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"THE MORAL SUPPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS"

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An address by Gen. A.G.L. McNaughton to the World Conference of Religion for Moral and Spiritual Support of the United Nations, New York, June 16, 1948.

It is a very real privilege and pleasure for me to address you this morning to bespeak your interest in developing moral support to the United Nations. As an inter-faith organization, I recall that the Church Peace Union was established to work for enduring peace and to strive for a method of settling international disputes by pacific means. These objectives are also precisely the aims of the United Nations as set forth in the Preamble of its Charter; and there is, therefore, a very close inter-relation between the aims of the United Nations as a world peace-preserving agency and those of the Church Peace Union, which recognizes that the imperatives for a lasting peace and a just world order are basic objectives in all the religions of the world. The principles upon which your Union was founded accept the fact that, without doubt, wars begin first of all in the minds of men and, consequently, that the defences of peace must therefore be constructed through the education and spiritual development of the individual and through the building of closer understanding between peoples which we now have widened opportunities to do through the use of all the remarkable modern methods of communication which are available.

In the brief address I am to give this morning, I recognize fully that, in arguing the necessity of support for the United Nations, I am speaking to the already-convinced; yet, even so, I would like to advance some ideas of a general nature which may stimulate more detailed discussion at this Conference. My hope is to bring out the reasons for which we must give this support so that we may clarify the methods through which such support may be made effective.

In the first place, I believe we must all recognize that the United Nations, despite the set-backs and disappointments which so far we have experienced, represents, nevertheless, a very great step forward in the attempt to apply the processes of democracy in the field of international affairs. Many years ago Woodrow Wilson spoke eloquently against secret diplomacy and in favour of "open covenants openly arrived at". Whatever we may think of the disputes and disagreements which constantly bedevil the deliberations of the United Nations at Lake Success, I think we must agree that it is far better that these disagreements should be ventilated openly in public than that they should be the subject of secret diplomacy between nations, whose peoples would thus be kept in a state of unfortunate ignorance concerning the increasing seriousness of the international situation.

We cannot achieve peace by evading the disputes which exist today throughout the world, nor by attempting to conceal them under the camouflage of diplomatic politeness. We can achieve peace, however, by determining to settle disputes in the forum of open discussion.

The weaknesses and limitations which have come to light in the United Nations are merely the reflection of the disagreements which exist between the great powers of the world today. The temper of proceedings at Lake Success merely registers the international climate, and if very little real agreement has been reached in the United Nations, we must recognize frankly the fact that there is very great disagreement between the major powers. We must certainly not confuse the symptom with the disease. The futilities and the frustrations which have occurred so often in the meetings of the United Nations, and more particularly in the Security Council, have been the consequence and not the cause of these disagreements. The United Nations did not create the problems of power politics and the clash of ideologies which have plagued its existence so far; on the contrary, the United Nations has played a very useful role in bringing before world opinion the existence of these problems and these divergent trends of thought in a manner which could never be achieved under the older, traditional forms of secret diplomacy.

The meetings at Lake Success have been described by a cynical observer as "open disagreements openly arrived at". The key word in this phrase is open; for, in the last analysis, the United Nations depends for its effective strength on the force of public opinion throughout the world, and the more we have experience of it, the more fully we appreciate that this is a very real force indeed. This is emphasized in the Preamble of the Charter itself, which begins with the words, "We the Peoples of the United Nations...". The representatives at Lake Success are merely the instruments of their respective governments which, in democratic states, are, in turn, responsible to public opinion. The positions taken by these national representatives at United Nations meetings are well publicized and, in a healthy democracy, these positions should be the subject of close scrutiny by the public in whose name these representatives are speaking. In this way, and, in my judgment, only in this way, can the democratic process be applied in the field of international affairs. If public opinion in a democratic state is lethargic and indifferent, then this public has only itself to blame if disastrous policies are sponsored by its representatives. On the other hand, an alert and well-informed public opinion gives a fine insurance that sensible and well-considered policies will be advocated and carried out. The United Nations offers an opportunity for world opinion to assert itself to a degree which has never existed before in international affairs and, for even this reason alone, it is deserving of full public support.

Again we must recognize that the world becomes smaller day by day. Nations are now increasingly inter-dependent. Improved communications and vastly enlarged methods of public information make it evident that events, which might perhaps have had only an academic interest some decades ago, are today matters whose immediate urgency is no longer attenuated by distance. If I may cite the case of my own country for example. In the last few weeks Canadian representatives have been intimately concerned in the discussions of the questions of Indonesia, of Kashmir, of Czechoslovakia, of Palestine; we have had discussions of the future of international trade at Havana, and of the future of a free press at Geneva; we have been concerned in the political settlement in the state of Korea; and with other anxious nations we have earnestly sought to evolve a system for the effective control of the dread forces of atomic energy.

The implications of this greater inter-dependence are well expressed in an address given by Prime Minister Mackenzie King when he received an honorary degree from the University of Brussels on 10th November 1947; he then said, "We are all members, one of the other. What injures one, injures the other. What is done by one to help mankind, helps the other." It follows then, from this condition of close inter-dependence to which we have arrived, that we must give our full support to the international agency - the United Nations - which has, as its primary purpose, the maintenance of international peace and security.

Today far too often we hear people talking glibly of the inevitability of war. Frequently these people are persons who have never themselves been called upon to participate actively in a war and who do not realize the full extent of its horror. Certainly, I do not believe that war is inevitable, but I do believe that it will break out unless nations can be induced to decide their disputes by the exercise of reason and through discussion instead of by fighting. With all its defects and limitations, the United Nations does provide the means and methods by which this process can be carried forward. This does not mean that the United Nations, by itself, can prevent war. As I have already said, the delegates at Lake Success are merely instruments of the governments of their fifty-eight countries. They have no separate identity of their own. The will to peace must come from the governments concerned and, even beyond them, from the peoples for whom these governments are responsible. However, providing that the will to peace does exist, it can be most fruitfully developed through open international conferences and discussions in the manner provided for by the constitution of the United Nations. This again, is a sufficient reason for our giving our full support to this hopeful organization. We must work for unity inspired by consent, rather than for unity derived from the coercion of force. That is, we must work for the direct application of the democratic process in the international field and this requires, above everything, an effectively organized Universal International Association of Nations.

The primary task of the United Nations is to maintain international peace and security, but it performs as well many other useful functions in the economic and social spheres. The work of the Economic and Social Council, and of the Specialized Agencies which are associated with it, have so far proved to be among the most fruitful undertakings of the United Nations. In the complexity of a modern industrial world it is essential that close cooperation should exist between nations in financial, labour, health and scientific matters - to name only a few of the fields of endeavour. The work of the United Nations in these fields is, to my mind, an additional reason, and a very strong one, for public support.

If I have spoken emphatically concerning the reasons for our supporting the United Nations, I do not mean by this that we should adopt an attitude of unreasoned and unquestioning devotion, and that we should defend its every action in an atmosphere of uncritical enthusiasm. What is needed is a persistent, intelligent and well-informed public opinion which will bring to bear a constructive effect and so encourage needed changes. The United Nations is a young and, as yet, far from perfect body and in this it is, as I have said, the reflection of the imperfect world in which we live. We cannot achieve a truly effective international organization except by patient, long-continued effort. The goal for all of us is a world society based on justice under agreed law. If we tend to become impatient with the frustrations at Lake Success, we must remember, on the other hand, that in all parts of the world, men and women of good-will are devoting their lives hopefully and with quiet determination to the ultimate realization of the international ideal of peace and friendly relations between all nations. A great body of people today are increasingly aware that collective security throughout the world is not an idle dream, but the most urgent practical necessity of our time. If real collective security

is to be achieved, what is required, above all, is the persistent, intelligent and well-informed public opinion of which I have spoken, devoted to the ideals of peace.

I have argued that the United Nations must be supported, and I have tried to give some general reasons why we must do so. Yet, if effective support is to be given to the ideals of the United Nations Charter, we must go much deeper than merely to try to develop or revise the Charter itself, or to amend the other formal treaties which our nations have accepted. It would be quite useless to draft a Charter which did not reflect existing international facts. As I have already indicated, the Charter is, to some extent, at least, not only a method but a measure of the degree of willingness of nations to cooperate with one another in the attainment of common ends. The United Nations operates in the environment of international relationships as they actually exist. The Charter represents a code of international conduct and also the outline of an organization to coordinate international activities. As it is a document which lives only through the will and the activity of the members of the organization, it cannot be expected that the Charter will be changed or improved unless the relations between the members of the organization themselves, change and improve.

If the Charter has weaknesses, and the veto privilege of the Great Powers is generally so regarded, then we must recognize frankly that this veto or the rule of unanimity as it is sometimes called, is based on the assumption of agreement and trust between the Great Powers, - and that this basic assumption does not seem valid today. Therefore, for those of us who wish to see a stronger and more effective Charter, it is evident that we must work, first of all, for a greater measure of international understanding and cooperation. If this can be achieved, it will not be difficult to take the consequential step - to amend and strengthen the Charter to reflect the improved international situation.

Real and lasting improvement in the international field can come only from within men's minds. Men's minds must be trained and formed in such a way that war, with all its horrors, becomes a mad nightmare which need never enter into serious political discussion. How well the minds of men and women are trained to proceed by logic and to accept the law, how well they are taught to cherish the ideals of peace, is clearly the responsibility of the educator and, even more particularly, of the leaders of spiritual thought. It seems to me, therefore, that this is the fundamental way in which you can manifest your support for the ideals of the United Nations - through the training of the minds of men and women in the ideals of tolerance, of understanding and of justice.