

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES



CANADA

INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 62/7

THE UNITED NATIONS - AN OPPORTUNITY AND A CHALLENGE

An interview between the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. Howard C. Green, and Mr. Delmar MacKenzie of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, on January 25, 1962.

Mr. MacKenzie - Mr. Green, news reports have recently suggested that this is a more serious time for the United Nations than some of the difficult periods it has gone through in the past. I would like your assessment of the period that we are in now. Will the UN become stronger, or will it go the way of the League of Nations, as some have suggested?

Mr. Green - In my opinion the death of the Secretary-General, Dag Hammarskjold, last fall was by far the most serious problem of recent years. There are still extremely serious problems facing the United Nations, but that was a crisis that might very well have resulted in the break-up of the United Nations. However, a strange thing happened. Mr. Hammarskjold's death brought a very clear realization to all the delegates except those from the Communist countries (which have, you will remember, been attacking Mr. Hammarskjold for years) that the preservation of the United Nations was absolutely essential to their own survival and that it was the greatest asset that each of them had. They made up their minds that they were going to get through this crisis in one way or another, and, as you know, after a number of weeks unanimous agreement was reached on the appointment of a successor.

U Thant has been doing exceedingly well since he took that job.

I do not think there is any question of the United Nations going the way of the League of Nations.

Mr. MacKenzie - Do you believe that it has stronger roots than the League of Nations had? What safeguards does the United Nations have that were not there at the time of the League of Nations?

Mr. Green - I think the roots of the United Nations go very much deeper than those of the League of Nations. One reason, perhaps, is that the older nations have had the experience of the League of Nations and remember what went wrong with it. As a result of the Second World War, there has also developed a much greater determination to do something to stop these destructive wars. Today, the fact that a nuclear war means the end of civilization is recognized by all nations, and, in the light of this, the work of the United Nations has become vitally important; so I don't think there is any comparison between the United Nations and the League of Nations.

Mr. MacKenzie - One suggestion that has been made is that the United Nations Assembly is too large a body to make policy quickly - that the simple matter of getting through a debate on a subject, of getting through the preliminary statements, makes it difficult to get a quick decision when a quick decision is necessary. Do you know of any undertaking to change this so that the Assembly can be more effective in times of crisis?

Mr. Green - I think you must distinguish between the Security Council and the General Assembly. The General Assembly has, of course, 104 members and I don't think there should be any attempt to cut it down. As a matter of fact, there will be more members eventually. Some new ones are coming in this year, and the original plan was to have all nations represented. The Security Council, on the other hand, was supposed to be the executive of the United Nations. Five big nations are permanent members of the Council and each of them has a veto. Now, when the United Nations was set up, it was the belief that these five nations would be able to work together. They had, after all, been allies during the war and they had been successful. But almost from the start the Russians refused to co-operate. It has been difficult for the Security Council to function as it was intended to do because the Russians have had different ideas and have as you know used the veto about a hundred times. This, I think, is one of the drawbacks of the United Nations as it exists at the present, but it isn't easy to get round that difficulty.

Mr. MacKenzie - Would it require changes in the Charter? By what mechanism might this be done?

Mr. Green - The best way to change the situation would be to have a better spirit of co-operation. I think that, if the Communists decided to co-operate, then the whole organization would be able to function a good deal more efficiently than it does at the present. Even so, I am a great believer in the United Nations and I think that without it we would be in a terrible situation in the world today.

Mr. MacKenzie - Do you see any indication that the Soviet Union - that the Communist countries - have taken a more co-operative attitude towards the United Nations since the fifteenth Assembly, when all that trouble occurred?

Mr. Green - The co-operation last fall and so far during 1962 has been much closer than it was a year earlier. A number of steps have been taken by agreement, and tension has lessened a good deal since the problem of a replacement for Mr. Hammarskjold was worked out. You will recall that that was done by unanimous agreement, although the Russians had demanded that the Secretary-General's office should be filled by three men - one from the Communist world, one from the West, and one from the uncommitted countries - and that each should have a veto. However, they dropped the idea and agreed to the appointment of U Thant.

Mr. MacKenzie - A suggestion has since been made in the United States, and in Britain - and it may be that this has only been made in the press and not formally - that some kind of mechanism (not a three-part Secretary-General, but a representative group of advisers, or something of that sort) be set up under the Secretary-General. Has there been any movement toward this?

Mr. Green - U Thant has actually done that since he took over as Acting Secretary-General. He now has a larger advisory group around him than Mr. Hammarskjold has and they represent a much wider group of countries. That is in effect today.

Mr. MacKenzie - To return to the suggestion that this is a particularly critical time at the United Nations. This is partly based on the view of some of the European countries that the United Nations is just a "talk-shop" and partly on the concern, which Lord Home expressed, that the small powers may be voting in a different manner on issues where they are using force than on issues where a larger nation uses force. Do you see any attitude on the part of the small or middle powers that is likely to cause the big powers to rely less on the United Nations?

Mr. Green - I would hope not. In my experience at the United Nations, I have found that the representatives of all countries are a pretty good lot. Of course they are trying to put forward the views of their own people, but I don't think that any more criticism should be levelled at the small or middle members of the United Nations than at the large ones. One thing to remember is that all these delegates are human and that they make mistakes. Almost everyone has faced some criticism.

President de Gaulle has been very critical of the United Nations, and I don't agree with that. Lord Home was critical, but in the reports of his speech the emphasis was placed on the first half, which was the critical portion; the second half was played down and in the second half he praised the United Nations. I personally think Lord Home was too critical of the organization, but that's a matter of opinion.

Mr. MacKenzie - There is also a matter of economics. This seems to have become critical at the United Nations. What would be your view of the future financing of the United Nations?

Mr. Green - This financing of the United Nations is a very serious problem, and a great deal of trouble has been caused by the expense of the United Nations Emergency Force in the Middle East and particularly by the cost of the Congo operation. I think it costs about \$10 million a month. It is a very sad fact that some countries refuse to pay anything towards either of these operations. The Communist countries pay nothing toward the cost of the United Nations Emergency Force and they pay nothing toward the cost in the Congo. The French pay nothing for the Congo. The Belgians were paying nothing toward the Congo operation, but they changed their policy a few weeks ago. This defaulting has meant that other countries have had to pay more than their share. If every country paid its fair share for the cost of these operations, the United Nations would have no financial problems.

The finances of the United Nations had fallen so far behind that at the last session the General Assembly authorized a bond issue of \$200 million; it is hoped that the repayment of that bond issue will be made possible by all countries paying their regular assessments. In other words, the cost of redeeming the bond issue will be included in the regular assessment. The financing of the United Nations has certainly been a very difficult problem and it's been of great concern to Canada. We have taken a very active part in trying to find a solution to the problem.

Mr. MacKenzie - What part of the bond issue is Canada buying?

Mr. Green - The bond issue is for \$200 million. Our commitment is for \$6.2 million

Mr. MacKenzie - I would like to pursue the question of Canada's vote in the United Nations. The suggestion was made some years ago - at the time of the previous United Nations intervention - that a permanent police force might be set up under the United Nations to which countries such as Canada could contribute. Has this idea been pursued or has there been a change in the original concept?

Mr. Green - There never was a desire at the United United - at least during Mr. Hammarskjold's term - to have a force of regular troops or what you might call a United Nations army. Mr. Hammarskjold felt it was better that nations should have forces which could be called upon in an emergency and the Canadian Government agrees with that. We have one regular battalion earmarked for service with the United Nations. As you know, we have a large number of troops in Palestine and in the Congo, partly because the middle powers are called on for police duty far more than any other group of nations. It isn't considered wise to ask the large powers to put troops into any of these areas because, if they started fighting amongst themselves, we might very well have a third world war. The very small nations are not in a position to supply troops, so the burden has fallen on countries like Canada. Mr. Hammarskjold used to tell me in New York that Canada could act as a fire brigade. I don't think any country has taken a larger part in the United Nations peace-keeping operations than Canada has done, and I don't think any country has a larger number of trained personnel for work of that kind.

Mr. MacKenzie - Do you expect Canada's role in the field of security - of peace-keeping operations - to expand?

Mr. Green - Yes, I do. I think there will be general expansion of the peace-keeping function by the United Nations, and I think that something on a bigger scale has to be worked out for peace-keeping operations. That is one of the subjects we are studying at the present time.

Mr. MacKenzie - Mr. Green, could I ask you, at this point, to outline anything else you might like to say about the United Nations and Canada's role in it?

Mr. Green - I believe there are several reasons why Canada has an important role to play at the United Nations. We have never been a colonial power (not that we are any better than the colonial countries - we have simply been so busy developing our own country that we have not had time to look at anyone else's). Since we are not a colonial power, we have an advantage in dealing with countries which have recently gained their freedom. Furthermore, we have a generally good reputation; we are considered to be idealistic in our approach to world affairs. Canada's support for the Colombo Plan and other aid programmes is an example of our idealism. Finally, Canada has a lot of friends. We have good friends in Africa and Latin America. I don't think any country has better relations with Latin American than we do, and we are also on very good terms with the new French-speaking states in Africa. They are intrigued by the fact that Canada is a bilingual country and it is much easier for us to establish good relations with them than

it is for most of the older countries in the United Nations. We are on very good terms with the Scandinavian countries. In New York they sometimes refer to the Scandi-Canadian axis, because we so often reach the same conclusions as our Scandinavian friends. We have many friends in Asia. Japan, for example, is one of our closest associates at the United Nations and there are others - Malaya, Burma, the Philippines, India, Pakistan and so on. Not less important, we have a very close connection with the United States. We have closer, more friendly relations with the United States than any other country in the world. I think even the Communist countries have respect for Canada. I don't know whether they like us, but I think they respect us; so we are able, at the United Nations, to take initiatives and to muster a good deal of support. We did that last fall with considerable success. The United Nations represents a great opportunity and a great challenge to a middle power such as Canada.

S/C