at San Francisco. Fifty-seven states have now been admitted to membership. The Charter is the basic document which underlies the events and governs the deliberations which have been taking place, and which are at this moment taking place, at Flushing Meadows and Lake Success.

The Charter is not, needless to say, a perfect document. We have only to remind ourselves of the character and tone of those deliberations to fully realize that fact. It is not possible to say of it, as Sir Edward Coke once said of the Common Law of England, that it is the "perfection of reason". Perhaps some might feel and even say, in other company, that this description may be something less than the whole truth when applied to the Common Law itself!

Since the Charter is in the nature of a constitution, it is expressed in broad and general terms. Also since it was the product of many minds and many pens, representing the measure of agreement arrived at by many nations, somewhat mistrustful of each other (perhaps it would be more accurate to say "one of whom was very mistrustful of all the others") there are, inevitably, crevices and contradictions, gaps and inconsistencies. It is, moreover, a new constitution and it is not to be expected that a new constitution can be a wholly good one. It must first acquire a leathery and weatherbeaten hue, be lashed by the storms of vigorous debates, and prove itself able to withstand the strains and stresses of conflicting views and interests.

It will therefore be necessary, in the course of time, if it is to endure as we hope it will, that greater clarity and more obvious effectiveness be given to the provisions of the Charter. Gaps must be filled and apparent conflicts resolved, in order that the bare bones of the Charter -- or, if I may borrow a phrase from the civil law, the nudum pactum, -- may eventually be fully clad. This will be a gradual, perhaps a tortuous process, and it is apt to take many forms.

It may be of interest to examine some of these forms.

(1) Practices and procedures in the United Nations, its organs and related agencies may be expected to take form and crystallize Lawyers need not be reminded of Sir Frederick Maitland's observation that substantive law is often "secreted in the interstices of procedure". In this connection, Canada has taken initiative in an effort to improve the Provisional Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly, and in underlining the obvious need for reform in the procedures of the Security Council.

Of this organ, I shall have something to say later. However, since the close of the last regular session of the General Assembly, at least one practice has grown up in the Security Council which, without formal amendment of the Charter, lessens the stringency of the veto power. It has been agreed that the mere abstention, as distinct from the negative vote, of a Great Power in the Security Council will not be considered as a veto. This practice has not an absolute juridical force. Indeed it is contrary to the language of article 27 of the Charter which requires for the decision of all other than procedural matters the affirmative vote of seven including the concurring votes of the permanent members. However, as lawyers, we know that once a convention of the constitution has become well established through repeated use, it is barely distinguishable from a rule of positive law. We know that much can be done, through conventio developments of this kind and without formal amendment of the Charter to strengthen the authority and prestige of the United Nations.