

The third constitutional problem which has caused difficulties for middle powers in the United Nations in the voting procedure in the Security Council. This is what is popularly known as the veto. There is no aspect of the work of the United Nations which is better known to the public than the veto, and this certainly is one part of the machinery which has been put to energetic use.

The voting procedure in the Security Council requires seven out of eleven votes for any important motion to carry in the Security Council, but a motion is lost, no matter how many votes it receives, if one of the five permanent members of the Security Council votes against it. It is a rough and not very satisfactory solution to a very difficult problem. The United Nations is based on democratic principles, and in a democratic community one man has one vote. But the inequalities amongst states are so great, not only in power and resources but also in responsibility, that the principle can not be fully applied. It is impracticable to suggest that a number of small states by their votes should be able to put in motion the resources of the large ones. It was therefore decided that before action could be taken in the Security Council the votes of all the large states should be required. This voting procedure has never been popular with the non-permanent members of the Security Council, and opposition has varied from forthright denunciation and demands for the removal of the veto on the part of such states as Australia and Argentina, to suggestions for extensive procedural reform the effect of which would be to lessen its undesirable consequences. During the formative period of the United Nations, no subject came closer to killing the organism before it had been born. The Yalta formula, which resulted in the present arrangement, was never regarded as a particularly beautiful child by any of its sponsors, except by the Soviet Union, which regards it as the irreducible safeguard of its position within the organization. The best that could be done, however, in San Francisco was to have the veto power qualified by a joint statement made by those who enjoyed this privilege, to the effect that they would use it with restraint and only in the common interest. Looked at in any absolute sense, this was not much of a concession to the less privileged members of the United Nations. When, however, it is recalled that some proposals advanced would have given to the middle and small powers of the United Nations an even more restricted position than they now enjoy, it was probably the best that could be hoped for. It might have been possible, in an atmosphere of greater confidence, to limit the use of the veto to actions in the Security Council actually involving the use of sanctions. I do not think, however, that this problem can be satisfactorily solved by any adjustment in the constitution. Even in the best of circumstances, it will be only by a very gradual process of evolution in custom and precedent, by the constant exercise of self-restraint on the part of both those who possess the veto and those who do not possess it, in the working out of techniques for reaching agreements, by experiment, and often by trial and error, that the veto shall be allowed to fall into disuse. In the meantime, we shall have to make the best of a situation in which an arbitrary distinction is made between five powers, which by reason of their great size and strength, possess a privileged position, and the undifferentiated mass of other members which, without reference to size and strength, do not enjoy the benefits which this privilege confers.

I notice that the general topic for your discussions during the present week is "The United States and the Soviet Union in the United Nations". The political tension which has arisen between these two great states, and between the Eastern European states generally and the democratic world has cast a shadow over the world, and the constitutional issues I have been discussing may seem, in the gloom, like pale and ghostly unrealities. Does it matter whether the membership of the Security Council really represents the distribution of