

VERNMENT
CANADA

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 51/41 THE UNITED NATIONS TODAY AND TOMORROW

An address by the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. A.D.P. Heeney, to a combined luncheon meeting of the Empire Club and the United Nations Association in Canada (Toronto Branch) made at Toronto, on October 25, 1951.

Yesterday, October 24, was "United Nations Day" - the sixth anniversary of the coming into force of that great agreement between nations - The United Nations Charter. Six years ago millions of ordinary people, the world over, acclaimed this event as the beginning of a new order in human affairs - one from which the horrors of war were to be exorcised by the magic formula - collective security.

It was especially interesting to me that my invitation to celebrate this day with you in Toronto should have come from two sources; not only from an Association which, in terms, is devoted to the purposes and principles of the United Nations but also, jointly, from a Society which is attached to those British ideals of Empire which have contributed so greatly to the development of free co-operation between nations and to the settlement of international differences by methods of justice and common sense. This conjunction of Empire Club and United Nations Association is a happy one. For upon the nations of the Commonwealth, Asian as well as Western, the future of international organization may in considerable measure depend.

I take it that in what I have to say, you will expect me to attempt some reckoning of these past six years of the United Nations; and you may also wish me to express some views on the prospects for the success of this great experiment. At any rate I shall be able to give you some indications of how we in your Department of External Affairs are thinking of "The United Nations, Today and Tomorrow".

Now I could begin by enumerating and describing the accomplishments, the very substantial accomplishments of the United Nations and social affairs; in the so-called "specialized agencies" like the Food and Agriculture Organization, the World Health Organization, the International Civil Aviation Organization and many others. I could point to the very large and practical results of international co-operation under United Nations auspices in the relief of the needy, in care for the distressed and homeless in many lands - to the magnificent work among children and refugees and to the considerable progress that has been made since San Francisco in the development of the legal and

administrative framework of international order. The record of United Nations achievement in these and many other affairs is very great and too little known.

But substantial, even imposing, as such an account might be, you would not be satisfied with it. Nor should you be. For people everywhere, at this moment, are looking to the United Nations for one thing above all these others - to be saved, to be saved from the paralyzing threat, from the dreadful fact of war. And human beings will rightly judge the United Nations not by its social, its economic, its humanitarian achievements but by its capacity to achieve the first purpose stated in the very first article of its Charter - the maintenance of "international peace and security". It was something much more radical, much more difficult, much greater than a vast international Community Chest that the victorious nations worked to build at San Francisco in 1945. And whatever the noble role of its accomplishment in economics and law, in charity and enlightenment, the United Nations will be judged by history, by one test only - did it or did it not "save succeeding generations from the scourge of war"?

And so it is to this first purpose and principle of the Charter that I venture to direct your attention this afternoon.

Let me begin by recalling to you the words of the first part of the Charter's first article:

"The purposes of the United Nations are:

(1) to maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression..."

These words, framed six years ago, are as topical as today's headline. For it was in support of this provision that, in June of last year, the United Nations moved to stop the aggression which had burst out in Korea. And it was this decision which, in turn, brought about significant changes within the United Nations.

When the Sixth Session of the General Assembly opens in Paris on November 6, twelve days from today, it is likely that the most important debates will relate to Asian questions, especially those arising from events in Korea. It is almost certain that discussion of the Korean issue will lead to a general examination of this basic problem - the role of the United Nations in maintaining collective security.

In a world divided and confused by the aggressive policies of Soviet imperialism, the performance by the United Nations of its primary role in the maintenance of peace has become infinitely complicated and difficult. As early as the Second Session of the General Assembly in the Fall of 1947, the present Prime Minister, then Secretary of State for External Affairs, referred to a growing feeling in Canada that the United Nations, because of the experience of the Security Council, was not showing itself equal to the discharge of its primary task of promoting international confidence and ensuring national security. Mr. St. Laurent then went on to say: "Nations, in their search for peace

and co-operation, will not, and cannot, accept indefinitely and unaltered a Council which was set up to ensure their security, and which, so many feel, has become frozen in futility and divided by dissension".

The most recent example of what the Prime Minister had then in mind was the sad spectacle of the Security Council's indecision over the Iranian issue, a week ago today. Stalled in a tangle of legalistic arguments and evasions, the highest body of the United Nations on that occasion was unable to muster the minimum seven votes for the most moderate of resolutions calling upon the parties to the dispute to discuss their differences.

In April 1948, in the House of Commons, our Prime Minister admitted that Canadian faith in the United Nations as an effective organization for peace and security had been "pretty severely shaken". But, Mr. St. Laurent added: "What is unshaken in our determination to make of it (the United Nations), or within it, an effective organization for this purpose. Unshaken also is our faith that this can be achieved".

With certain other nations of the Free World, Canada these past two years has pressed on toward the objective of genuine collective security in two ways:

first, by creating the North Atlantic Treaty Organization - NATO;

second, by action within the United Nations itself to increase the United Nations capacity to deal effectively with acts of aggression.

Within the United Nations the most significant step was the "Uniting for Peace" resolution passed by the General Assembly, during its fifth session in November last. This resolution was a direct result of the Korean crisis. It was designed to meet the conditions of just such a crisis in which the Security Council might fail to discharge its responsibilities because of lack of unanimity among its permanent members.

The core of this resolution was that "if the Security Council ... fails to exercise its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security in any case where there appears to be a threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression, the General Assembly shall consider the matter immediately". The effect was to put much larger powers and much greater responsibilities in the General Assembly. From then on frustration in the Security Council needed not imply inaction and defeat; the Assembly had the right and duty to act.

These two developments - the establishment of NATO and the new authority vested in the General Assembly to act in the face of aggression, have added materially to the effectiveness of collective means for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Canadians believe in the principle of collective security. And, because they believe in it, Canadians are willing to support responsible and reasonable proposals for giving it effect. At the same time most of us recognize that the present world situation compels us to

accept important practical limitations upon the universal application of the principle.

First of all, we must face the fact that, now and as far ahead as we can see, the one world, which we all hoped for at the end of the Second World War, is unattainable. There seems to be no real prospect of our being able to establish friendly or even normal relationships with the Soviet world in the foreseeable future. Of course we should remain receptive to any genuine compromise which may be offered by the Soviet Union, but it would be folly for us not to recognize that the present divisions in the world which result primarily from Soviet Russian policies, will continue for some time to come.

The second limitation is that imposed by strategic considerations and the presently available military and economic resources of the free countries. We believe that aggression of all kinds everywhere should be frustrated. But we are by no means certain that the Free World yet disposes of the strength necessary to give effect in every part of the world to this article of our faith. The blunt fact is that, in present circumstances, unlimited collective security everywhere, because of the dispersal of resources involved, might mean no real security anywhere. On the other hand, failure to stand by the principle of collective security and seek to enforce it in any clear case of aggression would strike at the base of confidence on which the United Nations is founded.

If the United Nations is to avoid this dilemma; if it is to avoid a fatal dispersal of strength and at the same time maintain support for the essential security obligations of the Charter then the most careful judgment must be exercised on each occasion. Our representatives in the United Nations will have to make a deliberate calculation of the moral and strategic factors present in each particular issue involving aggression or threat of aggression. These decisions will be difficult especially because they will often have to be made rapidly and without very thorough examination.

Speaking of this problem only a few days ago in the House of Commons my Minister, the Secretary of State for External Affairs, suggested that these decisions - how to give effect on any given occasion to the security obligations of the Charter - might be made easier by the acceptance of certain principles:

(1) in every situation, our obligation under the Charter to do whatever we can to maintain the principle of collective security should be discharged; in other words, we should recognize unprovoked aggression for what it is, whether, committed by great or small powers; and take appropriate action - but this action may have to vary according to circumstances;

(2) we should never formally condemn an aggressor until the fact of his aggression has been clearly proven, and until the mediatory and conciliatory functions of the United Nations have been exhausted;

(3) condemnation of aggression does not mean that in every case economic and military sanctions must follow; indeed it is essential, and only ordinary common sense, that measures adopted against

an aggressor be practicable; they should be determined upon in relation to the general strategic and political situation and their possible effects in dangerously weakening the strength of the Free World in areas of greater importance;

(4) we should recognize our limitations in this way even when we have formally condemned the aggressor. There is nothing immoral in this. Nor does it mean that there is one law to be applied to the strong and another to the weak. It does mean, as Mr. Pearson said, that "the responsibility of defending the Free World is so grave that those who share it will require the highest qualities of intelligence, as well as the most sensitive consciences, in deciding where the limited forces at their disposal should be applied". With the growing strength of the free nations these delicate problems of decision will tend to diminish.

There can be little doubt that the United Nations intervention in Korea has given new validity to the principle of collective security and added new strength to the United Nations itself. Furthermore the experience gained in the organization of collective United Nations action, in the establishment and operation of a United Nations Command, and in the provision and maintenance of United Nations Forces will certainly prove valuable in the future.

During recent months a special Committee of the General Assembly, the "Collective Measures Committee" upon which Canada is represented has been examining these practical problems of collective action. The report of this Committee will bring into sharp focus the central issue of the role of the United Nations in the event of a general war.

So much for my attempt to review with you the present state of the United Nations and to examine the prospects of the United Nations in its efforts to discharge the basic task committed to it six years ago. Whatever its imperfections the United Nations remains an established forum where the Soviet and free worlds meet; and an institution committed to the maintenance of international peace and security by collective means.

Six years is not long in the life of a nation; still less in the history of man's long effort to develop the institutions which will save him from self destruction. The struggle to build these institutions of order and peace must be pressed forward with all the intelligence, energy and ingenuity of the free nations. The record and prospects of the United Nations in its brief and stormy course proves it worthy of our steady faith and work.

Finally, let us remember that no human institution, however perfect, can work if there is no desire to make it work. To quote my Minister once more: "the United Nations is not an entity in itself. It is the sum total of the wills of its members and of the combined contribution they are willing to make". The United Nations has shown itself to have great vitality. Canadians will, I believe, continue undiscouraged to support it, to work in it and for it with sober confidence that, if time be given it will at last deliver mankind from the age old tragedy of war.