

Thirty years ago, on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, the Department of External Affairs published an assessment of Canada's role in the organization from 1945 to 1965. Called "We the peoples...", the document served as a reference point for the public discussion that went on at that time about how we could contribute to making the organization better. As an "old UN hand," I am pleased that the Department, in its new manifestation of "Foreign Affairs and International Trade," has decided once again to publish a book which will tell the story of "Canada in the UN" as we prepare to face the challenges of the 21st century.

This book must be concerned primarily with the present and the future, but its content is in no small measure a legacy of the past — a past that Canadians should remember proudly. I am honoured to have been given the opportunity to contribute some recollections to the record.

My own period of involvement in UN affairs began in 1955, when I was the desk officer concerned with the negotiations to set up the International Atomic Energy Agency. The UN was only 10 years old and most of the founding personalities were still prominent on the world stage. Looking back to those times and the intervening years to 1980, when I completed my assignment as Ambassador to the UN and came home to retirement, I find that my memories are of people more than events. This is as it should be, because it was the players who made things happen, and it is they who have given life to the history of our country.

Everyone knows the story of Mike Pearson [Lester B. Pearson was known to friends and colleagues as Mike] and the origins of UN peacekeeping, but that is only one episode in the long history of Canadian efforts to give substance to the goals of the United Nations Charter.

In addition to serving under Mr. Pearson, I worked with seven ministers of External Affairs: Sidney Smith, Howard Green, Paul Martin, Mitchell Sharp, Don Jamieson, Flora MacDonald and Allan MacEachen. Mr. Smith took office while I was stationed in Vienna and died before I returned to Canada, so I didn't have any personal experience of working with him, but I did with all the others and I can testify that without exception they gave strong support to the organization, and to the work of Canadian representatives, not only in New York and Geneva but also in all the other parts of the world where the UN and its agencies function.

My memories are more personal. For instance, I recall Howard Green's deep distrust of his European and American colleagues and his empathy with those from Third World countries. He became particularly friendly with the delegate from Cameroon, who sat next to us in the General Assembly, with the result that Cameroon was the first of the French African countries where we opened an embassy.

And then there was the evening in New York, after a long drafting session on the speech to be delivered by Paul Martin in the plenary session of the General Assembly the following day. We decided to go to a fish restaurant on Third Avenue for dinner. As we walked



## *The United Nations:*

## *Memories of Days Past*

*by William H. Barton*