

Some two thousand years ago the Greek philosopher Aristotle, a pretty shrewd observer of political processes, pointed out that once you establish a democratic form of constitution, you make it inevitable that sooner or later the poor will try to use their voting power to coerce the rich into improving their material lot. This, of course, is exactly what has happened in this century in the national states of the western world, just as it tended to happen in the city states of Greece in the fourth century B.C. Now we have established a loose but none the less a real framework for consultations and votes among nations. In the United Nations General Assembly, as in the world which it reflects, among as well as within national states, the poor are in a clear majority. It is not surprising that they realize this, nor is it surprising that the existence of a constitutional framework in which the poor have votes should serve to increase the awareness, by those more fortunate, of the majority's problems and needs. To see the international constitution working itself out in this way is surely grounds for less cynicism, not more.

Internationally speaking, Canada is one of the rich. Indeed we are clearly one of the most fortunate and well-to-do peoples on earth. Our own rôle in the international technical assistance and economic aid programmes which these political pressures have developed is of course as a contributor rather than as a direct beneficiary. As such, we are one of the minority. We must avoid becoming a milch cow. Our delegations have to keep their eyes open. This of course is natural enough. But Canadians can be proud that our country has been playing a generous and practical role in this programme.

Incidentally, it is worth noting that in this field, the United Nations is empowered to make recommendations only. If the majority, who are under-developed countries, sought to push too hard, too fast, for too-great international financial contributions, and what economists might call by analogy "transfer taxes", there could be a danger either of bringing General Assembly resolutions, and the United Nations itself therefore, into disrepute, or of causing the constitutional framework itself to blow up or disintegrate.

The signs are that most delegations of under-developed countries are aware of these dangers and are on the whole acting with prudence, restraint and responsibility.

As a pressure group, these qualities of restraint make them more effective rather than less so, but it is just as well to recognize that they are a pressure group, out for results. In the early years of the United Nations, the representatives of areas which have called themselves under-developed were profoundly impressed, and not a little envious, at the sight of hundreds of millions of dollars of grants and government loans going from North America to European countries for the reconstruction of economies shattered by the war.