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THE UNITED NATIONS AT THE CROSSROADS

The following passages are from a speech delivered to the Canadian Club of Montreal on April 12 by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. Paul Martin:

We are facing, at this moment, one of the most serious crises we have faced since the end of the Second World War. It is not a crisis which has come upon us suddenly. As Canadians, as members of the International Commission, we have watched that crisis build up in Vietnam over the past ten years.... It has reached the point where the maintenance of peace and security in that part of the world are seriously at issue.

In such a situation, the interests, of the international community are deeply engaged. We should be right to expect, therefore, that the international community would bring its influence to bear upon that situation. And the channel that comes to mind for doing that is, of course, the United Nations. For the United Nations is the highest expression of the collective will to peace of the international community....

VARIED ROLE OF UN

If we look back over the past two decades, it would be difficult to think of many situations of the kind which is now confronting us in Vietnam in which the United Nations has not had a part to play. In some it has served as an organ of mediation. In others it has acted to contain the conflict until a settlement could be negotiated at the political level. In others still, it has been able to muster an international presence to supervise and guarantee arrangements

freely entered into by the parties concerned. At the very least, the United Nations was able to keep open the channels, to provide a discreet venue for contact between the parties. And it was able to do these things because there is written into the Charter of the United Nations a collective commitment by all its members in all situations "to unite their strength to maintain international peace and security".

But here we are, faced with a situation that is full of the gravest risks, with a situation that is threatening to set back much of the patient progress we have made towards broadening the basis of international co-operation, and the United Nations has been powerless to intervene. It has been compelled to stand by in impotence while the situation deteriorated. It has been incapable of taking the action it should be taking to reverse the course of events in Vietnam, to bring the parties to the negotiating table, to prepare the ground for a peaceful and honourable accommodation. It has been incapable of doing these things because some of the parties concerned have refused to accept its credentials to act in this situation and because it is itself engaged in a crisis which has had the effect of paralyzing the general will for international action....

UN FUTURE IN DOUBT

What I am concerned with...is the future of the United Nations as an organization. Twenty years after the First World War, the League of Nations came to the end of its effective life. And it foundered on the rock of collective security. Are we going to allow, can we afford to allow, the United Nations to

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(C.W.B. April 14, 1965)

share the fate of its predecessor?...Or are we going to revalue the role of the United Nations, to give it the authority, the responsibility and the support which it must have if it is to play its proper part in a rapidly changing world? If we do not want history to repeat itself, these are questions which we must ask ourselves in this twentieth year of the existence of the United Nations....

UNFOUNDED ASSUMPTIONS

When the United Nations came into being it was assumed that its effective operation would depend upon the great powers acting in harmony with one another. It was assumed that the United Nations would be supported and sustained by the strength of the great powers. And that assumption applied, of course, with particular force to the functions which the United Nations was expected to discharge in the matter of keeping the peace. In the event, these assumptions failed to materialize. Instead of drawing on the strength of the great powers to bring situations of conflict and instability under control, the problem for the United Nations became one of insulating such situations from great-power involvement. Needless to say, in those circumstances much of the machinery envisaged in the Charter for maintaining or restoring international peace and security proved, in practice, to be inoperable.

DIVERGENCE OF VIEWS

Then, of course, there has always been a difference of view among the great powers as to the latitude they were prepared to give the United Nations as the focus of an evolving system of world order and security. As a senior official of the United States Government recently defined it, the United States approach to this question has been "that the Charter of the United Nations is a treaty obligation and affords the framework for an evolving system of international law and order which should be upheld and expanded by custom and by extension as world conditions permit". But that has not been the approach of all the other great powers. And, in particular, it has not been the approach of the Soviet Union. The Soviet view of the United Nations has always been much more restrictive. It has not been prepared to see the United Nations evolve into that "dynamic instrument of governments" which the late Dag Hammarskjöld envisaged and which alone can do justice to the conception of an evolving world community....

In a recent article, Professor Hans Morgenthau suggested that there was an "insoluble contradiction between national sovereignty and an effective international organization". Now perhaps, if we think in terms of world government, that may be so. But I do not myself think the two are irreconcilable in practice. Nor was that the view of the framers of the United Nations Charter, who explicitly assumed that the organization would be "based on the principle of the sovereign equality of all its members". The real point, surely, is this: the United Nations is an organization composed of sovereign states; as such, its effectiveness depends on the willingness of its members to co-operate freely and responsibly in the realization of its purposes and objectives.

PROBLEM OF NEW NATIONALISM

Now I think it is fair to say that, when the Second World War ended, there was a broad disposition to do that, to work together for the achievement of a more rational world order. To some extent this disposition has continued. It is certainly at the base of what we have been able to accomplish over the past two decades in working together internationally towards common objectives. But, in the intervening 20 years, the world has changed. In many countries, recovery and reconstruction have led to a resurgent sense of national identity. And in scores of new countries the current of nationalism which propelled these countries to independent nationhood has continued to flow strongly.

I am not here concerned with an assessment of nationalism. I am inclined, in fact, to think that the pendulum may have swung, that nationalism may have entered into a new phase. Certainly, the constructive impact it has on the nation-building process cannot be seriously discounted, particularly in the new countries. What I am concerned to argue is that the conditions prevailing at the end of the Second World War - conditions in which men tended to focus their hopes and aspirations beyond the national horizon - no longer apply in quite the same measure today.

There is another consideration which I think is relevant to any analysis of the present position of the United Nations. When the United Nations came into being in 1945, it had 51 founding members. Today, 20 years later, its membership is 114. The vast majority of the new members have different problems and preoccupations from our own. Of course, they are concerned with peace no less than we are. But they are also concerned with racial equality, with the eradication of colonialism and, above all, with the yawning and widening gap between rich and poor in the world. They need an environment of peace if they are to carry forward their economic development with any prospect of success. But they would argue, conversely, that there cannot be true peace or true stability in the world unless the sources of conflict, the sources of instability, are removed. And that, in their view, requires an imaginative international approach to their problems. And they remind us that, in the Charter of the United Nations, we pledged ourselves not only "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war" but also "to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom".

CORE OF CRISIS

These, then, are some of the factors that have led to the present crisis in the affairs of the United Nations. The core of that crisis relates to the matter of peace keeping. In the face of great-power deadlock, it became clear that the type of enforcement action provided for in the Charter could not realistically be contemplated. And so the peace-keeping operations of the United Nations developed along different lines. Essentially, they involved the injection of United Nations forces into situations of conflict or potential conflict with the consent of the state or states concerned. They involved "holding the fort", as it were, until longer-term solutions

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PRAIRIE FISHERIES STUDIED

A further step toward the establishment of a regional export-sales organization for Canada's freshwater-fish products was taken recently at a meeting in Ottawa of the Federal-Provincial Prairie Fisheries Committee, which consists of deputy ministers of federal and provincial government departments concerned with fisheries. It was decided that officials of the federal Departments of Fisheries, Trade and Commerce and others concerned should establish a technical group to study the feasibility of such an organization from all points of view and produce a design for consideration by both federal and provincial governments. This group will make its first report to the Committee at a meeting in Ottawa on May 7.

The Committee also considered proposals made by sub-committees on suggested designations of grades of fish and standards of quality for the fishery products of the Prairie Provinces, the Northwest Territories and northwestern Ontario. A report on the idea of provincial loan boards and its possible application to the Prairie Provinces was also considered. Mr. J.S. McLean of the Nova Scotia Fisheries Loan Board gave the Committee the benefit of his considerable experience in this field. The Committee also received from federal officials an outline of the Fishing Vessel Assistance Plan and the problems associated with its possible extension to the Prairie Provinces.

BOATS AND EQUIPMENT

Another report heard by the Committee was on the Federal Government's Fisheries Indemnity Plan for boats and equipment. It was agreed that the inland provinces should advise the Federal Government regarding their interest in extension of the plan to their fisheries. It was indicated that the Government would give serious consideration to such an extension.

Other matters considered at these meetings were plans for economic research in the freshwater fisheries of Canada and development of an improved fisheries statistical system. Federal-provincial programmes in Newfoundland were described for the benefit of the Prairie members of the Committee, and other matters discussed were information, education and extension services. Biological and technological research programmes in freshwater areas were discussed with Dr. F.R. Hayes, Chairman of the Fisheries Research Board of Canada.

TIDAL-POWER TO BE STUDIED

Federal hydrographers and oceanographers of the Department of Mines and Technical Surveys will study tides and currents in the upper Bay of Fundy this summer to assist in the assessment of the potential of tidal-power development in the Minas Basin and Shepody Bay-Cumberland Basin area, according to an announcement made recently by the Minister of Mines and Technical Surveys, Mr. W.M.

Benidickson, and Mr. J.W. Pickersgill, Minister of Transport, who is the Cabinet member responsible for the Atlantic Development Board.

Personnel of the Department's Bedford Institute of Oceanography at Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, will make the survey, which will take about three months. They will use a chartered ship and operate current and gauging stations at key points in the area. The survey will be a follow-up of the hydrographic coverage of the Bay up to Cape Chignecto last summer by the Canadian Hydrographic Service.

BASIS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

These surveys will provide the data for further studies of the effect on the tide in the Bay of Fundy of construction of dams and barriers across Minas Basin and Shepody Bay-Cumberland Basin. Mr. Pickersgill said recently in the House of Commons that the Atlantic Development Board was considering further power studies in the area, which would include investigations of Minas Basin similar to the first-phase study already completed of Shepody Bay and Cumberland Basin. The study and survey being undertaken by the Department of Mines and Technical Surveys is complementary to further studies on tidal power to be carried out by the Atlantic Development Board.

THE UNITED NATIONS AT THE CROSSROADS (Continued from P. 2)

could be brought into play. And where such operations could not be mounted by decision of the Security Council — whose primacy in these matters was never really at issue — they were mounted under the residual authority which the Charter has conferred upon the General Assembly in these matters.

The difficulty arose when the Soviet Union, France and some other countries refused to be bound to pay their share of the cost of certain peace-keeping operations. That was not, of course, the position of the vast majority of member states, which accepted the principle of collective financial responsibility as applying to these operations. And the view of the majority was also sustained by the International Court, which confirmed that the costs of peace keeping were expenses of the organization within the meaning of the relevant articles of the Charter and thus legitimately assessed by the General Assembly.

DILEMMA FACING UN

And so the Soviet Union, France and the other countries concerned found themselves in a position of financial default. By January 1 of this year, 13 of these countries had accumulated arrears in amounts which brought them within the scope of Article 19 of the Charter. That is to say, they could be deprived of their vote in the General Assembly. But, in the final analysis, the General Assembly could not bring itself to take that step. It realized

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that such a step would divide the membership, perhaps irrevocably, that it involved the risk of two of the great powers walking out of the United Nations, that, whatever the outcome, the financial position of the organization was unlikely to be repaired in that way. At the same time, the General Assembly was not prepared to condone financial default; it was not prepared to surrender the principle of collective financial responsibility even though it failed explicitly to uphold it. Personally, I regard this as a great tragedy. But having said that, I must also acknowledge the great dilemma with which the General Assembly was faced. Either way, the stakes were incalculably high. And, in these circumstances, there was perhaps something to be said for the view that what was needed was a pause — a pause for negotiation, a pause for reflection, which would give all concerned an opportunity to consider how the position of the United Nations could best be brought into line with the changing requirements and the changing realities of a changing world.

UN NOT WORLD GOVERNMENT

Whatever the gravity of the present crisis, we should not, I think, allow it to distort our perspective. This is not the first great crisis the United Nations has faced and it will not be the last. We must recognize that the United Nations is not — and is not likely, in the foreseeable future, to become — an instrument of world government. The late Dag Hammarskjöld rightly envisaged it as “a dynamic instrument”. But he did not lose sight of the fact that it was, in essence, an “instrument of governments”. And, much as we might regret it, most governments are not yet prepared, in this imperfect world of ours, to subordinate national interests, to any significant extent, to the collective interest of the world community where the two appear to diverge.

If that applies to governments in their generality, it applies, I think, with particular force to the governments of the great powers. In a deeply divided world, that is a fact of life we have to accept realistically. It does not mean, of course, that we must abandon the ideal — the vision — of a more rational world order. What it does mean is, as Victor Hugo once put it, that there are limits to the amount of future it is practicable to inject into the present.

UN ACHIEVEMENT

I also believe that we must see the present situation as a whole. It is true, of course, that the United Nations has reached a critical juncture in its affairs. It is also true that some phases of the work of the United Nations have had to be put in suspense. But that is only one facet of the situation. The Security Council was able to discharge a heavy agenda of business in 1964. In the same year, the United Nations was instrumental in mounting the largest economic conference to have been held in recorded history. The United Nations is now following up the results of that conference by bringing within a single international focus the problem of economic development in its various ramifications. The Specialized Agencies of the United Nations are continuing to move forward vigorously in their respective fields — in improving

health and education, in augmenting food supplies, in bettering labour standards, in regulating international aviation and communications, in harnessing the atom for peaceful uses. And I need hardly remind you that United Nations forces — including Canadian forces — are still keeping the peace in various quarters of the globe, from Cyprus to Korea.

So what is at stake here, as *The Economist* recently put it, is not just the survival of a debating society. What is at stake is the whole pattern of international co-operation we have been able to evolve over the past 20 years....

NO WAY BUT FORWARD

In this situation, our course is clear. We have no alternative but to go forward. We must consolidate the progress we have made. We must invest the United Nations with the influence, the strength and the moral authority to discharge the responsibilities which the Charter has laid upon it. We must build on the past, but we must also open up new perspectives for the future.

How, then, do we go about doing these things?

First, we must restore the United Nations to solvency. We must at all costs avoid a recurrence of the present crisis.

Second, we must preserve the capacity of the United Nations to play its rightful part in the maintenance of international peace and security... Much as I wish it were otherwise, I believe that the need for peace keeping will continue undiminished in the foreseeable future.

Third, we must proceed in these matters on the basis of the broadest possible consensus of the membership of the United Nations....

Fourth, we must take serious account of the shift of emphasis that has taken place in the preoccupations of the membership of the United Nations. We must be prepared to give equal weight to the problems of peace and security and to those relating to the betterment of the social and economic conditions in which the vast majority of mankind are constrained to live....

Fifth, we must be prepared to go further in accommodating the new nations of the world. We have been inclined to see the United Nations as an instrument for security and stability. They see it as an instrument for peaceful change in the world. There must be a bridging between these two conceptions if we are to give the new nations a firm stake in the United Nations.

Sixth, we must recognize — and act on the recognition — that, in the world of today, the United Nations cannot be the property or preserve of any single nation or group of nations....

Seventh, we must also recognize that, so long as there are divisions in the world, they are bound to find reflection in the United Nations. If we want to make the United Nations a more effective body, we must work at narrowing the differences that divide us....

Eighth, whatever the exigencies of the present situation, we must keep the goal of universal membership firmly before us as a means of strengthening the organization.

Ninth, we must be prepared... to take those steps that are necessary to make the United Nations a really effective instrument of world order....