is particularly interested in following up the resolution of the Disarmament Commission, which urged the earliest possible continuation of international negotiations on disarmament. As a member of the Ten-Nation Disarmament Committee, we know that considerable progress was made during the sittings of that Committee.

Evidence of Compromise

This is a fact which has not been generally recognized. However, it is clearly evident from a comparison of the original disarmament plans submitted in March by the two sides with those brought forward in June.

The revised plan of each side clearly reflected an effort to meet the views of the other and brought the two sides appreciably closer to agreement on many points. The progress made in that Ten-Nation Disarmament Committee should not be thrown away. Today is no time for recrimination and I do not intend to stir up trouble, but I still do not understand why the Eastern five on that Committee decided to walk out of that Committee just as new Western proposals were about to be introduced. I have always thought that was a most unwise action.

In the course of the general debate, a number of suggestions have been made for improving work of the Disarmament Committee. Canada, for example, has put forward the idea of providing a neutral chairman, and believes that other nations should be invited to assist with technical studies. The First Committee is the proper place to discuss all such suggestions.

Every nation represented in this Assembly stands to gain by disarmament and this is particularly true of the non-nuclear powers. The very fact that the non-nuclear powers cannot defend themselves against the nuclear powers makes disarmament a matter of life and death for them. The situation of the non-nuclear powers today is intolerable. They have a special contribution to make in the discussion of this problem. I suggest that contribution can now best be made in the deliberations of the first Committee addresses itself to the immediate task of finding a way for the resumption of disarmament negotiations.

There are so many constructive, worthwhile things to do in the world today, so much development is required in every nation in the world, so many peace-time problems to solve.

There is plenty to keep all nations busy, both large and small, without spending so much energy and wasting such vast resources on preparations for a nuclear war.

The key to unlock the door to this happier age is disarmament, and for disarmament negotiating is essential. I suggest that today there is no other road to relaxation of world tension.
