

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, October 24, 1995

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*Translation*]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 11 petitions.

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UNITED NATIONS ORGANIZATION

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to commemorate, in the name of the government, one of the most important events of the century: the creation of the United Nations Organization on October 24, 1945.

Fifty years ago, the first signatories of the UN Charter, including one of Canada's greatest prime ministers, Mackenzie King, gathered together in San Francisco to work out their vision of hope for humanity.

Amid the ruins of a devastated world, our predecessors firmly believed that, for the sake of humanity, they had to build a better future. They also knew that peace and development were not a matter for a few countries but one for the whole planet and all its peoples.

Today, as we contemplate the achievements and turmoil of the past 50 years, one thing is clear: the UN is a universal organization, not only because almost all the countries of the world are members, but because it is involved in all fields of human activity.

From peacekeeping and peacemaking to education and the fight against poverty; from human rights and development to the environment, human health, refugee assistance and programs to promote economic stability and growth; from democratization efforts to initiatives to share technologies and improve food and

agriculture, Canada can be proud of the progress made by the UN in improving the fate of millions around the world.

• (1005)

But we can also be proud of our contribution to these efforts. We Canadians were among the first to sign the charter. It was also a Canadian, the late lamented John Humphrey, who wrote the first draft of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948.

[*English*]

It was my predecessor, Lester B. Pearson, who helped usher the UN into adulthood. Among his valuable contributions to the UN, none was more visionary than his proposal to help set up the first peacekeeping operation in 1956 during the Suez crisis. Since then, more than 100,000 Canadians have served in over 30 peacekeeping missions around the world, without mentioning our contribution to the Korean war. Today I want to pay tribute to those who have served and those who have died in the service of peace and in the service of the United Nations.

Canada has worked through the UN to fight for the rights of the poor and the underprivileged, to promote respect for the environment and to push for disarmament. We have consistently been one of the largest suppliers of food aid. We have assisted in missions to monitor elections in many parts of the world.

The International Civil Organization is based in Montreal. The Food and Agriculture Organization was founded in Quebec City and just last week celebrated its anniversary by holding a major conference there.

Canada has played a leading role in the International Atomic Energy Agency as well as in many other UN specialized agencies. We have served on the Security Council in every decade since the UN was created and we have recently declared our intention to run for a security council seat for the 1999-2000 term.

[*Translation*]

And last year, Canada announced that it would nominate the City of Montreal as the future home of the Secretariat for Biodiversity.

[*English*]

As we stand here today at the beginning of the next chapter in UN history and on the threshold of the 21st century, I am pleased to state that Canada remains firmly committed to the United Nations system. I pledge our continued support for the UN's goals.