

Canada does not, of course, exclude itself from all blame for this inadequate record. Like other countries, there are times when we get our priorities mixed and lack the proper sense of urgency in dealing with new or continuing threats to world order and security. Nor am I interested merely in pointing the finger at others for the dubious pleasure of giving vent to my frustrations. I speak as I do because I know that many of you share my views. It is not our sense of commitment that is flagging; no one in his right mind would wilfully project the world towards more blood-shed and potential global conflict. All of us want peace and order in international affairs.

Yet we are trapped in the tangled thickets of history, of fear, suspicion, and ancient deep-seated antagonisms. Self-interest usually prevails over our efforts to define and foster larger, more generous objectives. I am aware of the conviction of many in this organization and elsewhere that this is the reality of international affairs - "the real world" as they call it - that glaring imperfections are a normal and unavoidable part of the human condition and that we must resign ourselves to the mere containment of the most virulent and dangerous manifestations of human greed and irrationality; accepting that the world's fate is to stumble on from one crisis to the next. There are grounds for healthy skepticism, I agree; but in the United Nations that skepticism gives way too often to resignation and to a form of professional cynicism that views all new approaches as yet another example of short-lived idealistic naivete.

Let me assure you that I am not naive; but I cannot accept, Canada cannot accept, that this organization and its member states are powerless to remove the root causes of those major tensions that now require all of us to live out our lives in the constant shadow of impending disaster.

There is among us another widely held view that while any country can light a fire only the super-powers have the option of either fueling its flames or putting it out. There is, of course, a key role for the large, wealthy and powerful nations and their actions should not be greeted by automatic mistrust. But for smaller countries to do nothing or adhere blindly and unquestioningly to this or that power bloc is to avoid responsibility and to make a mockery of the United Nations and the opportunity it provides for reasoned, free and open debate.

However awesome the outcome of super-power decision making and action can be, we must never forget that many of today's flash points are not of their making. Many smaller countries have shown that they are perfectly capable entirely on their own of causing problems for all of us. And such actions are all the more reprehensible when they risk or even invite the escalation of east-west tensions.

If we are to make progress here, there must be an end to the sterile debates of recent years where the outcome is always a foregone conclusion. If the vitality of open debate is not restored to the U.N. then increasingly the important decisions affecting the fate of mankind will be made elsewhere and this organization and most of its agencies will wither into insignificance and, eventually, unlamented oblivion.