

Lewis: UN a beacon of hope

by Neal Watson

The United Nations does not deserve the disparagement it receives because it is an exemplary organization that is "still a relative beacon of hope in an often irrational world," says Canada's UN Ambassador Stephen Lewis.

Lewis, speaking to about 300 people at a forum in SUB Theatre last night, said in General Assembly, the UN takes initiatives that are palpable and important. He said the UN's response to the famine in Africa was its "finest hour."

"The United Nations has responded urgently to the nature of the African emergency," he said. "If it wasn't for the UN, the Sudan would be closer to the brink than it is."

It is important to recognize that although the super-powers do thumb their noses at the UN, the organization provides a forum for world antagonists "to meet without

losing face," Lewis said. "World leaders speak obliquely past each other, but can still make contact."

Lewis called criticism of the UN often "uncritical and mindless" and said it "flows from objections to internationalism per se."

The perception that the UN never accomplishes anything is due to the nature of the body, he said.

"The UN moves with anxious, incremental inertia. It is the nature of the body that sovereign states be recognized."

Lewis urged the audience to consider the member states of the UN as "159 political parties."

"It is not the UN that deserves the abuse, but it is more appropriately directed at the nation states."

However, despite seeming pre-occupation with debate, UN agencies, like UNICEF, accomplish substantial goals in dealing with international issues like hunger and

medical care in Third World countries, he said.

Lewis emphasized that he was proud to represent Canada at the UN because of Canada's strong reputation in the world.

Canada's reputation as a non-nuclear middle-power with a strong tradition of peace-making and positive intervention in world affairs has made Canada a country that other countries listen to at the UN said Lewis.

The fact that Canada had opposed the prohibition on chemical weapons and the militarization of outer space were examples of the work Canada was doing to follow world peace, according to Lewis.

During the question period, Lewis defended his vote against the UN nuclear freeze motion and insisted that the position had not undermined Canada's credibility in the world community.

He called the vote against the

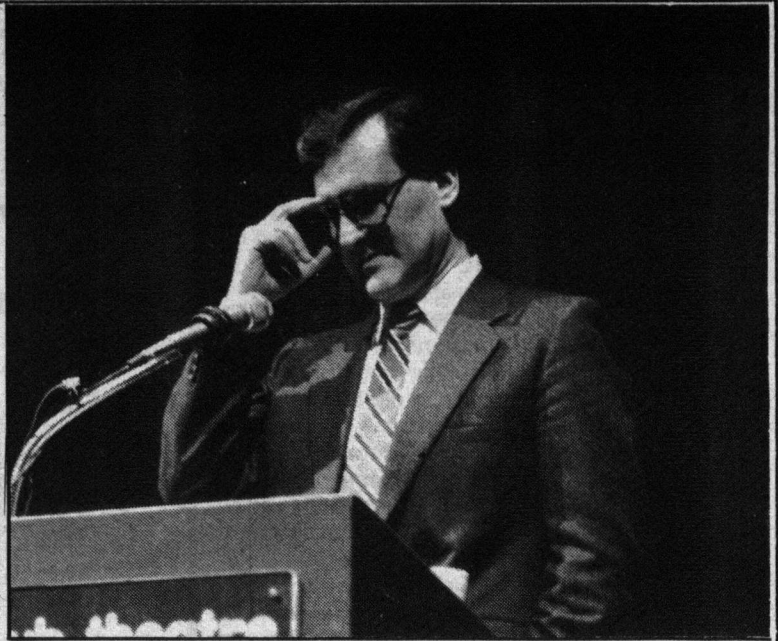


Photo Bill Doskoc

The UN is a world body that deserves appreciation, says Ambassador Stephen Lewis.

freeze a "maintenance of a past position."

Lewis urged the audience not to "go to the barricades on this issue." He said, "The freeze is real, but

people dying in Ethiopia is also real."

"The world isn't as simple as one issue."

UBC president resigns in protest over gov't policies

VANCOUVER(CUP) — "Good-bye Pedersen, hello trouble," reads graffiti in the student union building at the University of B.C.

George Pedersen, administration president of B.C.'s largest university, resigned Mar. 7, saying the B.C. government's education policies have made it impossible for him to perform his job.

"If my resignation does nothing more than dramatize to the general public the plight of our university system, it will be an action worthy of taking," Pedersen said.

Pedersen told a hastily organized press conference that UBC did not know how much money to expect from the government for the next fiscal year, even though the university's administrators have repeatedly asked for earlier and more frequent financial information.

"All we do is spend our time reacting, and reacting in a time frame that is in my view virtually impossible," he said.

"What is impossible, to be more specific, is the uncertainty and the complete lack of planning that is

going on in this province as it relates to our university system."

Pedersen's resignation came a week before the government's budget was scheduled to be announced and three weeks before the beginning of UBC's next fiscal year.

Pedersen said he has too much pride as an administrator to remain in a situation preventing him from providing strong leadership, and has accepted the position of administration president at the University of Western Ontario. He plans to move to London, Ontario this summer and replace acting president Alan Adlington.

Pedersen said he suspects some members of UBC's academic community will be disappointed and angry about the decision and its timing. "All I can say to you is that I understand those kinds of reac-

tions as very human ones and can only offer my regrets.

"However, I want to be sure that you understand that I do not apologize in any way for my past performance or for my decision to leave," he said.

"I believe that I have given it the very best shot that I can, often seven days a week, frequently 16 to 18 hours a day for the last two years, and I have come to the conclusion that it is simply a good time to leave."

Reaction to Pedersen's resignation has ranged from shock to bitterness to praise.

David McLean, chair of UBC's board of governors, denounced the move and said Pedersen's timing was "terrible" and "not in the best interest of the university."

McLean said he told Pedersen his resignation would have to be

effective immediately because he criticised the government — "the people who pay the bills of the university."

But Haracio de la Cueva, teaching assistants' union president, says the president took a well-calculated risk by resigning to publicize the plight of B.C.'s education.

In his resignation speech, Pedersen suggested the government allow universities to plan their finances thoughtfully and should exercise caution in its attempts to influence university operations.

Two major cuts to UBC's budget in the last two years have forced the university to fire 190 faculty and staff members and curtail any hiring or salary increases. The government cut university funding by five per cent last year and has hinted it will do so this year.

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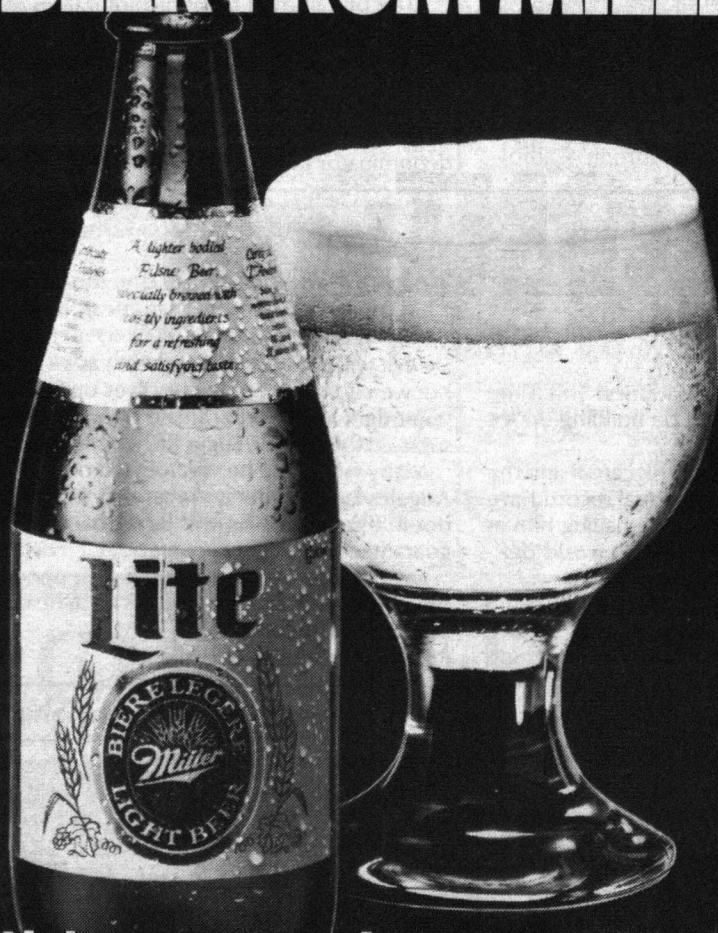


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