

increasing pollution, unforeseen commodity shortages and the capricious movements of world finance.

For ill as well as for good, we are increasingly interdependent, however jealously we guard our independence. No nation can solve inflation in isolation from the others. No nation can ensure the cleanness of air or the purity of water that flows freely across political boundaries. Faced individually by each sovereign state, the challenges are insurmountable. For they are universal problems and they can only be met effectively by universal solutions. The United Nations and its agencies are the only bodies with the authority and with the breadth of representation to meet these challenges.

Even collectively, these challenges are intimidating. Our experience with the problems of international security -- not least those of the Middle East -- has taught us that they will not be overcome by conferences alone, by resolutions or by formal votes. They require a profound and clearheaded appreciation of the dimensions of the problems matched by a common will to work co-operatively toward solutions.

We must try to avoid barren and abrasive confrontations, which are frequently the result of the formal voting process. Consensus is another, and often surer, route. It is the technique we are increasingly using at our Commonwealth heads of government meetings. The results are not dramatic, but they are nonetheless real.

Consensus does not mean the imposition of the will of the majority on a reluctant minority which feels its vital interests are at issue; it means the shared recognition of what should and can be done. I believe we attach far too much importance to the voting scores; votes are little solace to the hungry.

There have been three successive years of drought in parts of Africa and the Asian subcontinent and abnormally poor growing seasons in many other parts of the world. Until now, only a few food-producing nations, including Canada, held surplus food stocks, and even their existing stocks fluctuated according to weather conditions and international demand. Over the years, efforts to create food banks have proved largely unsuccessful.

Now, a constructive proposal to assure world food security has been introduced by the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization. Its rate of success will be directly proportional to the effort made by each nation to adjust accordingly its food production and stocking policies. I urge every nation -- not just

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