

The UN General Assembly— A Senator's Impressions

HON. GORDON B. ISNOR

In the following article Senator Isnor of Nova Scotia describes his personal impressions as a member of the Canadian Delegation to the seventh session of the United Nations General Assembly.

ALMOST the first words used by Canadians and other visitors to the United Nations are — "Isn't this wonderful, it seems fantastic, tell me more about it."

You agree with the first two thoughts but when it comes to "telling more about it" that's a different story for the very simple reason that there never has been anything just like the United Nations.

Then perhaps, after having invited your friends to have lunch with you in the Delegates' Dining Room, which operates on a self-supporting basis, you start to explain the functions of the United Nations and answer all manner of questions.

By way of background I should explain my position by stating that early last September I received an invitation, extended on behalf of the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for External Affairs, to be a representative on the Canadian Delegation to the seventh session of the United Nations General Assembly opening in New York on October 14.

"Land of Queer Names"

While feeling honoured, I questioned my usefulness to the Delegation, due to the fact that I had never made any special study of External Affairs, or of the United Nations. However, it was pointed out that, because of my long years of service in the House of Commons and the Senate, particularly in connection with financial matters, there was certain Committee work for which I was adapted. So here I am — in the "Land of Queer Names"—such as: UNRWAPR, UNICEF, UNKRA, UNESCO, ILO, FAO, ICAO, UPU, WHO and many others, too confusing to try to enumerate. It was in a state of "bewilderment" in its truest sense

that I found myself seated next to Mr. Paul Martin in the Plenary Session of the Assembly on the opening day.

It really took me the best part of the first week to get my feet firmly on the ground — but things quickly adjusted themselves. I felt proud to be a Canadian as I listened to the favourable comments regarding the election of Mr. Pearson to the Presidency. As this was the first session to be held in the newly completed quarters of the U.N., the retiring president, Dr. Padilla Nervo, Hon. Vincent Impellitteri, Mayor of New York, Mr. Trygve Lie, Secretary-General and others spoke in glowing terms of the work of the Headquarters Advisory Committee which handled the details in connection with the new building.

The Buildings

These extraordinary structures, housing the U.N. Permanent Headquarters, occupy an 18-acre tract of land on Manhattan Island, covering six blocks from 42nd to 48th Streets, between First Avenue and the East River. At first sight one almost has a feeling of awe — the buildings are unique in so many ways, and so outstandingly different from other buildings. The three elements are the 39-story skyscraper office building of the Secretariat; the long, low Conference Building paralleling the river with its Council Chambers and Conference Rooms; and the strikingly magnificent General Assembly Hall.

Underground parking and garage facilities are provided for 1,500 cars. The U.N. maintains a postal service and there is usually a line-up of persons purchasing U.N. stamps both for philatelic and personal use. (Letters bearing U.N. stamps must be mailed within the U.N. Buildings.)