

# THE ATOMIC DILEMMA

IS there a solution to the atomic dilemma? This was the question discussed by a "Question Mark" panel heard from YA stations on May 31. Members of the panel were Professor M. L. E. Oliphant, Director of the Research School of Physical Sciences at the Australian National University; the Very Rev. C. W. Chandler, Dean of Hamilton; and E. V. Dumbleton, Editor of the "Auckland Star." The chairman was John Reid, Lecturer in English at Auckland University College. Below is a condensed transcript of the discussion. The full discussion is to be broadcast from the YZs.

**REID:** I wonder if we could begin by defining the dilemma.

**Oliphant:** The world faces a situation now which it has never had to face in the past. Not only have we before us weapons of mass destruction—we have to face a different kind of situation where the whole of the world is involved, whereas practically only soldiers were involved in the past.

**Chandler:** I rather feel the problem is fundamentally a problem of man, that man is incapable in his own strength to find a way out.

**Dumbleton:** Each nation feels that its survival is dependent on its being the strongest. That is the source of the atomic race, and the dilemma is whether this feeling can be overcome.

**Oliphant:** Self-preservation nowadays can never mean going to war.

**Chandler:** I think the first nation to be utterly disarmed would be impregnable.

**Dumbleton:** We would be foolish and unrealistic to underestimate the strength of national feeling.

**Reid:** Is there a practical solution?

**Oliphant:** I just don't believe the banning of atomic weapons offers any solution. The use or misuse of weapons of war is determined during an all-out war entirely by the strategy of the moment.

**Chandler:** The general consensus of public opinion, brought behind those who at least have power to move toward the banning of this weapon, is good. If we approach the banning of this weapon we are going one step nearer the ultimate banning of war completely.

**Dumbleton:** We talk about banning the weapon. Who is to ban it?

**Oliphant:** The general idea is that some solemn convention should be entered into by all nations whereby they agree not to use atomic weapons or similar weapons of mass destruction. But such solemn agreement, unless accompanied by some guarantees that the weapons will not be used, could never be accepted by any responsible government as giving safety to its people.

**Reid:** Surely the matter is complicated, too, by the fact that the United States argues that so long as it has a stockpile of atomic bombs that is a deterrent? Isn't that a relevant consideration, that you have the fear of war which leads men to concentrate on weapons of war?

**Dumbleton:** I think that is an illusion. Suppose that the United States has 50,000 atomic bombs and Russia has 10,000. The discrepancy is of no importance if either side can devastate the other with 500.

**Chandler:** Man has been trying to find practical solutions to all sorts of things for centuries. Nations have been trying to out-vie each other in the matter of armaments, and this balance of power has led us nowhere. What is called for is a tremendously revolutionary opinion to be taken up and captured by the world. Every age calls for its individual

voice. Somebody has almost got to die for the people today. This is fundamentally a moral and spiritual problem.

**Oliphant:** This is exactly the situation that the world has faced for the last 2000 or more years. Great religions all teach morality in its widest sense, but not one of them has yet prevented war. Indeed, leaders of religions always find some reason for giving war their blessing. I just cannot feel that we can appeal to things that have failed in the past to find solutions to our problems. Morality and ethics, the teachings of religion, are perhaps basic to any solution. But there is an old saying, God helps those who help themselves, and unless man makes the effort he is not going to find the solution elsewhere.

**Reid:** We are asked to find some kind of solution. Is there any practical method the nations of the world could engage in order to reach at least some interim solution?

**Oliphant:** If some way could be found for asking the people of the world what they would agree to in order to find a solution I believe that they would unreservedly and overwhelmingly vote for some form of central world government with powers which are limited to the prevention of war and to the promotion of international understanding, but above all things possessing the only armies, the only organs of police for the preservation of law and order. We adopt that solution to the problem of crime.

**Dumbleton:** That is an ideal solution, but I don't think it is practical. When you set up an international authority with limited powers in fact you have made it the strongest power in the world. Then if the controllers are corrupted by power we would have no idea of the consequences.

**Chandler:** Wherever the power may be you have the personal element still there. Ultimately, I think it lies in the people's hands. When the people can unitedly be brought to say "No" perhaps something will happen from the top.

**Oliphant:** These things are very often determined by emotion rather than reason. I agree that it is wrong to prosti-

tute science. On the other hand, if my own country were involved in war, whether it were right or wrong, I would take the old-fashioned attitude that her preservation was greater than I was. That is a very natural reaction that we have got to take into account. We have got, therefore, to try and build up in the limited sphere of the prevention of war that same loyalty to the world as a whole men now feel towards their own nation.

**Dumbleton:** Between the wars earnest endeavours to bring about disarmament broke down because they came up against the mistrusts of nations. What practical reason is there for believing the rulers of Soviet Russia or of the United States would yield up their sovereignty in a matter of this kind to a joint body which would have power over the survival of each nation in the future?

**Chandler:** The development of the hydrogen bomb may be the means of a tremendous revival. Common man's opinion is being marshalled. There are indications among the religions of Christendom that they feel they have got to find a solution. Everything that Oliphant has said regarding the churches' failure in the past is substantially true. We have come to terms far too readily with the State. But I do think that in this dilemma today it is either down and out or must spell a complete revival.

**Reid:** Is the real problem the problem of making the voice of the people articulate and real?

**Oliphant:** Countries used to the expression of democratic feeling could express these feelings democratically. But why not accept the fact that for the moment the peoples of Russia or of China have to speak through a government which is dictatorial in many ways. That should not prevent us from negotiating with them. In time I think the thing would straighten itself out. Ideologies are insignificant in comparison with the survival of man.

**Dumbleton:** The assumption that the peoples of the world are against the use of atomic weapons I think is correct, as it is correct to say that people are

against sin. How much are they against sin, against atomic weapons? If you put in the power of an international body, the power of life and death you give them every other power. One of the fundamental causes of friction and strain is the maldistribution of wealth, particularly in Asia—scores of millions undernourished and, by contrast, Australia and New Zealand exceedingly fortunate in every respect. Supposing your world authority decides that to ease this pressure it is expedient, right and Christian to move 50,000,000 Chinese or Japanese into Australia and 10,000,000 into New Zealand. Would we agree if we could by agreeing relieve ourselves of the fear of the atomic bomb?

**Oliphant:** I think we would if the alternative was extermination.

**Dumbleton:** I don't think that if a referendum were taken there would be no doubt whatever about the answer.

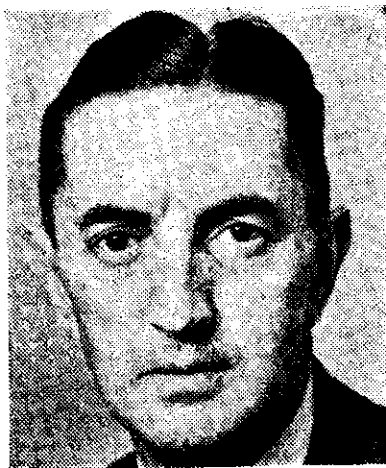
**Reid:** The point appears to be to what extent the present means of communicating and sifting out such things have been successful. In what way has the United Nations been deficient in this regard?

**Oliphant:** People haven't yet sat round a table and discussed dispassionately this whole problem. Yet I believe that in the United Nations there is the nucleus of a body which can fulfil these functions. If the United Nations could be given a real police force and the other nations agreed to hand over their authority in those matters to the United Nations I believe a solution would be found.

**Chandler:** I speak really as a Christian absolutist. I believe neither the United Nations or any other body of men will ultimately achieve the end we desire unless there is a tremendous weight of public opinion behind them. If only the Church could be galvanised into definite action and courageous outspokenness much good would come.

**Dumbleton:** I don't want to appear out of sympathy with Oliphant or Chandler. I am in almost complete sympathy with all they have said or with their motives. But harm is done by oversimplifying the problem. I cannot, in the light of what has happened before, think that a practical solution has yet been offered. Hope lies in a relaxation of international tension. The hydrogen bomb particularly has done one thing. It will make governments more cautious.

**Reid:** I think the members of the panel have agreed that this is an international problem of tremendous magnitude, and that the conscience of the average man needs to be stimulated and kept alerted as to the great crisis that faces him and all his fellow human beings.



E. V. DUMBLETON



DEAN CHANDLER



PROFESSOR OLIPHANT