



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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THE UNITED NATIONS - SURVIVAL AND CHALLENGE

Speech by the Honourable Paul Martin, Secretary of State for External Affairs, to the University Model United Nations, Montreal, February 9, 1966.

... I have been asked to speak to you on the general theme for your meetings -- "The United Nations -- Survival and Challenge". With public attention focused on proceedings in the Security Council in the past week, this is a theme which is particularly timely and important. The situation in Vietnam brings before the world the issues of war and peace which were of fundamental importance in the thinking of those who drafted the United Nations Charter in 1945. It reveals, in a particularly dramatic fashion, the problems preventing the proper functioning of the world organization.

It has, of course, been the desire of the Canadian Government that the United Nations would be able to act effectively to end the conflict in Vietnam. At the opening of the General Assembly session last September, I pointed out:

"Speaking for Canadians, I can say that it is a matter of deep concern that the United Nations has been prevented from effective action in Vietnam.... It is the duty of this Assembly to express clearly and forcefully the collective conviction of the United Nations that the war in Vietnam must be brought to a negotiated settlement."

In Parliament last week I stated that I wished that "there was a role for the United Nations, and that there was a greater opportunity for the Secretary-General to play even a more productive role in the matter than he has been able to play in spite of his heroic efforts".

We have welcomed the United Nations action, in bringing the matter before the Security Council, although we realize fully the major obstacles which at present prevent that agency from acting effectively. I hope that the attention that has been focused on United Nations involvement in this crisis will lead to renewed efforts to find a basis for the negotiation which is the only practicable means of settling this tragic war. I think that we are all increasingly aware of the validity of the observation made by U Thant in his annual report last summer, that "both the Vietnam situation and the disarmament impasse point once again to the imperative need for the United Nations to achieve universality of membership as soon as possible".

I do not intend, however, to comment further on this particular situation. I have discussed Vietnam in Parliament on several occasions in recent days and I should like to continue rather with an assessment of your main theme at the Model United Nations -- the challenge to the organization in many fields. There is some danger involved in considering the United Nations too much in the light of the crisis of the day, with the result that we miss the significance of gradual development on a broad front.

Twenty Years After

Twenty years is a very brief span in the development of a great political institution. Our national parliaments have taken centuries to establish principles and rules for the orderly and democratic conduct of the nation's business. It is curious that on the international plane, and in an organization now composed of 117 independent countries, we have a tendency to demand instant perfection.

"We find it hard", as the Secretary-General of the United Nations said at the Commemorative Meeting in San Francisco last year, "to accept the time-lag between the formulation of an idea and its practical realization, and we are sometimes inclined to question the validity of an idea -- or even to reject it impatiently -- before it has had the chance to take root and grow."

I, for one, would agree with U Thant that it was never realistic to suppose that sovereign governments, in a relatively short period, would be able to live up to all the ideals and aims of the United Nations Charter. It seems obvious that, if we want a better system for peace and security, then years of long and hard work will be required to remove the many obstacles in the way.

The United Nations is not, and may never be, a world parliament. As long as the world is made up of independent sovereign states, the work of the United Nations will be affected by the clash of national interests. But this does not mean that we cannot set some limits to the rivalry of nations. It does not mean that we cannot direct that rivalry into more constructive channels of peaceful competition.

It is often forgotten that, only a few years after the United Nations was founded, the effect of the cold war and the East-West deadlock almost made it impossible for the organization to work as a force for peace. And yet, what has in fact happened in the last 15 years or so? We have, through a process of trial and error, found ways to keep fighting from breaking out in several parts of the world. Also, the United Nations, by serving as a place for discussion and an agency for the peaceful settlement of disputes, has itself helped a good deal to improve relations between East and West.

The lesson to be drawn from this is that it will take many years to make the United Nations into a really effective world organization. We shall have to find new ways of getting along with other countries. Every country will have to give up something of its own interests, in the interest of a better world.

Challenges for the Future

Two of the most important challenges facing the United Nations are peace keeping and the problem of under-development. The overwhelming majority of United Nations member states are under-developed countries. So long as this condition persists, there cannot be any expectation of lasting peace and stability. We must help these countries to develop their economies. In so doing, we are making it easier for the United Nations to achieve peace in the world.

Peace Keeping and Financing

Of course, peace keeping has been a special preoccupation of Canada's since the United Nations was founded.

All nations agree that the United Nations should improve its ability to keep the peace. The basic purpose of the organization is, after all, the maintenance of peace and security. In this field the effectiveness of the United Nations depends on the means it has available for action. Unfortunately, to date, peace-keeping operations have been organized without much advance planning. It has been impossible to reach agreement as to the ways in which these operations should in general be authorized, controlled and financed.

The Charter must, of course, be our starting-point. However, part of the trouble is that the United Nations has been called upon to deal with situations which were not clearly set forth in the Charter. Also, the idea of collective security in the Charter has undergone significant changes. The changes have been gradual; each has been made for a good reason at the time. We can see how this has happened. The enforcement provisions of Chapter VII of the Charter have in practice been abandoned in favour of recommendations. The General Assembly, and not just the Security Council, can start peace-keeping action in certain circumstances. The smaller and middle powers have been asked to help by using their armed forces.

One solution would be to revise the Charter but this, I fear, has no hope of success. U Thant has drawn attention to the fact that "situations involving the restoration or maintenance of international peace and security vary so considerably that it would be very difficult to attempt to rewrite the Charter to include absolutely clear and precise provisions to deal with every given situation to the satisfaction of all members".

I am personally confident that, with goodwill and co-operation, it should be possible to find an acceptable formula, within the terms of the Charter, to overcome the present difficulties that face the organization.

We in Canada regret that, in recent years, fewer states have accepted the principle of collective financial responsibility for the costs of peace-keeping operations. Nevertheless, in the dispute over this issue in the last couple of years, there was really no reasonable alternative for the United Nations but to come to terms with the strongly held views of the Soviet Union and France. Moreover, I should

hope that, in the future, for basically the same reasons, differences of opinion which may develop over issues of principle will not be pushed to the point where any important member or group of members might feel impelled to leave the organization.

It is essential that agreement be reached on rules to govern the conduct of future United Nations peace-keeping operations. I shall explain the Canadian approach to these questions.

First, we believe that the maximum possible sharing of the cost, preferably by collective assessment, is the fairest method of financing peace keeping. It should be the first method to be considered. When it is decided to split up the costs of an operation among all members this should be done according to a special scale which, among other things, takes account of the ability to pay of the developing countries.

Second, the functions and powers of the Security Council and of the General Assembly should be regarded as complementary. Either one can have a role to play. If the Security Council is unable to act because of disagreement amongst the great powers, then the General Assembly must be allowed to consider the matter and to recommend to governments what they should do if they so desire. It can be expected that the Assembly, before reaching any decision, will take into account views expressed in the Security Council.

Third, the United Nations must have the technical and military ability to act when required. This accounts for the Canadian interest in advance planning and the provision of stand-by forces for United Nations service.

There are many more things that must be looked into. For example in the future the United Nations will have to pay much more attention to developing its ability as a conciliator in seeking solutions to the underlying political disputes which have led to conflict. In the past, United Nations intervention has too often tended to freeze a situation.

In the introduction to his last annual report on the work of the organization, U Thant pointed out that United Nations peace-keeping operations "have often seemed to possess the limitations of their own success, namely, that they have helped over long periods to contain and isolate explosive situations without really affecting the basic causes of conflict". He went on to suggest that the very fact that operations such as the United Nations Emergency Force in the Middle East (UNEF) have become an accepted and semi-permanent part of the way of life in these areas has created problems. It has tended to reduce the sense of urgency which might otherwise stimulate the parties concerned to search for a basic solution of their differences. This is no reflection on the conduct of these operations but, as the Secretary-General says, it is, nonetheless, a dilemma which all countries ought to study carefully in relation to both existing and future peace-keeping operations.

The Challenge of Under-Development

I turn now to the second major problem confronting the United Nations -- the challenge of under-development.

The problem is so great that it is not easy to understand. The statistics reveal the shocking reality. Two-thirds of the world's population lives in under-developed countries which together command only one-sixth of the world's income. In this Model General Assembly, then, the overwhelming majority of student delegates will be representing countries with a per capita income of less than \$250, compared to the United States' per capita income of about \$3,000. There is a vast gap between the majority of states, which are poor or very poor, and a small group of industrially-developed, high-income countries.

As you know, at the start of the Sixties, the United Nations sponsored a programme called the Development Decade. The aim was for the under-developed countries, as a group, to reach a yearly rate of economic growth of 5 per cent. This rate of growth has not, in general, been achieved. When allowance is made for population growth, per capita income in about half the 80 under-developed countries which are members of the World Bank is rising by only 1 per cent a year or less. This means that those countries which are lagging behind can scarcely hope to reach a per capita income of \$170 annually by the year 2000.

In the words of the President of the World Bank (George D. Woods), the implications are plain and sobering:

"If present trends are allowed to continue, there will be no adequate improvement in living standards in vast areas of the globe for the balance of this century. Yet, over the same period, the richer countries will be substantially increasing their wealth."

The gap is, therefore, widening. The flow of international aid from the industrialized countries seems to have reached a plateau and is not rising. Tragically, the present trend is for the growth of the low-income countries slowly to lose momentum.

There are other and related problems -- population growth, the initial cost of becoming an industrial society, which is much higher than it was at the start of this century, and the high cost of debt service, which means that a poor country must spend much of its foreign exchange on debt repayment rather than investing in new productive development.

Although the picture is bleak there are certain hopeful aspects: --The rich nations have accepted a measure of responsibility to assist the development of the poor. In the industrialized countries, people are learning how to carry out aid programmes more efficiently. For example, in Canada we have reorganized our aid effort to bring greater knowledge and experience to bear on development problems. The Canadian aid effort has doubled in volume since 1963, and during the current year some \$250 million will have been made available in Canadian aid.

--Countries such as Canada are finding new and better ways to act in groups or to act individually in giving aid to under-developed countries. Consultative groups have been organized to co-ordinate the flow of aid and technical assistance to particular countries. These groups, in which Canada is participating, have proved their value in India and Pakistan.

--The United Nations, which we used to think of as a place where economic and social problems could only be discussed, has increasingly become a place where action is taken leading to change in the economic field. This development has been reflected in the establishment of a number of major assistance programmes. Different types of technical assistance have been combined under the new United Nations Development Programme; the World Food Programme has been established on a firm basis; and UNICEF is continuing its outstanding work to provide health, nutrition and welfare services for children in the under-developed nations. Again, there is a new attempt to link the ideas about more liberal trade policies with the ideas about international aid. This has led to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and a host of related bodies.

All this is to the good. It is clear, however, that very much more needs to be done and that our generation may well be judged on the success or failure of our efforts to reduce the disparity between the developed and the under-developed countries.

More aid must be made available to the under-developed countries and on better terms. To assist in meeting this need Canada recently introduced a new development-loan programme of \$50 million annually on terms as liberal as those offered by any country granting aid or by any international lending agency.

More aid, in the form of preliminary studies of the possibilities for economic development, will have to be made available through the United Nations. At a minimum, it is estimated that the present target of \$200 million annually for the United Nations Development Programme will have to be doubled over the next five years.

I can assure you that in Canada we intend to back these efforts. It is an immense challenge -- that of raising standards of living and opportunity through international co-operation. It is also an immense incentive to peace.

In conclusion, may I wish you well in your deliberations. The United Nations, it is true, did not create the international problems of today. It must, however, do something to help solve them if it is to justify the faith placed in it. The energy with which you carry out your work here will be a measure of your belief in the United Nations and your service to that higher ideal of a peaceful world with fair living standards and reasonable opportunities for all men....