

The special assembly on Palestine, which met a year ago, was summoned, we should not forget, at the request of the United Kingdom to make recommendations for the future government of Palestine.

This special assembly established a committee which went to Palestine, investigated the position and reported to the regular assembly which met last September. In preparing its report the committee does not appear to have had any reason to assume that the United Kingdom intended to withdraw from Palestine in the immediate future.

Thus when the general assembly began in the autumn to consider the report of the special committee, the majority of whose members had recommended a plan of partition with economic union, it was found that an important feature of the plan was a suggestion that the mandatory power should continue to administer the territory during a two-year transitional period. The assembly also had before it, however, an announcement greatly altering the situation, but the reasons for which I am sure we all appreciate, that the United Kingdom government would terminate the mandate and withdraw from Palestine at the earliest possible date.

The general assembly, after a long discussion of the problem, recommended by more than a two-thirds majority that a plan based on the proposal of the special committee for partition with economic union should be adopted. It put the responsibility for implementing that recommendation on the Security Council if the two parties, the Arabs and the Jews, were unable to agree on it. Implementation from outside seems very much like leading a horse to water. You cannot have economic union without agreement between the two parties.

It is important that the Canadian attitude towards this issue should be made clear. This plan for partition with economic union was not initiated by the Canadian government. It was proposed by a United Nations special committee on Palestine. When the report of that Committee came up for discussion at Lake Success last autumn, it soon became clear that a plan based on partition with economic union was regardless of its merits the only one that could possibly secure the necessary majority at the general assembly. At various times the Canadian delegation intervened in the discussions for the purpose of endeavouring to make the plan as practicable and as realistic as possible. Above all, we tried to ensure that there would be some provision for implementation included in the assembly recommendation.

It was, and still is, the Canadian attitude that the United Nations should not make recommendations in regard to Palestine without taking into account the problem of whether their acceptance could be secured. In the past the world as a whole has been spared the necessity of concerning itself with the problem of Palestine because of the willingness of the United Kingdom to administer that country. The inability of the mandatory power to continue to carry this burden, presented, and still presents, the question of whether the responsibility which the United Kingdom is laying down will be picked up by the United Nations; or, if not, by whom?

By the United Nations in the form of a trusteeship? That was considered by the special committee and by assembly delegations last autumn and rejected. By the people of Palestine through the establishment of a unitary state with an Arab majority? That would not, so most delegations felt, fulfill the promises made, and so often confirmed, to the Jews that they should have a national home in Palestine. Or by the formation of Jewish and Arab states, with the majority of the inhabitants Jewish and Arab respectively, but joined together by economic union and free communication?

The Canadian delegation supported this last solution, as the least unsatisfactory of the alternatives which had at one time or another been considered; as the least unjust and least impracticable solution to a problem where, honorable members must realize, justice and practicality are so difficult to reconcile or even to discover.