

initiative to expel Israel from the UN. Such a move, had it taken place at the seventh special session, would have destroyed all hope of progress on the economic issues before the session. The African countries had been willing in the past to go along with Arab political demands (e.g., the severing of diplomatic relations with Israel) in the hope that they would gain substantially through aid from the newly-rich oil-producers. Their expectations of major aid flows from OPEC were not met and many saw their development problems exacerbated by high oil prices. Several of the African leaders were unwilling to accept the consequences of an attempt to expel Israel from the UN, in view both of their relations with the United States and of the survival of the UN as an institution that could bring them important political and economic benefits.

A third reason for the change in atmosphere was the world economic situation and the awareness by developing countries that continued inflation and recession in the Western industrialized world would have a damaging impact on them. Their exports to Western markets were in jeopardy, and there was danger of a reduced capacity of aid donors to provide development assistance. A general deterioration of the international trade and payments system, it was seen, was certainly not the straightest path towards the reform of that system, even though such reform was badly needed. While the radicals among the Group of 77 continued to press for a revolution in the international economic system, the moderates saw the danger of straining the system too much in its present fragile state.

Awareness of interests

There was, too, during the 18 months between the two special sessions, a re-thinking of national interests on the part of many members of the Group of 77.

Mr. Wright is Head of the Bilateral Section of the Aid and Development Division in the Department of External Affairs. He has served in Rome and at Canada's Permanent Mission to the United Nations in New York, and was a member of the Canadian delegation to the seventh special session. He is a graduate of McGill and Columbia Universities and last contributed to International Perspectives in the November-December 1974 issue, where he reviewed a book on the UN by William F. Buckley, Jr. The views expressed in this article are those of the author.

*Danger
from continued
Western inflation
recognized*

notable was the leadership given by moderate developing countries to the Group of 77 as a whole, and the significant change in the position of the United States. There was less rhetoric, as formal statements were uncharacteristically responsive to the interventions of other speakers and addressed the basic economic issues on the agenda. Political will on the part of both developed and developing countries to reach a genuine consensus was the dominant feature of the session. Why this fundamental change over 18 months? There are several important reasons. First, the sixth special session did have one positive effect. It brought the economic issues between developed and developing countries into the political spotlight. The notion of a New International Economic Order gave some coherence to the myriad demands developing countries had been making for years. Political leaders focused on economic issues in the context of a New Economic Order more than they had in the past.

On economic issues, the New Economic Order was all-embracing, and many leaders in the developed world called for a thorough review of policies related to it. In this process of study and review, the seventh special session became oriented towards the resolution of some of the outstanding problems. Thus a timetable for the evolution of policy in important developed countries was established.

Second, the situation in the Middle East improved. While the sixth special session was called in the aftermath of the October 1973 war and the subsequent oil embargo and major oil price increases, the seventh session was convened shortly after a disengagement accord between Israel and Egypt and a period of relative calm in the area. The atmosphere at the session has so often in the past reflected the situation in the Middle East. Between the two special sessions, the UN as an institution had been severely tested — on the Palestine issue and during the "tyranny-of-the-majority" debate. By September 1975, when the seventh special session was convened, the air had been cleared and the climate had cooled to a point that permitted deliberations on economic issues between developed and developing countries without the intrusion of the Middle East or other purely political issues into the debate.

U summit

The summer summit in Kampala of the Organization for African Unity played a major role in this process. African countries did not reach agreement on an Arab