

Machinery may be self-operating, but to be critical of the UN is to be critical of the ways governments use the instruments of the UN system. To fashion better instruments, but to leave the same governments in charge, might achieve the opposite of what many critics want. On the other hand, we cannot expect to change quickly or easily the ways other governments behave. About the best we can do is to make the most effective use possible of the UN as an organization, assuming that neither Canada nor any other member is obliged to accept the decisions or recommendations of the UN if it is determined not to do so (except in certain carefully-defined circumstances). Obviously, however, the UN would cease to function if members refused to pay their assessed shares of the budget or to attend meetings. In that sense the UN imposes certain costs. We do help to keep the machine operating. But if we have cause to complain about some of the results it is best to address those complaints to those who push the levers. As Dag Hammarskjold put it:

"Aboard this new Santa Maria we have to meet the impatience of those sailors who expect land on the horizon tomorrow, (and) the cynicism or sense of futility of those who would give up and leave us drifting impotently. On the shores we have all those who are against the whole expedition, who seem to take a special delight in blaming the storms on the ship instead of the weather...".

This paper is offered as a contribution to the process of public debate about the UN today, not as it was or might be. A separate publication entitled Canada and the United Nations: 1945-1975 is available to students of the background, and the booklet on the United Nations issued as part of Foreign Policy for Canadians in 1970 remains relevant and useful. The paper is not a statement of Government policy. It does attempt, however, to relate its discussion of the United Nations today to Canada's distinctive outlook and contribution.