

SEEKING A NEW BALANCE: REFORM AT THE UNITED NATIONS (continued)

proved structure would make it possible to remedy many existing flaws.

Reform will focus essentially on the economic and social sector. It was initiated last June by the group of high-level experts whose report recommended over 70 corrective measures. The most visible will undoubtedly be cuts in staff, 15% at all levels, 25% among senior executives. The most significant measure may be to create a special ECOSOC commission to review and streamline the intergovernmental structure, that is, all agencies, commissions, committees and task forces that bring member states together. If this work is successfully completed, we may see a change in the United Nations' economic and social activities and the way in which they are managed.

It must be noted, however, that the political sector as a whole will not immediately be affected. Reform does not address the question of how best to equip the United Nations to forestall disputes and alleviate short- or long-term factors of political instability. We must likely await the achievement of real economic and social progress before political initiatives are undertaken. This prerequisite and the resulting delay should not be overly harmful to the United Nations. They will surely continue to serve as an anchor, tossed about in the wake of the super or lesser powers, but nevertheless able to keep them from sailing full speed ahead.

Canada has greatly contributed to reform at all levels, largely due to the daily activities of the Department's many officers who handle various technical or political issues at the United Nations. This collective effort has earned Canada

its reputation as one of the most active and energetic member states, but also one of the most level-headed.

Our representatives in New York have reminded all delegations that all member states have the same rights and duties before the General Assembly and must explain themselves before their peers when they are at fault, as when they violate human rights.

At the branch level, we have sought to give greater direction to social programs and activities: respect for human rights, equality for women, tolerance of minorities, openness to change, especially in societies clinging to a narrow or outmoded vision of themselves. We would like the United Nations to foster social development and provide reassurance that needed changes can be made without inevitably leading to chaos. Finally, we have made a set of "structural" proposals for managing the United Nations system, budgeting, financing and programs, to allow easier and more effective decision-making by member states.

On this small note of hope, I would like to return to the second question. If they were doomed to fail, if the United Nations were a useless institution, why persist in being a member, in defending and supporting it? This is a question that we do not like to ask ourselves in Canada, since it seems like an implicit attack on a basic political philosophy that has been a constant for over 40 years. If the United Nations were a foreign body, if they were merely a strait-jacket, it would be easy to extricate ourselves and to be rid of them. But the real world is not like that. The United Nations are in fact nothing more than a huge mirror, a rather faithful reflection of the modern world. It is not a flat-

tering picture, but we must understand that this hobbling giant is none other than the international community. The anemia of the United Nations says a great deal about the state of international cooperation. We cannot escape this; on the contrary, we must face facts.

What is to become of the United Nations? Simple, practical people like ourselves are not prone to existential angst or metaphysical speculation. They continue their efforts as long as they must, until the system gets back on track again □

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