

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 57/26 THE PRESENT POSITION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Address by Mr. L.B. Pearson, Secretary of State for External Affairs, to the Women's Canadian Club, Saint John, N.B., April 4, 1957.

There have been doubts and criticisms levelled recently--in Canada and in other countries--at the United Nations. On the other hand, hopes, perhaps exaggerated, have been raised about what the UN Assembly can now do because it stopped the fighting in Suez.

Our present preoccupation with the future of the Organization is, in fact, due to a large extent to the dramatic events of last autumn in the Middle East when the United Nations moved in, via the Assembly, in a way which captured the world's attention and caused both praise and criticism.

For myself, I remain firm in the belief that our world Organization remains an indispensable agency for international co-operation. If it did not exist, something like it would have to be found or else we would lapse into a state of international anarchy in a divided world with the forces of freedom on one side, the forces of reactionary Communism on the other, facing each other in fear and hostility across an unbridged chasm, and with the uncommitted millions of Asia and Africa trying to remain aloof or perhaps form their own alignments.

It is not a cheerful picture; and it makes it all the more advisable to have a new and realistic look at the United Nations, especially in the light of our recent experiences at the General Assembly.

One aspect of the situation - which those experiences have emphasized -- concerns the position of individual states, especially in voting power. The voting rules of the United Nations Assembly are certainly not ideal. It is easy enough to portray as absurd an arrangement by which Luxembourg, Cambodia and the United States have one vote each; when any rational approach would result in some form of weighted voting by which power and responsibility would be related to voting rights. It can be argued that no national government could be