

nearly insuperable obstacle to conciliation. The U.N. is trying to foster that mood - not an easy or quick job.

The United Nations also has to reckon with the impulse, strong in the strong nations, to go it alone, to do things by themselves which might better be done through the international organization. There is a reason for this. Often it is more difficult to do things working with and through others than to do them alone. The opposing ideas, the hesitations, what sometimes seems the downright orneriness of the others, have to be taken into account. Who was it said that "the best committee for getting things done is a committee of two, with the other member out of town"?

The same principle often seems to apply in world affairs. A nation which feels strong enough to do a particular job prefers to do it alone, thus not being bothered with collaborators and alone gaining the credit for whatever is accomplished. The disinclination of the United States and of the British Commonwealth to merge their Point IV and Colombo plans in the U.N.'s Technical Assistance program illustrates what we have in mind.

Sometimes national legislatures, which have to appropriate the funds by which the U.N. operates, think it costs too much. We will consider the U.N. budget later, and will show that in actuality the cost is amazingly low when compared with the costs of national governments or when measured against the importance of the issues with which the U.N. deals. But these legislatures are always under pressure to hold down expenditures. If they don't, they know they will hear from the taxpayers except in those countries where the taxpayers have nothing to say beyond a very occasional small groan, discreetly muffled.

Since the U.N. does not swing blocks of votes in national elections, the temptation is strong for national legislatures to cut appropriations to the U.N. to the lowest possible point at which the international body can keep functioning at all. The U.N. therefore never has the money it would require to do all the things it should do in the way they should be done. It does not complain about this, for it knows how governments work. Yet this, too, is a tough fact it will always have to take into account.

One more difficulty which confronts the U.N. is public apathy. Perhaps apathy is too strong a word, but no better one occurs to mind. There are too many people in all the U.N. member-nations who pay little attention and show little interest until some big international crisis bursts on the front pages of the papers and howls over the radio. Then they are likely to begin shouting, "Why has the U.N. let this happen? Why doesn't the U.N. straighten this out?"

Almost certainly, the U.N. will be doing its level best to straighten out whatever the trouble is, and has been at work to keep it from developing into a major contention. But the U.N. cannot do much to guide the nations toward a peaceful solution of their problems beyond what world public opinion supports. When the delegates know that the public is watching, and not only watching but getting ready to support measures that make for peace, then the U.N. is likely to function most nearly as it is supposed to function. But one thing too often lacking is this sort of intelligent public attention and support in times of what might be called normal U.N. activity, and not simply when some great excitement is stirring the nations.