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The opening address by Mr. Sidney E. Smith, Secretary of State for External Affairs, to the University Model United Nations Assembly, University of Montreal, on February 4, 1959.

C'est avec grande joie que je me trouve parmi vous aujourd'hui. Il me fait d'autant plus plaisir de vous adresser la parole que cette occasion coïncide avec ma première visite au nouveau Centre social de l'Université de Montréal. Nous savons tous le rôle éminent que jouent les institutions montréalaises de haut savoir dans la vie et dans la pensée de la nation canadienne tout entière. Il n'y a pas de meilleur exemple de cet apport que la présente réunion. Je tiens à profiter de cette occasion pour féliciter les organisateurs et en particulier remercier l'Université de Montréal qui a bien voulu nous accueillir.

Canadian Support for the U.N.

In his message of welcome and good wishes to the organizers and participants of the University Model United Nations, the Prime Minister, John Diefenbaker, said that the United Nations constituted an indispensable instrument of international diplomacy and that support of this organization is a basic element in Canada's foreign policy. You in this Model United Nations are therefore performing a notable international and national service in fostering knowledge of and respect for the world organization, and you are to be congratulated on the imaginative way you have set about your task.

Perhaps it would offer an appropriate background to your deliberations of the next few days if I were to explain in greater detail why it is that Canada looks upon support for the United Nations as a cornerstone of foreign policy -- why it is that we have attached so much importance to fostering and strengthening the United Nations ever since its inception in 1945. It may fairly be asked why we, in common with the vast

majority of other states, have an abiding faith in an organization which in some respects seems to have fallen so far short of the high hopes entertained for it in 1945. Those hopes centred on what are admittedly the key purposes of the Charter - the maintenance of international peace and the pacific settlement of disputes. They were hopes born out of the anguish of the Second World War and which had inspired those who met in San Francisco to express, in the words of the preamble of the Charter, their determination to "save succeeding generations from the scourge of war". For most people, that high purpose conjures up a picture of a United Nations capable of safeguarding the peace and of enforcing its decisions in international disputes by the application of collective force.

Limits of United Nations effectiveness

Critics of the United Nations point to its failure to fulfil that supreme function and draw the hasty conclusion that as an instrument for the safeguarding of international peace the U.N. is ineffective. In fact, the means whereby the United Nations would have at its disposal enforcement powers have never been established in the way the Charter envisaged, mainly because the relevant passages in the Charter were all predicated on the existence of harmony between the permanent members of the Security Council. I need not labour here the disappointing and dangerous political divisions which have characterized great power relationships in the post war period and which have effectively frustrated many of the security provisions of the Charter. Those same political divisions between the Soviet Bloc and the rest of the world have tended also to hamper the ability of the United Nations to exercise its conciliation functions.

To the critics of the United Nations I would say that if the world organization has failed in some respects to live up to the high promise of its earliest days, the reason is to be found not in the defects of the organization itself, but in the unhappy facts of the contemporary political scene. I would also say, however, that these shortcomings, which centre almost entirely on the peace-keeping provisions of the Charter, should be kept in careful perspective. No one would wish to deny the paramount importance of those Charter provisions relating to the maintenance of international peace and the peaceful settlement of disputes, but we would do well to remind ourselves that a further object of the Charter is to protect the dignity and worth of the human person and to promote social progress and better standards of life.

Achievements

In the pursuit of this objective, the functions of the United Nations today go far beyond issues of war and peace. In the kind of world which modern technology

has helped us to create, the interdependence of regions and nations has become so much a fact of our daily existence that extensive and well co-ordinated machinery for concerted international action over a wide range of economic, social and cultural problems has become essential to our present way of life. Basically these activities contribute to and make for peace. I suggest to you that had the United Nations proved completely ineffective in dealing with political disputes -- which it has not -- the United Nations or some other organization of universal proportions would still have had to be maintained for the regulation of the myriad fields in which the international community is now so interdependent. Let me stress again that it would be folly to allow disappointment at certain security shortcomings in the world organization to obscure its solid achievement in the economic, social and cultural fields, as exemplified in the work of the Economic and Social Council and the many specialized agencies which have been set up under its aegis. At the last session of the General Assembly, a new Chapter in this kind of activity was begun in the creation of the United Nations Special Fund which will enable the United Nations to participate in pilot projects in under-developed countries, in fields such as resource surveys, housing or sanitation. The possibilities which this new project opens up for the betterment of all mankind are virtually limitless and in some respects no less exciting than the dramatic issues of war and peace which tend to overshadow the more pedestrian activities of the United Nations.

Forum for Negotiation

But to revert to those questions which have involved the maintenance of peace, I hasten to make plain that I am not of those who believe that the United Nations has proven ineffective in this field. In spite of its inability to bring force to bear to implement its decisions and in spite of the fundamental differences between the Communist Bloc and the rest of the world, the Security Council and the General Assembly of the United Nations have been instrumental in resolving a host of potentially dangerous situations, simply by providing a forum in which the process of negotiations and conciliation can go forward. It is, after all, of the essence of a peaceful settlement that there be negotiation between the parties to a dispute. The Charter enjoins member states to have recourse to bilateral talks and regional arrangements before turning to the facilities of the United Nations. Thus the Charter itself recognizes that the United Nations machinery is not the only means available for the pacific settlement of disputes and it is generally recognized that there are occasions when the United Nations alone might not be the most effective forum. Even in such cases, however, the opportunity for discussion and multilateral negotiation which is afforded by the 82 nation General Assembly can be a most useful adjunct to conventional

private diplomacy. It can on occasion create the circumstances in which private diplomacy can work. In fact the two processes of open debate and private negotiation are rarely completely separated in the United Nations. It is a truism that the exchanges which take place in the corridors are equally as important as those which take place publicly in the Council Chamber and Assembly Hall.

In assessing the value of the United Nations as an instrument for the peaceful resolution of potential conflicts, we should not neglect the important moral suasion which it can exert by providing a means for the expression of world opinion. The procedures of the United Nations are available to any member state which feels its security threatened by the action of another member. There is available to all, therefore, a convenient means of bringing the harsh light of public opinion to bear on the circumstances of any complaint and there are few governments, if any, whose actions and reactions are entirely impervious to public opinion at home and abroad. The consideration of a complaint in these circumstances tends to ensure that negotiations once begun will continue until a generally acceptable solution has been reached. This is the diplomacy of reconciliation about which the Secretary General has so often spoken and which more often than not requires no formal action on the part of the Security Council or the General Assembly.

Preserving the Peace

Where the Security Council has been called upon to intervene in a number of dangerous situations, it has a creditable record of success in its early days. Iran, Indonesia, Kashmir and Palestine are examples from the period 1945-1949. Some of these problems are not yet resolved, it is true, but the assistance provided through United Nations observation machinery in the early stages has in nearly every case brought appreciably closer the prospect of achieving a permanent solution, while in the meantime warding off a possibility of further deterioration. Consideration by the United Nations in the last three examples I have mentioned, where open hostilities had taken place, was instrumental in bringing about the cessation of hostilities, an essential preliminary to the opening of negotiations. The observer groups which were set up by the United Nations to supervise the cease-fire arranged in Kashmir and Palestine are still on the spot, and by their presence they are helping to prevent a renewal of hostilities.

The promising record of Security Council interventions in the early stages of its existence was, of course, brought to an abrupt halt by the deepening crisis of the cold war after 1948. The unusual circumstances surrounding the Security Council's firm response to the Korean crisis of 1950 led directly to the adoption of a new approach designed to avoid the paralyzing consequences of the vote in the Security Council. Recognizing that substantial Charter revision was out of the

question, but recognizing also that the General Assembly had no power of enforcement under the Charter, the members of the United Nations sought a means of using the power which the Assembly already possessed -- the power of recommendation based on persuasion and moral force and not on command -- should the Security Council be rendered impotent by the veto. Out of this examination emerged the resolution which is known as the Uniting for Peace Resolution and which was designed to allow the General Assembly to be used for security purposes on those occasions when the Security Council failed to discharge its primary functions. Under the provisions of this Resolution, an emergency session of the Assembly can be called on short notice for the purpose of discussing any situation arising out of a breach of the peace or an act of aggression and for the purpose of making recommendations in that connection if the Security Council has failed to reach agreement.

It was the Uniting for Peace Resolution which provided the basis for Assembly action two years ago when hostilities broke out in the Middle East. On that occasion, it was the Assembly which was able to obtain a cessation of hostilities and, in achieving this objective, it was the Assembly which created and was able to secure acceptance of a United Nations Emergency Force. All will agree that UNEF has made a valuable contribution to the preservation of peace in the Palestine area.

More recently, we have had further examples of a successful intervention under United Nations auspices to preserve the peace, this time in a heartening example of the Security Council functioning as I believe it was intended to function: I am referring, of course, to the Council's decision in June 1958 to send an observation group (UNOGIL) to Lebanon with a view to ensuring that there was no illegal infiltration of personnel or arms across the Lebanese borders. UNOGIL wound up its activities some five months later having made a steady contribution towards tranquility of the area throughout the critical events of last summer. That same crisis brought in its train a further example of United Nations peace-keeping activity in the form of the United Nations "representative", now stationed in Amman and shortly to have counterparts in Damascus and Beirut.

The catalogue of activities which I have been describing provides, I think, an excellent illustration of the varied means which the United Nations is coming to have at its disposal for the preservation of the peace and settlement of disputes between states, ranging all the way from armed forces in the field under the United Nations flag to the more token presence of a United Nations representative. It is probable that the Security Council and, in the event of its

failing to act, the General Assembly, to an increasing extent will have recourse to investigatory procedures in order to determine the validity of charges of various kinds of aggression brought before it. It seems to me that, in this age when we are more likely to be confronted with types of indirect aggression, it becomes less important to measure the United Nations' peace-keeping capacities in terms of armed forces at its disposal.

I believe, too, that, in the infinite variety of United Nations activities for the prevention of conflict, we are witnessing something bigger than the more erratic and ad hoc efforts by the United Nations to act as a fire brigade in temporary emergencies. Perhaps what we are in reality passing through is a stage in history in which the international organization, like the nation states before it, is groping its way uncertainly and slowly towards a more rational society in which the relations between states will be regulated through the orderly processes of the United Nations. Each time an initiative of the kind I have just been describing is launched and is successful, we add in a small way to the creation of a climate of confidence which will lead nations closer to accepting the benevolent and objective authority of the United Nations to act as the guardian of the independence and integrity of nations as provided for in the Charter. The divisions and tensions which have characterized the international scene since the United Nations was founded have seriously impeded progress towards that goal -- but they have not arrested it entirely. They have, it is true, introduced new caution into the consideration of permanent stand-by force arrangements to be at the disposal of the United Nations in future emergencies. But by the same token, they have resulted in the expansion beyond all anticipation of the role of the United Nations as a forum for negotiation, and in the successful development of a wide diversity of United Nations machinery to help maintain the peace while political solutions are being sought.

Meanwhile the other activities of the United Nations and the specialized agencies, their work in the economic, social and cultural fields and in the encouragement of respect for human rights, go on. This work, while not directly related to the grave political and security problems, cannot but be in the long run a significant factor in the amelioration of the conditions which give rise to international conflict.

In all of these fields, the United Nations has had its successes: despite its limitations and occasional failures, its prestige has remained high, and I think we can look forward with some confidence to a further increase in the effectiveness of the United Nations.

Your activities here can make their contribution towards that end, and I wish you all great success in your proceedings of the next few days.