

Last year the Council spent 40 per cent of its time on the question of Israel's relations with Syria and Jordan, and a quarter of its time on the situation in Rhodesia. The year before it spent much of its time dealing with the situation in Kashmir and the situation in the Dominican Republic, but was not required to consider the situation in the Middle East at all. So, to some extent, the Council is a prisoner of events.

Over 60 items remain on the Security Council's agenda, and all are potentially relevant to the maintenance of international peace and security, even though many of them are dormant. To take the most obvious example, the situation in Vietnam remains on the Security Council's agenda although it has not been discussed for over a year because there is no basis for agreement within the Council as to what the United Nations can or should do to bring peace to that unhappy country.

While it is true, therefore, that the Council usually reacts to rather than shapes events, it is equally true that constructive use of the Council depends on the seriousness with which governments regard their obligations under the Charter. It is no service to international peace to treat the United Nations as a substitute for the task of direct negotiation, or to use its machinery for the purpose of publicizing charges which it is impossible to verify. Indeed, I would urge that, before a subject is given consideration by the Security Council, the Council should satisfy itself that the question is one which does in fact endanger international peace, and that the parties concerned have themselves examined all peaceful means for the settlement of the dispute before placing it on the agenda.

Whatever the subject under discussion, however, Canada will take a position which is consistent with our record of strong support for the principles of the United Nations Charter and for the strengthening of the organization.

We shall act independently and according to our best judgment -- keeping in mind, of course, our special relations with our allies on the Council, our Commonwealth ties and our interest as a nation which looks both across the Atlantic and across the Pacific oceans. We shall have in mind our responsibilities as members of the International Control Commissions in the states of Indochina and as participants in the United Nations Emergency Force in the Middle East and in the United Nations Force in Cyprus. These responsibilities will shape our attitudes but certainly not limit our determination to participate actively in the search for solutions to the disputes concerned.

We shall be conscious also of the importance of finding common ground between the permanent members of the Council without sacrifice of principle. It is true now -- as it was in 1945 -- that the ability of the permanent members of the Council to work together is an important condition for the maintenance of peace. In the intervening years, the smaller powers have performed many of the arbitration, conciliation and peace-keeping functions which it was thought in the beginning would be the primary responsibility of the permanent members. Yet they have only been able to do this in so far as some consensus, tacit or otherwise, has been in existence between the