

UNITED NATIONS

APPROVAL OF AGREEMENT SIGNED AT SAN
FRANCISCO, JUNE 26, 1945

The house resumed from Tuesday, October 16, consideration of the motion of Mr. St. Laurent:

That it is expedient that the houses of parliament do approve the agreement establishing the united nations and constituting the charter of the united nations and the statute of the international court of justice signed at San Francisco on June 26, 1945, and that this house do approve the same.

Mr. M. J. COLDWELL (Rosetown-Biggart): Mr. Speaker, it is my hope that by unanimous vote this house will adopt the resolution approving the charter of the united nations. It represents not all that Canada hoped for, or probably that any one of the delegates from any of the nations would have wished, but in its present form I think we can all agree, at least those of us who were at San Francisco, that it represents the highest common denominator attainable at the conference.

Canada, because of her contributions in the two world wars, her disinterestedness in the disposition of territory other than her own and, I believe, the non-partisan complexion of her delegation and the ability of the Canadian representatives to reach agreement on fundamental issues—in spite of the fact that a general election was in progress in Canada—as well as the unique geographical and political situation of our country, enabled the Prime Minister (Mr. Mackenzie King) and the delegation to exert a considerable influence on many aspects of the Dumbarton Oaks proposals. These have been already noted, may I add, in the very excellent speeches that were made by the acting Minister of External Affairs, the Minister of Justice (Mr. St. Laurent) and the hon. member for Peel (Mr. Graydon). We were recognized as near neighbours of Russia and of the United States, yet associated with the United Kingdom and other members of the British commonwealth as an independent self-governing nation, having, too, through our French-speaking population, an historic link with old France. To complete the picture let me add that our western shores like those of China are washed by the Pacific ocean.

Canada, then, is a nation of world-wide associations and world-wide interests. We of all nations in this hemisphere can in no sense afford to stand aloof or remain unaffected by events anywhere in this shrinking world of the twentieth century. To us, then, the main purpose of the charter, the prevention of war and the maintenance of security, is indeed of vital concern.

But, sir, this purpose imposes upon Canada as upon all others of the united nations the obligation to assist in every way the development of friendly relations among the member peoples and the promotion of international cooperation in both economic and social spheres, and these aims, let it be said, run like silver threads through the whole charter; for they are of the very fabric of peace.

To arrive at friendly understandings and to prevent misunderstandings, the representatives of the signatory nations, which one day we hope will include all the nations of the earth, will meet in annual sessions and in special sessions of the general assembly organization, to which each nation may send five delegates and exercise one collective vote for the delegation. Thus a forum for constant exchange of views has been provided, as well as the means for public men and women of all peace-loving nations to meet and get to know each other—a much more important thing than perhaps sometimes we have imagined. Indeed I came to the conclusion at the San Francisco conference that the longer it lasted and the better the delegates became acquainted with one another, the brighter were the prospects of understanding and agreement among the nations themselves. The difficulties in the way of understandings are many and immense. Apart from the question of language there were many other difficulties. The radio, the aeroplane, speedier communication in so many ways between the nations, all tend to make the world smaller and to bring diverse peoples into closer contact. This development of communication has come about in a generation, and its beneficial effects have not yet been fully felt.

We must recognize, too, that great nations have deliberately lived apart because of fundamental differences in their ideologies, their standards of living and their environments, and this has engendered suspicions that are difficult to overcome. That these suspicions were present at San Francisco no one will deny, and it is therefore all the more remarkable that a charter as comprehensive and as satisfactory in so many ways should have been achieved. Its principal defect, that of the veto power of the principal powers, stemmed I think from these suspicions so characteristic of the immediate pre-war period. I think we should be less than fair and frank if we failed to recognize this and to say that one of the responsibilities of public men in all countries is to do all within our power to dissipate them and to remove causes of suspicion among the nations. But in order to do this we must not