

United Nations Charter Reform

world body. On a theoretical basis this looks attractive and sensible, and for those of us who live within a national federal system it seems eminently workable. But I think people have not examined the alternative closely enough to realize where the danger still lies. For me, the danger lies in the fact that we will still have nation states, presumably of their own free will granting and contributing certain powers to this international body. Such a world body would obviously be better than the present United Nations, but it would still have the weakness of regarding the nations as somehow exercising an ultimate sovereignty of their own.

I think we can never get away from a concept of sovereignty. Sovereignty exists because it relates to power and it relates to people. That is where I think we should start looking for our answer, by putting the power back in the hands of the people. I think if we are going to get beyond the present impasse, and I think it is important that we do—it is fundamental for the survival of this civilization—we will have to begin to be more creative about devising another kind of political framework through which people can invest and direct their power into an international forum, not just through national governments but directly in their own right.

If you wish, I would use the example of the Canadian federation. We meet here as members of a federal Parliament exercising jurisdiction on a number of questions of importance to the nation, not because ten provinces and two territories have created this Parliament and sent us here as individuals but because 21 million or 22 million people who call themselves Canadians in regular elections send their representatives to this forum to transact business on their behalf.

This is perhaps a kind of federalism which on a world plane might indeed get us beyond the impasse which we presently face. It is an impasse in three basic areas. It is an impasse in terms of jurisdiction, and jurisdiction I think will continue to hound us as long as there is in fact no consensus on the degree to which this body may act independently. The body's functioning will be further limited by the fact that its financing depends on the capricious behavior and interests of the nation states. We have seen and learned only too well how limited and how hamstrung this organization can be when its financing depends on that kind of response. Thirdly, the responsibility of this body can be exercised

only as freely as the individual nation states, and particularly the most powerful ones, are willing to allow it to act.

I suppose that if the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce has been considered an idealist, my suggestions will be considered to be those of a wild-eyed idealist. But, Mr. Speaker, I think the time has come for us to realize that unless we are willing to attack the root of the problem, the difficulties of establishing some form of international law and order, we are merely turning up the control on a pressure cooker that, when it finally explodes, will hurt everyone. It is clear that the pressure has been great enough over the past 25 years to hurt millions of people. They are being hurt at this moment.

• (5.30 p.m.)

It seems to me that Canada, one of the few countries that has been able to work effectively and successfully with the federal form of government, could make an unparalleled contribution in this field. We have a Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) who claims to believe that the federal form of government is the form of government that ought to work best for an international community. I commend the hon. member for introducing this proposal relating to the reform of the charter of the United Nations. I say that this is just a threshold, an opening of the door for major change. This proposal would enable us to establish a form of government that is responsible to people and that would ensure the kind of peace, good government and security that the peoples of this modern world so desperately need.

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton-Melville): Mr. Speaker, may I at the outset commend the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce (Mr. Allmand) for introducing this private members' notice of motion asking the government to take the initiative in strengthening the charter of the United Nations so that it may become a more effective international organization than it is today.

I hope the House will refer this notice of motion to the Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence so that it may be dealt with in an appropriate fashion. I also hope the subject matter of the notice of motion will come before the House in the form of legislation in the near future.

Like the hon. member for Egmont (Mr. MacDonald), I cannot help stressing the importance of the issue before us. I often