

[November 1986] than six months ago when we were on the brink of bankruptcy. But there are plenty of problems ahead: for a start, we have to raise \$60 million to get through January, and—while we can put the reforms of the Group of Eighteen into effect—like supertankers, we can't turn on a dime. It will take time to alter course. About 75 per cent of the UN budget consists of staff costs. It's the most labour-intensive public administration I know. Most other public administrations are dealing with grants and construction work and other areas where you can control your expenditures. But our budget is basically our payroll.

"This problem has a thousand and one angles. What is fascinating about working in the United Nations Organization is that there is simply nothing that is straightforward. This is primarily a political problem, and one should never forget that.

"The argument put forward by Maurice Strong and Sadruddin Aga Khan that assessments should be reorganized so that no member state is responsible for more than 10 per cent of the budget—and, conversely, [so that] the United Nations is not vulnerable to a single large contributor—has a lot of merit. This could be done by the General Assembly under Article 17 of the Charter, on a recommendation from the Committee on Contributions. Until a couple of years ago I thought ability to pay was the most equitable way of financing the UN. Now I tend to favour the assessment of member states on a pragmatic basis, which would assure the financial viability of the organization. When I was a small boy, the one thing my father taught me was never to put all my eggs in one basket...."