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CANADA AND THE UNITED NATIONS IN THE MID-SIXTIES

BY

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HEAD OF THE UNITED NATIONS DIVISION

DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

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Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen;

INTRODUCTION

It is a great pleasure for me to be with you tonight. Those of us who have the job of dealing on a day-to-day basis with Canada's foreign affairs are by force of circumstances compelled to live in what might fairly be called an un-Canadian environment. We alternate long periods of service abroad with spells in Ottawa where we are submerged in the parliamentary-civil-service atmosphere (or should I call it smog) of the capital. In this situation it is very difficult to maintain a sense of identity based on knowledge of the views and concerns of the people for whom we are acting as agents - namely the Canadian taxpayers. Our Department recognizes

this problem and tries to arrange periodically for foreign service officers to travel around Canada, but shortages of staff and travel funds impose very strict limitations on the extent of this program.

2. With this explanation, and because as a Westener living in Eastern exile an opportunity to breathe western air again is always appreciated, I feel frank to confess that I worked hard to promote this visit. But these were not my only reasons; I feel that as Head of the United Nations Division in the Department of External Affairs I have a particular missionary responsibility.

3. The United Nations is supposed to represent the interests of Everyman. The Charter's opening words are "We the People of the United Nations..." These are bold words, but words without substance unless the measures taken by Governments to fulfill their responsibilities as members of the world community are buttressed by an enlightened public opinion with the capacity to support, exhort or criticize as required. It is an obvious corollary that the

public must be well-informed, and although a tremendous mass of published information about the United Nations is readily available, I don't think that it replaces the desirability of first-hand contact between interested citizens and those who represent them at the U.N.

4. During the period of my assignment to our U.N. Mission in New York I was always very conscious of, and encouraged by, the fact that the level of interest in the United Nations and support for its objectives is at least as high, and probably higher, in Canada than anywhere else in the world. But since my return to Ottawa I have become equally aware of the need to reinforce interest with knowledge. These past few years have been eventful ones for the U.N. and I think it is very important that the significance of developments during this period should be fully appreciated so that our attitude toward the Organization and toward our role and opportunities as a member state may be based on sound premises.

This, I hope, will explain my topic, - "Canada and the United Nations in the mid-Sixties", and why I am looking forward to getting as well as giving in the course of our discussion.

THE CHANGING CHARACTER OF THE ORGANIZATION

5. Perhaps the best starting-point is the U.N. itself.

It is now well into its twenty-first year -- it has come of age.

Already it has outlived the effective life of its predecessor,

the League of Nations. During the brief but eventful period that

it has been on the international scene, change and development

within the Organization have been continuous and it is only to

be expected that the U.N. of 1966 differs in some important

respects from what it was, and was intended to be, in 1945.

6. Let us also be clear about what the U.N. is not. It is

often, but quite incorrectly referred to as a world parliament.

In fact it is an organization of sovereign nations, each one of

which, to all intents and purposes, is free to interpret its Charter obligations as it sees fit. I would suggest that a more appropriate metaphor is that of Professor Innes Claud. He has described the U.N. as a tool, - an instrument. Its members, - the hands which control this instrument, have purposes which they would like to have it serve, and the political process within the Organization is, in essence a continuing struggle between the advocates of conflicting purposes, - a struggle to determine whose purposes will be served by the United Nations. Thus, the Charter has not changed but the political context within which the United Nations exists and functions has changed, and this makes all the difference between the United Nations of 1945 and that of today.

7. During the first ten years of the United Nations' existence the hands which guided the instrument were in all important respects Western. Since then there has been a gradual

but accelerating process of diffusion so that today no one group can enforce its own purposes. This process can be considered to have begun with the 1955 decision (for which Canada was in large measure instrumental) to admit a number of countries hitherto excluded. It is now evident that this decision was one of the most significant taken by the Organization since the signing of the Charter in that it opened the gates to the flood of newly-decolonized nations.

8. The new members are for the most part non-European, non-white, ex-colonial (and more or less hotly anti-colonial), economically under-developed and socially backward. They have their own order of priorities; the liquidation of western colonialism; the repudiation of racialism (or in any event the doctrine of white superiority); and international assistance for economic development without the strings that could be labelled neo-colonialism. It is only to be expected that

for all these reasons they are more or less strongly devoted to neutralism, non-alignment, and detachment from the East-West Cold War.

9. The most significant institutional effect of the influx of recently decolonized states is, of course, the voting power they have acquired in the General Assembly. In theory they can dominate that body. In fact they have not by any means reached that point and perhaps never will, but they clearly have made it something other than what it was - a dependable instrument of an American-led Western-oriented majority.

CANADA'S PLACE IN THE UNITED NATIONS

10. But what of Canada in this changing United Nations?

From the outset the U.N. has been accepted by Canadians, largely uncritically and on faith, as a pillar of our foreign policy. It has been the touchstone of our hope for the achievement of international peace and security; it has offered a counter-balance of

sorts to the pull exerted by the omni-present influence of the United States. And even although cold-war realities forced us to turn to NATO for military security, the possibility of finding alternative solutions through the United Nations continues to attract us. In sum, I think it is fair to say, there exists in Canada a kind of "U.N. mystique". This is a highly laudable and useful manifestation of faith provided it is based on a sound appraisal of situations as they are rather than as we would wish them to be. For this reason I'm going to shape my comments on Canada's place in the United Nations with a view to distinguishing between what Senator Fulbright so aptly termed myths and realities.

CANADA'S PLACE IN THE UNITED NATIONS

11. FIRST - let us look at Canada's view of itself as a leader in the Organization. If we think back to 1945 it comes as a bit of a shock to recall the status we enjoyed then

as the most important of the so-called middle powers. France was just emerging from her years of bondage, and Italy, Germany and Japan were defeated enemies, while we were in the midst of a period of unprecedented industrial expansion. We were very conscious of this status and were successful in having an expression of the special role we foresaw for ourselves spelled out in Article 23 of the Charter, which in setting out the composition of the Security Council provides that in the election of non-permanent members due regard shall be speciallly paid, in the first instance to the contribution of Members of the United Nations to the maintenance of international peace and security and to the other purposes of the Organization.

12. In spite of the guidance given in the Charter, election to the Council has in practice been dictated almost exclusively by considerations of what is referred to in the U.N. as "equitable geographical distribution". Canadian hopes of achieving frequent election to the Security Council thus have not

been realized, but indisputably during the first ten years of the U.N.'s existence, when the membership was half that of today and mainly western-oriented, and when many governments were pre-occupied with the problems of post-war reconstruction, Canada was able to exercise a measure of leadership that it was not possible to maintain as other middle powers became able to play a more active role and as the number of members in the Organization increased. In other words, the process of diffusion of influence which I mentioned a few moments ago has had specific application to Canada's position and role.

13. It is necessary that we should recognize this fact. Canada can and does have an important and influential place in the circle of nations which actively support and sustain the United Nations. But in the U.N. of today individual delegations are effective only to the extent that they can mobilize groups of other delegations to join with them. In many important areas basic policy divergencies between groups rule out any

possibility of enlisting such support, and even when it can be done the strategy often has to be Macchiavellian, even to the extent of letting some other delegation take credit for our initiatives.

CANADA'S CONTRIBUTION TO KEEPING THE PEACE

14. SECOND - let us consider the Canadian view of the U.N.'s role in the maintenance of peace and security. The Charter, of course, conceives of this essentially as the task of the Security Council acting on behalf of the whole membership, and with the unanimous agreement of the Great Powers, the permanent members of the Council. In fact this concept of unanimity has rarely been realized, and the record of the U.N.'s endeavours to take positive action to keep the peace is a history of efforts to overcome the obstacles to action imposed by the inability of the Great Powers to achieve agreement. The role of the Organization was thus effectively changed to one of keeping these powers out of troubled situations rather than bringing them in. Seen in this light the number of occasions

during the past twenty years when the U.N. has been able to make an active contribution to the maintenance or restoration of peace is impressive.

15. Canada has always been in the forefront of the advocates of U.N. activism in the field of peace-keeping. We have given support and on many occasions provided personnel and other help for the long succession of commissions, watch-dog committees, supervisory bodies for truces and cease-fires and other devices which have served to introduce a U.N. presence in areas of actual or potential conflict. In particular, we can justifiably claim to have been a principal architect of the concept of the U.N. Peace Force, beginning with the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) in Palestine in 1956 and since perpetuated by the United Nations Operation in the Congo (ONUC) and by the United Nations Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP).

16. The propagation of the idea of the peace-keeping force

has for ten years been the major target of Canadian attention at the U.N. We have used every avenue at our disposal to present it as a significant contribution to the maintenance of peace; - a valuable addition to the machinery provided in the Charter for the peaceful settlement of disputes which has helped avoid any necessity to resort to the Charter provisions for coercive action in dealing with breaches of the peace, even assuming agreement could be obtained to invoke them.

17. I think it is fair to say that the Canadian appreciation of the value of U.N. peacekeeping forces is fully justified and indeed is accepted by most member nations. But this is only half the story; peacekeeping operations have brought in their wake certain attendant problems which show no early prospect of resolution and which as of this moment are imposing increasingly serious limitations on the ability of the organization to maintain and improve on its peacekeeping capacity. I shall single out only

two of the most important.

18. The first of these limiting factors is financial. It is quite true that compared to the cost of war, peacekeeping operations come at a bargain price; but in absolute terms and measured by U.N. budgetary standards they are expensive. Where is the money to come from? For ten years our answer and that of our friends has been that costs should be shared by the whole membership as a collective responsibility. Successive Canadian governments have considered our relatively large share a reasonable price to pay for peace, but linked with this has been our firm conviction that our fellow-members should also do their share, each according to his capacity to pay. It has been what Peter Bishop described in the "International Journal" as an ideal initiative for a small and rich nation.

19. But this approach has always been resolutely opposed by the Soviet bloc, which regards as illegal any activity in this field which is not subject to active control, supervision

and veto by the permanent members of the Security Council.

Accordingly the USSR denounced the legality both of UNEF and ONUC and from the outset refused to pay its share of the costs of these operations. It was later joined by France which takes a slightly different position on the question of principle but has refused to pay its share of the cost of ONUC.

20. Most of the balance of the membership has supported the concept of collective responsibility in principle but I think it is fair to say that a great many nations take a much more detached attitude to the whole issue than we do. The small and poor nations in particular find the financial burden onerous, not so much perhaps because of the size of the share they are asked to pay, but because any diversion from their own pressing needs is resented. No doubt they also have seen the dangers to them of involvement if fighting breaks out as not being so great as they have seemed to us.

21. The issue of how to pay for the U.N.'s major peace-keeping activities came to a head at the 19th session of the General Assembly. On the one hand the Soviet bloc and France owed so much that under terms of Article 19 of the Charter they should lose their votes in the General Assembly; on the other the U.N. had used up all its available sources of credit so that some form of corrective financial action was imperative. As you will remember, the 19th session was stalemated over this issue, which was resolved only a few weeks before the beginning of the 20th Session last September. The solution, if that is the right word, was to reach a "consensus", the essence of which was that the applicability of Article 19 would not be raised with regard to UNEF and ONUC, and that the financial difficulties of the Organization should be solved through voluntary contributions by member states.

22. General acceptance of this consensus enabled the 20th Session of the General Assembly to function normally but it has

also left in its train some difficult problems, the most immediate of which is that, so far, the voluntary contributions to get the U.N. out of debt have been few and far between. But perhaps more important in the long-term is how present and future peacekeeping operations are to be financed.

23. It is clear that in future the attainment of agreement between the Great Powers about the nature, scope and duration of any specific action to be taken will be a prerequisite to successful application of the principle of collective financial responsibility. The measures authorized last autumn by the Security Council over Kashmir demonstrate that agreements of this kind are attainable in certain circumstances, but we must expect that in the present state of world affairs they will be limited and cautious. It is possible, of course, for the U.N. to act in some situations even in the absence of unanimity, and no doubt there will be occasions, such as Cyprus, when it will do so. But action in such cases is dependent on the willingness of

some members (almost always a small number) to foot the bill,
and in the words of the Secretary-General:

"the policy of piecemeal extension of peace-
keeping operations, to be financed by voluntary
contributions which may or may not be forthcoming,
makes their efficient planning and economic running
almost impossible."

24. The second factor limiting the peacekeeping potential
of the United Nations arises from the fact that success in
devising peacekeeping techniques has not been matched by success
in peace making. The Secretary-General recently commented that
peacekeeping operations have, in his own words:

"...often seemed to possess the limitations of
their own success, namely, that they have helped
over long periods to contain and isolate
situations without really affecting the basic
causes of conflict ... The very fact that they

have become an accepted and semi-permanent part of the way of life in the areas (in which they operate) has tended to come extent to reduce the sense of urgency which might stimulate a search by the parties concerned for a basic and peaceful solution of their conflicts."

25. There is no easy answer to this conundrum. Sovereign nations under the best of circumstances are most reluctant to make the kinds of concessions which are usually necessary to resolve disputes, and even more reluctant to accept any form of binding arbitration. When emotions arising from events of past history, national pride, race or religion are involved the difficulties are compounded.

26. The only course to follow, it seems to me, is the unglamorous pragmatic one of using whatever techniques offer

hope of working, including peacekeeping on occasion, to keep the temperature of conflict as low as possible and to encourage progress in the development of peaceful settlement. A guiding principle in the achievement of this aim is that the disputants, to the greatest extent possible, must be thrown on their own resources to resolve their differences. It is in the light of this principle that, in cases where peacekeeping operations are involved, the Security Council or the Assembly as the case may be, must keep testing the assumptions on which the nature and size of the U.N. presence was determined and modify or cut back its involvement to the minimum deemed necessary at any given moment.

27. This, then is the context within which Canadian policy regarding peace-keeping is going to have to be shaped for some time to come. It poses some hard questions for us. How far should we carry our support for peacekeeping in the absence of any general willingness to share the burden? What is the

danger that such operations, if supported by only a few nations, will lose their U.N. character? Alternatively is there a danger that a precedent will be created for using the U.N. to suit the particular interests of a few nations? Should we attempt to find a way of injecting new life in the moribund Military Staff Committee of the Security Council, or by doing so will we enhance the possibilities for veto action and at the same time weaken the position of the Secretary-General? I put these problems to you, not only because I'm interested in your views but also because I hope I have made it evident that they are problems which are not amenable to simple or sweeping solutions.

PRIORITIES OF PURPOSES

28. So much for peacekeeping. I want to talk next about another aspect of the Canadian attitude towards the U.N., - the order of priorities we attach to its aims and purposes. Canadians generally give first priority to the maintenance of peace. Perhaps the most frequently-expressed view in letters to the Minister for External Affairs from the Canadian public is that the

U.N. should be able to rule war out of existence and that if the present charter is inadequate for this purpose then it should be amended as necessary. The assumption behind this opinion is that the logic of the requirement is so obvious that it could not fail to win general approval. Of course it also assumes that peoples and nations the world over see the deficiencies of the present Charter and the need for reform with the same eyes as those of Canadians. Such, alas, is not the case.

29. I have already pointed out that the ideas which dominated the United Nations during its early years were Western. The Charter itself is essentially a European document. Most of the delegations responsible for drafting the Charter were of European origin and the concepts they were seeking to express were European ideas. Thus, while intellectually they recognized that saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war, and the economic and social betterment of mankind were opposite sides of the

same coin, the maintenance of peace and security was considered by most of the Charter members, certainly Canada, to be the primary purpose of the Organization. Moreover, they conceived of economic and social action mainly in institutional terms rather than in the form of a large multilateral aid and development programme.

30. I venture to suggest that in spite of the development of the past twenty years, including the growth of the U.N.'s economic and social programmes (and Canada's substantial contributions to them), the influx of new members, and the vital relationship of economic development to their political stability, Canada, along with the other economically advanced nations, has still not really accepted the concept of balance between the importance of political and security matters on the one hand, and economic, social and humanitarian affairs on the other. As a "have" nation our over-riding objective is peace and stability, but for the ninety nations with two-thirds of the world's population

whose peoples at best are only one step removed from starvation, the over-riding objective is change, - quick and dramatic change. Life for this two-thirds of the world was yesterday without hope, relief only a distant dream. Today these people know that their aspirations for a better life are a practical possibility. The ferment caused by this knowledge is perhaps the most important motive force of our time.

31. The underdeveloped nations are demanding a new division of labour and a redistribution of capital resources to bring to their people the advantages enjoyed by the wealthy west. But so far, in spite of the fact that we are in the second decade of an organized response to this demand, with the level of development assistance at a record high, the gap between the "haves" and "have-nots" continues to increase. It is this hard fact that has led the Secretary-General to comment forcefully that if the ever-widening gulf between the rich countries and the poor

is not bridged it will increase tensions to the point where eventually they could prove to be more explosive than any other divisions in the world today.

32. It is frequently suggested that a suitable target for the value of development assistance to be given by developed countries is one per cent of their Gross National Products. But just as important as help of this sort is modification of the terms of trade to give new industries in developing economies access to markets on terms which make it possible for them to compete. Unquestionably this is going to be even more difficult to attain.

33. The one sure fact is that if the present trend is to be reversed and the "widening gulf" (as the Secretary-General called it narrowed, the whole scale of the trade and development assistance operation will have to be changed. It will demand hitherto undreamed-of depths of generosity, patience and imagination on

the part of the world community. I suggest that the continued willingness of Canada to carry its share of the burden will be just as important - perhaps an even more important test of our dedication to the purposes and principles of the Charter than the efforts we make in such fields as disarmament and peace-keeping.

34. Another example of differing views on the priorities to be attached to the different purposes of the U.N. is the Afro-Asian attitude towards apartheid, colonialism and what they call neocolonialism. They are all aspects of the drive to end the mastery of the non-white part of the world and particularly of black Africa by whites. Much of the activity of the U.N. with respect to this issue has had to do with the matter of conferring or revoking legitimacy. There have been speeches, resolutions and declarations galore, affirming the right of self-determination, denouncing the fundamental iniquity of the colonial system and proclaiming the duty of the colonialists to lay down the white man's burden. The

anti-colonial forces have been successful in promoting a very broad ideological consensus on the impropriety of a continuation of colonialism. This is now being extended into international law - a new law delegitimizing colonial possession and justifying measures of liberation.

35. I think most Canadians will agree that our support must go to those who seek to end colonialism and apartheid. The difficulty is that the hard-core cases - the Portuguese Territories, Rhodesia and South Africa, are unlikely to be solved by the kinds of pressures which have been successful elsewhere. The accepted law regarding sovereignty makes the alteration of the status quo by means which the West has hitherto considered legal to be impossible.

36. The solution of the Afro-Asians is to change the law, - to give legal justification to assistance for wars of national liberation, to declare colonialism per se to be illegal,

and in the case of South Africa to seek to invoke sanctions. If we of the West don't like these solutions then it is up to us to find effective alternatives.

CONCLUSION

37. I've talked at some length about the U.N. as it is and Canada's place in it. I would like to close by projecting this examination into the future. My crystal ball is slightly flawed but I believe it is possible to identify certain factors which will strongly influence what happens.

38. The first of these factors can be seen in the reaction of the U.N. membership to the recent crisis over the financing of peacekeeping operations. In 1961, just a few days before his death, Dag Hammarskjold issued a report in which he argued that there were two groups of member nations in the U.N., - those which conceived of the Organization as a "static conference machinery" to be used by them as they saw fit for

resolving conflicts of interest, and those which believed that it should be a "dynamic instrument of governments" which would not only serve as a means of seeking reconciliation but also try to develop "forms of executive action" for the common good. This latter concept reflects the aspirations not only of most governments, but more important, of ordinary people all over the world. A specific application of this approach was the doctrine that there is a collective obligation on all members of the U.N. to help pay for approved U.N. peace-keeping actions whether or not, as individual governments, they favoured them.

39. There can be no doubt that the rejection by the Soviet bloc and by France of the doctrine of collective responsibility has dealt a severe blow to the ambition of most of us that the U.N. should move in the direction of developing an independent international personality - the seed of what might some day develop into world government. But I think that a

careful assessment of all the implications and consequences supports the conclusion that in coming to terms with the Russians and French the U.N. acted wisely. For basically the same reasons that applied in this case we should expect that divisions which may develop in the future over issues of principle, no matter how fundamental, are unlikely to be pushed so far that any important member or group of members might feel impelled to leave the Organization.

40. The second factor affecting the U.N.'s capacity for future action is the relationship between what might be called the power base and the voting base. In the early days of the U.N. the members which were instituting action programmes were at the same time the ones which could provide the resources to carry them out.

41. Today this is all too often not the case. Resolutions are passed by majorities of 90 to 0 with twenty countries abstaining, which looks like a convincing demonstration of U.N.

solidarity. The only catch is that implementation is usually dependent almost completely on the willingness of the 20 to provide the wherewithal, whether it be military force, money, or modifications of economic policies. It is resolutions of this kind which lead Western newsmen and politicians to sound off about irresponsibility, incapacity for effective action, early collapse of the organization, etc., etc. etc. Such judgments reflect the prejudices of the observers and indicate a lack of understanding of the actual situation.

42. The real problem is to realign the power-base with the voting base. This will be dependent partly on progress in strengthening the economies of the less-developed nations so that they acquire the capacity to accept a larger share of the fiscal responsibility for the U.N.'s actions, partly on alleviation of some of the burning regional problems which distract the attention of nations involved from

difficulties elsewhere in the world, and partly by the development of a greater measure of understanding on the part of each nation of the problems and concerns of others, and by a greater willingness to search for the accommodations which are essential if international relations are to be harmonized.

43. Having said this I must acknowledge that it is easier to write the prescription than to persuade the patient to take the medicine. It is going to have to be administered drop by drop and will take a long time to become effective. During this period the faith and patience of those who believe in the aims and purposes of the United Nations are going to be sorely tried. Up to now the U.N.'s major activities have on the whole corresponded with our views as citizens of an economically-developed Western democracy. Even the decisions we haven't thought much of haven't trod very hard on our pet corns. But increasingly during the next few years we are

likely to find ourselves in a minority opposed to proposals which to us are profoundly distasteful. There will be a strong temptation to leave the U.N. to flounder and to turn our attention to other avenues which look more promising.

44. I believe that this would be a serious mistake. The United Nations did not create the international problems of today and tomorrow; on the contrary, if it were suddenly to be erased the difficulties which beset the world, like dragons' teeth would multiply uncontrollably. The U.N. with all its weaknesses and faults represents our best hope for an accommodation between East and West; developed and Under-developed. Here lies the road to a better world - this is the route we must take.

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