

Townhall of the World

We know that the General Assembly spends much time in emotional and repetitious debate. But we are not impatient of this. It was a distinguished American, Senator Vandenburg, with whom I had the honour to serve in the first and second Assemblies of the United Nations in London and New York, who referred to the Assembly as "the townhall of the world". The ideals of liberal democracy that come to mind when one thinks of the old New England townhall have been embodied in the structure of the Assembly. Indeed, contrary to some of the critics, the General Assembly has exhibited a notable responsibility in many of its decisions, and in its deliberations has made tangible progress toward the establishment of a world public opinion and an international morality.

A striking fact of our age is its revolutionary character. The same gigantic strides in science and technology that have given man the weapons of terror, the wonders of "Telstar" and the early prospect of landing on the moon, have drawn the peoples of the entire world much closer together. National boundaries become hardly visible from the vantage point of a man orbiting the earth every 86 minutes.

The effect of the communications media upon international affairs has been profound. A new diplomacy of the fast plane trip, the hasty press conference and the formulation of policy amid the glare of lights and publicity has been created. The United Nations itself has become the focal point of world public opinion and the General Assembly a well-lit stage upon which international drama is enacted. From this platform, national representatives speak for and to their own people and also address themselves to public opinion in other countries. This is understandable for, as the British diplomat Lord Strang put it: "In a world where war is everybody's tragedy and everybody's nightmare, diplomacy is everybody's business."

But it is not easy, under these circumstances, to ensure the fundamental requirements of successful diplomacy, shared confidences and quiet negotiation and, in fact, they are easily and often abused.

There are great advantages in quiet diplomacy. In the conference halls, in the corridors and in the lounges of the United Nations, opportunities abound for government representatives to exchange views and to hammer smooth the wrinkles that contribute to international friction. Here we find the facilities for quietly probing and penetrating the veils of suspicion, mistrust and misapprehension which keep the nations divided.

Toward the Rule of Law

In recent years, much has been said and written about the need to provide a rule of law in the world. If the nations are to establish an orderly world community, they must be prepared