

sanctions on Rhodesia. Moreover, they claim, South Africa pretends to exercise its membership on the basis of a political system that excludes the majority of its citizens from participation in national and international life. In such circumstances, expulsion cannot be in conflict with the broad objectives of universality.

The upshot of the debate has been stalemate. The Security Council has refused to approve resolutions calling for South Africa's expulsion, but the General Assembly has effectively suspended South Africa's participation in that body by rejecting the credentials of its delegation, and South Africa has lost its membership in most of the Specialized Agencies, where the writ of the Security Council does not run.

To argue in favour of the principle of universal membership implies a willingness to accept the obligations of membership, including a responsible measure of participation, even when UN decisions appear to be biased or irregular. With rare exceptions, resolutions of the General Assembly do not create formal legal obligations for states and they are not obliged to support activities associated with them, but resolutions adopted by large majorities carry a certain moral weight and will usually deserve serious consideration by members that may have objected to certain aspects of them, especially if negotiations in good faith have preceded their adoption. In the case of the Specialized Agencies, the adoption of politically-biased decisions may legitimately lead to protest, such as refusal to participate in the activities at issue, but the withholding of assessed contributions on this account, as certain Western members of UNESCO have done, is disturbing. Distortion of the rules of procedure and of democratic debate in order to gain propaganda voting victories on issues of universal concern understandably provokes angry and bitter reaction, but no state or group of states is likely to gain by the curtailment or dissolution of the specialized activities of the UN.

B. "Politicization"

The impression has grown in the last few years that the UN system is overly "politicized". This is a serious matter, for much of the most useful work of the United Nations is devoted to subjects that are not political by nature even though the United Nations itself is a highly political organization.

Political discussion is nothing new to the UN family of organizations. One of the primary purposes of the UN system is, after all, to provide a forum for international political debate. Furthermore, "political" issues are, in many instances, the legitimate concern of Specialized Agencies and conferences. Membership questions, for example, and resolutions concerning observer status, are the responsibility of each agency, as are items referred to them by the General Assembly, such as the participation of an assistance to "national liberation movements". Nor can it be concluded that the basic nature and programs of the Specialized Agencies and technical conferences have been altered, although there is danger of this happening in UNESCO and the ILO.