

the assumption that the rules of procedure to which they were accustomed at home were accepted throughout the world in all legislative bodies. They were therefore often at a loss to understand why representatives from other countries did not immediately accept a proposal that the United Nations adopt as a rule of procedure, a rule of procedure of the national legislature with which they were familiar.

All Members of the U.N. have by now come to realize that there are scarcely any rules of procedure which are accepted in all legislative bodies throughout the world; that none of us can hope to solve the procedural problems of the U.N. by trying to persuade the U.N. to adopt the parliamentary procedures to which we are each accustomed, but that, instead, all of us must pool our knowledge and intelligence in an effort to find for the U.N. the procedures which are most appropriate for it.

The one serious obstacle which still makes difficult complete agreement among all Members of the U.N. on further reforms in the procedures, practices and organization of the Assembly is that there are still misconceptions in the minds of some Members of the U.N. of the fundamental purpose which rules of procedure serve in legislative bodies in which more than one political party is represented.

Those who are accustomed to a multiple-party system realize that the main purpose of many of the most important rules of procedure in a legislative body is to protect the minority against the majority. These parliamentary rules of procedure are self-denying ordinances which the majority accepts—self-imposed limitations. Perhaps one reason the majority party in a national legislature accepts these limitations of its power to ride rough-shod over the opposition in the legislature is that it knows that it will some day be the opposition.

The essential basis of democracy in a democratic legislature is that the majority preserve respect and defend the rights of the minority. But, while the minority has rights which the majority must respect, another basic principle of democracy is that the majority also has rights which the minority must respect. The minority in a legislature has the right to insist that there be adequate discussion before the majority presses a proposal to a vote, but the minority has not the right to carry obstruction to such lengths that the parliamentary machine cannot carry out its task. After all, the work of the United Nations must be carried on.

There is nothing in this whole business of reforms in the procedures, practices and organization of the Assembly which should divide the Members of the U.N. Here we are not dealing with questions of substance but with questions of procedure. Here we have not only the common aim, the preservation of peace, but the common desire that the General Assembly of the United Nations should operate with dignity and despatch.

The interests of all the Members of the U.N. in the future discussions of reforms in the procedures, practices and organization of the General Assembly are identical. Differences exist and will continue to exist on how the Members of the Assembly can best accomplish the end which they all have in view. But if those who advocate changes and those who oppose them each give reasoned statements in support of their positions, there is always a very good chance that the views can be reconciled.

It is only when reasoned statements are not given that there is no possibility of reconciliation.