

*Business of Supply*

There are, perhaps, complications or implications behind such a decision which we should raise and discuss. It has been suggested that Canada, looking at the realities of the international context, must concern itself with the reaction of other countries to such a decision on our part and with the hostility they might manifest toward this country if such a decision were taken—if we reneged, on our agreement to have the United Nations hold this conference in this country with the PLO as participants.

What that argument is basically, Madam Chairman, is an argument that we should accede to the wishes of other countries if they are opposed to our own because we fear the consequences. It is the classic argument of blackmail. It is the argument that we should allow ourselves to be bluffed and intimidated because of what other countries might do if they disagree with our policy. It suggests that Canada cannot risk taking a stand of independence, based on principles that other countries such as Denmark and The Netherlands have been able to take in the past. If the argument were presented clearly to Canadians, it is one that they would reject.

We have had some experience in Canada—in 1970 and over the past week—of groups, of organizations, of people who have attempted to blackmail the Canadian government. To this point we have resisted that blackmail and its implications on our actions. I cannot see the government doing otherwise but rejecting blackmail when it is applied in the international context.

The second argument which is sometimes presented as an argument for admission of the PLO representatives is that, after all, Canada does want to be a good member of the United Nations. We accept the implications of membership in the United Nations. We should not, like a naughty little boy, pick up our marbles and go home simply because the United Nations has not accepted our view of the status of the PLO.

It would be easy to suggest that, after all, conditions have greatly changed since we first asked the United Nations to hold this conference in Toronto. At that time the PLO was not an observer member of the United Nations. We certainly could say that, given the changed situation, the changed membership, the difficulty of security arrangements and so on, we can no longer hold the conference, secure in the knowledge that there would be other places that were prepared to hold it. But I suggest, Madam Chairman, that we not follow that argument; that we rather state forthrightly what our policy is and why it is that we do not find it acceptable to have these people enter our country. I suggest we be prepared, if I may use a colloquialism, to put our action where our mouth is.

I think it was Theodore Roosevelt who said that his foreign policy was to walk softly and carry a big stick. Canada in its dealings with the United Nations seems to have adopted a rather different policy, and that is to talk loudly and carry no stick at all. We have developed the reputation of being "the great abstainer" in United Nations' decisions. I suggest that that position does no service to us, no service to the principles that we espouse in our foreign policy, and no service at all to the United Nations. For other countries will not greatly respect a country that is prepared to preach, that is prepared to say what it thinks ought to be done, but does not have the

[Mr. Roberts.]

courage to render effective in action the principles upon which it says it stands.

We should take the United Nations for what it is. It is not an international court whose decisions are binding upon us. It is not an international government in which we have agreed to participate. And it is not a polite debating society. The United Nations is an international political forum where the politics of states operate. That is what it is and no doubt that is what it should be. It is not a forum where the Canadian government can get by with moral righteousness or by simple nitpicking of position, saying on the one hand there are parts of the resolution that we agree with but that, on the other hand, there are parts of the resolution that we do not agree with, and that therefore in view of the complexity of the issue we are unable to take a position. Neutrality carried to that stage is a declaration of impotence, a declaration of spiritual bankruptcy in the face of important political problems with which this country should attempt to deal, not simply through words, but through action in votes and action taken in other ways. We should be prepared to back up our opinion with whatever degree of power we can utilize, and power does not consist of saying: "We are terribly sorry but we cannot make up our minds where we stand on this issue."

● (1740)

There are those who say that the Palestinian Liberation Organization is a fact of life and that in international politics one must meet the facts of life, and that the appropriate course is to attempt to civilize the Palestinian Liberation Organization by giving it responsibility and credibility. The argument is that if it is given responsibility it may moderate its possible objective of the destruction of Israel or may moderate its use of terrorism, which goes on unabated.

There are those who made the same argument in the 30's, when they believed it was possible to civilize Hitler by giving him more responsibility and credibility and engaging him in the game of international politics. I would say to those who have argued that the PLO should be civilized by giving it responsibility and credibility, that there is no concrete achievement to which they can point. The giving of credibility and responsibility has not led the PLO to moderate its objective to destroy Israel, or led it to abandon its tactics of terrorism, or led it to abandon any of its purposes. Why should it when that organization has been so successful now in receiving international recognition, when it is receiving the acceptance of many states in the United Nations, and when it may be that the United Nations and Canada are prepared to allow it to enter Canada to participate in this conference? Why should it abate its demands or moderate its objectives when it is so successful in maintaining them without moderation? What incentive does it have to pursue reasonable conduct if we are prepared to welcome it when it is unreasonable? There may be something to be said in international politics for successful pragmatism. This is not an argument I would like to make, but there may be something to be said for successful pragmatism. However, there is no argument to be made for unsuccessful pragmatism. That seems to me to be the policy we risk pursuing.