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Text of a Speech by the Honourable Mitchell Sharp,
Secretary of State for External Affairs, to the
Twenty-third Session of the United Nations General
Assembly, October 9, 1968.

. . . My country . . . has made special efforts since 1945 to implement the principles of the Charter and to nurture the growth of this organization. Speaking in this Assembly for the first time as the representative of a new Canadian Government, I wish to re-affirm Canada's determination to do all it can to support these principles. It is our aim to help to achieve a better world by strengthening the United Nations and its agencies as indispensable instruments for international co-operation.

Canada's contribution will be pragmatic and realistic. It will be based on our assessment of what the situation requires the United Nations to do and what Canada can best do in the fulfilment of its responsibilities as a faithful member of the United Nations. In matters of peace and war there are limits on the kinds of agreement likely to be reached. Member states, however, must work towards strengthening the authority of the organization. Success will come slowly. Some would use this forum for the ends of propaganda alone. Others sincerely expect the Assembly to act as a quasi-government or legislature. Our yardstick ought to be the capacity of the United Nations to perform the functions which are its proper responsibility and on which there can be at any time a reasonable measure of agreement.

Canada's experience has led us to value our independence while recognizing the interdependence of all states in the modern world; to prize political diversity and cultural freedom; to cherish pride of country but to mistrust chauvinistic dogmas; to adapt but not to overthrow the traditions we have inherited from others; to govern by consent. We believe it is possible, indeed essential, to reconcile the affinities of geography and history and the close associations they imply with the universal conceptions set out in the Charter of equal rights, territorial integrity and political independence.

It follows that we cannot accept that a community of interest, real or alleged, political, cultural or economic, entitles one country to take upon itself the right to interfere in the internal affairs of another. In the Commonwealth of Nations to which we belong, the right of national self-determination is so taken for granted that member countries are free to develop ties with any other countries, including socialist countries.

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Above all, no international order can be founded or can exist on the self-appointed right of any government or group of governments to impose their policies on other sovereign states by force. The invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Soviet Union and some of its allies, was nothing less than the assertion of a proprietary right of a great power to exercise domination over Eastern Europe under the guise of a "fraternal" ideological relation. It was naked power politics without regard to the Charter of the United Nations. Have the Governments of the U.S.S.R. and its allies forgotten that, less than two years ago, this Assembly, by a vote of 109 to none declared:

"No state has the right to intervene, directly or indirectly, for any reason whatever, in the internal or external affairs of any other states. Consequently, armed intervention and all other forms of interference or attempted threats against the personality of the state or against its political, economic and cultural elements, are condemned."

Although we are bound to take note of the wishes of the Government of Czechoslovakia that the Security Council refrain from further action at this time, the Council quite rightly remains seized of this question, which has profound implications for the independence and sovereignty of all member states. The concern of members of the United Nations for Czechoslovakia, its leaders and its people will inevitably continue until the soil of that country is once again free of foreign troops.

We must also be aware of the danger to peace in Europe arising from recent charges levelled by the Soviet Union against the Federal German Republic and the evocation of an alleged unilateral right of intervention in yet another country. In the view of Canada, no such right exists.

While condemning the Soviet Union and its allies for what they have done, we must be ready to seize every opportunity for serious and constructive discussion of the issues that divide East and West. So long as Soviet troops remain on Czechoslovakian territory, the progress of such discussions will of necessity be slow and cautious. But there is one area in which we must press on: negotiations to end the arms race should be pursued vigorously. Progress on this front will benefit all nations, including Czechoslovakia.

ARMS RACE

Canada -- and no doubt a great majority of members of the United Nations -- was heartened by the announcement of the United States and the Soviet Union on July 1 of their agreement to begin negotiations on the limitation of strategic nuclear weapons, including anti-ballistic missiles. I urge the United States and the Soviet Union to begin these talks without delay and to support the early resumption of negotiations in the Eighteen-Nation Disarmament Committee on a comprehensive test-ban, a halt in the production of fissionable material for military purposes and the reduction and subsequent elimination of nuclear stockpiles.

Since we last met, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons was opened for signature and has been signed by some 80 countries. Canada has signed the Treaty and in due course intends to ratify it. All countries should help to realize the Treaty's full potential by acceding to it soon.

The continued use of force in international disputes and the incalculable human suffering caused by war have drawn attention to the part played by the traffic in conventional arms in contributing to the conditions which lead to outbreaks of violence. In the days of the League of Nations, efforts were made to impose some restraints on the arms traffic by publicizing statistics about weapons and other types of armament transferred between states. In our view, the conception of an international register of arms-transfers should be revived.

My Government is interested, too, in the possibility of limiting supplies of armaments in regions of acute political and military confrontation and has noted with approval the recent indication that, under certain conditions, the U.S.S.R. favours "the implementation of measures for regional disarmament and reduction of armaments in various parts of the world, including the Middle East".

NIGERIA

Next to the fear of war, which I have so far been discussing in its various current aspects, we are all keenly aware that hunger and serious privation are issues which, especially when they reach disastrous proportions, cannot be ignored in this body. The Secretary-General recognized this point when he drew to our attention the situation in Nigeria in the introduction in his annual report.

The Canadian delegation acknowledges and fully understands the request of the Organization of African Unity that governments abstain from any action which might impair the unity, territorial integrity and peace of Nigeria. We are also aware and appreciative of the efforts made by the Government of Nigeria and many other governments to deal with the humanitarian issues. We trust that such efforts will expand in keeping with the requirements of the situation. In the face of the human tragedy which has unfolded before our eyes, it is only natural that people everywhere should feel deep sympathy for the Nigerian people and be anxious that no international effort be spared to come to the help of those in need.

Because of our sympathy and concern for the Nigerian people, the Canadian Government is providing Hercules aircraft with crews and has allocated over \$1 million for relief supplies for Nigeria through the international Red Cross, whose invaluable service on this occasion, despite the difficulties arising from civil war, has given us grounds for admiration. In addition, Canadian voluntary agencies have made substantial contributions. My Government also agreed, at the request of the Government of Nigeria, to participate in the international team which has been observing the situation in the territories of the Eastern Region where Federal Government authority has been restored and whose continuing reports will give an impartial account of what is happening. The reports should be as full and detailed as possible in order to serve their intended purpose.

We do not yet know the full dimensions of the problems of immediate relief which may be required, still less the extent of reconstruction which will face the people of Nigeria when peace, we hope, is mercifully and quickly restored. We do know that these problems will call for international co-operation and assistance on a substantial scale. Canada stands ready to play a full part.

MIDDLE EAST

In the Middle East, continuing tension and sporadic fighting between Israel and its neighbours sow the seeds of future conflict. There is a danger that the escalation of violence in the Middle East could involve outside powers and thus constitute a grave threat to world peace. Yet we are all conscious that the time and effort devoted to settle this dispute since the end of the fighting in June 1967 has led to no improvement in the situation. Agreement by the Security Council last November to certain basic provisions and principles for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East was an important achievement. But principles are of little use unless the parties accept in good faith the duty of implementing them fully and effectively.

The Canadian Government reaffirms its support for Security Council Resolution 242 of November 22, 1967, in all its parts, and pays tribute to the patient and tenacious efforts of the special representative of the Secretary-General, Ambassador Jarring, to assist the parties. We give him our full support, and call upon the parties to use his good offices and earnestly seek agreement on a peaceful and accepted settlement based on the provisions and principles of Resolution 242. This is particularly important in the days which lie ahead when foreign ministers are in New York and readily available to consult.

ARAB REFUGEES

The events of June 1967 tragically aggravated the problem of the Palestine refugees. I am sure I speak for all member countries when I pay tribute to the work of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency and his staff. In extremely difficult conditions, the Agency, in conjunction with the host Governments, has carried out its responsibilities with perseverance, skill and compassion. In recognition of the vital need for UNWRA to continue its work, my Government, during the current fiscal year, maintained its voluntary pledge of cash and food aid valued at \$1.2 million and, in addition, contributed to the Agency the equivalent of \$650,000 in special donations.

The Agency can assist in supplying the refugees with the basic requirements for subsistence, and it has done notable work in providing education for thousands of refugee children. For the future, however, what is required is a just settlement which would offer the refugees the opportunity of living in peace and dignity. A solution to the refugee problem will only be feasible in the context of an agreed settlement between the Arab states and Israel. Meanwhile, pending the attainment of such a settlement, this urgent humanitarian problem remains. My Government, therefore, calls upon all member states to demonstrate the reality of their concern for the refugees by supporting, tangibly and generously, the operations of UNRWA.

VIETNAM

It is deeply discouraging that no tangible progress has been made towards a negotiated settlement in Vietnam. The high hopes universally aroused by the initiation of the talks in Paris reflected the overwhelming desire of mankind to see this agonizing and destructive conflict brought to an end.

While it is appropriate that this body should be concerned with the situation in Vietnam, responsibility rests in the final analysis with the two sides to the conflict. Canada has already expressed the view that the bombing of North Vietnam should stop. This is an essential first step. But a political settlement requires a general military de-escalation, and North Vietnam must demonstrate its willingness to contribute to this process.

RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

We are often reminded that the United Nations is a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations. One of the main threats to such harmony is racial discrimination and the effects it has on international stability. The divisions amongst the membership which these questions provoke must not be allowed to lead to a breakdown in communication between us. The object is clear: it is to ensure that the majority of the peoples of the countries of Southern Africa will no longer be deprived of their rightful place in the political, economic and social development of their countries.

The main issues are the future of South West Africa and Rhodesia, the question of apartheid in South Africa, and the refusal of the Government of Portugal to accept the overwhelming opinion of this Assembly in favour of self-determination for the peoples of Angola, Mozambique and Portuguese Guinea. In all four situations, minority groups have decided that they alone have the right to determine for an indefinite period the rate of progress and the capacity to govern of the unenfranchised majority. These inequities must be ended. The process of peaceful change must be accelerated.

But how? We are all looking for some way out of the present impasse over South West Africa. At the twenty-second session of the Assembly, the Canadian representative suggested that the Assembly explore the offer made by the Foreign Minister of South Africa to receive a personal representative of the Secretary-General, without prejudice to any position which may have been taken by members of this organization. We still hope that this approach can be followed up. We are prepared to consider other approaches if they command a wide measure of agreement and if they are realistic.

We have agreed on the principles of United Nations action against Rhodesia. We must do everything possible to see that these decisions are carried out by all states, and especially by South Africa and Portugal. We must continue also to confront these two states with our unanimous judgment that policies of racial repression and political subjugation are incompatible with United Nations principles. Canada respects and intends to abide by the decisions of the Security Council.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Violations of human rights are not restricted to Southern Africa. All member states are under an obligation to look to their own records of achievement in protecting human rights. My Government supports the initiatives which have been taken in the United Nations in the formulation of the various international covenants and declarations in the field of human rights. Canadian legislation reflects this concern in various enactments prohibiting discrimination based on sex, race, colour, creed or national origin, in living practices, conditions of employment, public accommodation and trade union membership. Voluntary organizations have promoted amongst all Canadians an awareness of their basic rights. Several provinces have established human rights commissions or ombudsmen, and a bill of rights enumerating individual rights has been adopted by the federal Parliament. The Federal Government is proposing entrenchment of a code of human rights in our constitution.

In order to facilitate the implementation of such covenants and conventions, my Government recognizes the need for new approaches to the machinery of implementation. The proposal to create an Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights is, in this context, an important and welcome development, which I believe deserves the broadest possible support from member states.

PLIGHT OF CIVILIANS IN WAR

In the broader context of human rights, the review of the arrangements for co-ordination between the activities of international relief agencies in case of natural disasters should, we think, be extended to cases of hostilities, so that, in such cases also, assistance can be provided quickly and effectively to the innocent victims involved.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

This organization is dedicated to the elimination of poverty, ignorance and disease. At the end of the First Development Decade, this goal is still far off. We can look back with satisfaction to some achievements --I think of the establishment of the United Nations Development Programme for example-- and we have learned some lessons. We have learned that economic development is a long-term process and that co-ordination of international programmes involves more than setting targets and adjusting priorities. We know better now that the terms and conditions under which aid is offered are of fundamental importance, as is the relation of trade to aid. We realize that the improvement of agricultural techniques is critical to the whole development process.

Nevertheless, there is no hiding the fact that the level of international assistance to developing countries is inadequate. The needs grow faster than the resources are made available, partly because population increases so rapidly. So far as Canada is concerned, our aid programme will continue to grow year by year to reach the goal of one per cent of the gross national product as quickly as possible. We are pursuing a set of economic policies which will free resources for high-priority purposes, and, notwithstanding the

imposition of strict limitations on expenditures in general, our aid effort will increase substantially next year. This includes an increase of 25 per cent in our contribution to the United Nations Development Programme in the coming year, as well as significant increases in our contributions to the United Nations Children's Fund and for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. At the same time, we have always recognized the importance of the terms of aid, and have, therefore, through extensive use of grants and long-term, low-interest, loans, sought to meet the needs of recipient countries.

On the eve of the Second Development Decade, we in Canada look forward to the conclusions of two major evaluations of development assistance and related policies of trade-- one commissioned by the UNDP and one by the World Bank. The latter is to be headed by a former Prime Minister of Canada, the Right Honourable L. B. Pearson. There has been some scepticism whether resources made available for development purposes have been used with maximum efficiency. These assessments should identify the lessons to be learned from past experience and provide useful indications as to the policies to be pursued in the future. In this context, there may be greater confidence in development operations and, we hope, greater willingness on the part of developed countries to increase their contributions.

It seems apparent that, to a significant degree, the gap between the more-developed and less-developed societies reflects the differences in the extent to which they have learned to apply the techniques and the fruits of science and technology to their fundamental development problems. No mere transfer of the experience of the more-developed nations can bridge this gap. The developing nations require their own capabilities in the field of science and technology. For this purpose, they must have ready access to the reservoir of knowledge and experience which exists elsewhere, and their efforts to adapt these to their own special needs and aspirations should be welcomed.

Recognizing this, the Canadian Government intends to establish in Canada an institution devoted to the practical application of science and technology to the fundamental social and economic problems of development. This institution will have a directing board and staff drawn from many countries, and the results of its studies will be freely available to the international community. It will be designed to add a new dimension to the search for solutions to those social and economic ills which are the root cause of so many of the difficulties brought to this Assembly.

My Government recognizes that the terms of world trade must be improved if the developing countries are to be able to utilize technological change to greater effect and attract investment capital. We have heard various comments from this rostrum about the Second United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. No one can be content with its results. But it is an encouraging fact that, as new forms of aid such as tariff preferences are formulated in UNCTAD, the need for far-reaching changes in the working methods of the organization have also been recognized. We look forward to the presentation by the President of the Second UNCTAD Conference to the General Assembly in plenary session of the issues raised at the Conference in New Delhi.

PROBLEMS OF HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

The Canadian delegation welcomes the fact that, in addition to examining comparatively unfamiliar questions relating to outer space and the ocean-floor, attention will be paid at this session to the problems of the human environment. We in Canada are keenly aware that the effects of pollution of the air and water respect no boundary. We and our neighbour the United States have together pioneered in the development of international machinery to deal with this problem. For these reasons we have welcomed the initiative of Sweden to have this important matter considered as a problem of world significance and, therefore, one which it would be appropriate to deal with in the first instance in plenary session.

PEACE-KEEPING

Despite the scientific revolution and startling advances in world organization, the sad fact is that governments are all too often forced to give military expenditures priority over the requirements of peaceful development. Resources which might be used to increase production and foster education must be applied to reconstruction and relief. It may be utopian to believe we can banish the use of force in relations amongst states. But we must strengthen the capacity of the United Nations to act as an agency for the control of conflict and the mediation of disputes.

My Government is encouraged by the signs of progress in the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations. We have been among those governments which have attempted to contribute to this work by summarizing their own practices and by pointing to the lessons which might be drawn. Papers on observer missions, prepared by the Secretary-General and now being studied by a working group of the Special Committee, represent a significant contribution to our study of peace-keeping in all its aspects. Discussions due to take place in the Committee should help in narrowing the differences among member states about preparations for peace-keeping. I hope the Assembly will instruct the Committee to expand its investigation to include other aspects of United Nations peacekeeping experience and attempt to draw some agreed conclusions. In this way, we should be able to develop an understanding about the practice of peace-keeping acceptable to all.

UNIVERSALITY OF UNITED NATIONS

We shall not be able to improve very much the capacity of the United Nations to realize its full potential in promoting peace and security unless the institution itself reflects the world as it is. The question of universality of membership remains pressing. We regret the absence from this Assembly of states that play an important part in world affairs.

The question of the representation of China is the most important of these issues, even though it is not strictly a question of membership. My Government has made public its decision to explore the possibilities of entering into diplomatic relations with the Government of the People's Republic of China. It is not in the long-term interests of world peace and security that the government in Peking should remain isolated. For this reason, we think that this government should be represented at the United Nations. We should welcome any equitable proposal which would facilitate the representation of the People's Republic of China in this organization - having regard, however, to the rights of existing members.

CONCLUSION

The United Nations is a very different organization from the one Canada helped to found more than 20 years ago. Its membership has almost tripled. It has formulated new priorities and is moving in new directions. It has demonstrated powers of adaptation in response to new demands. Human rights, economic development, co-operation in new environments, such as outer space and the ocean-floor, have taken their place as matters of major concern alongside the more traditional but nonetheless vital questions of war and peace. Indeed, it is now understood better than it was that all these questions interact.

As we endeavour to meet new challenges, we should not lose sight of the fact that the effectiveness of the United Nations is bound to be measured in the eyes of world opinion against the practical results which follow from our resolutions. It is not by the number of resolutions that we pass that posterity will judge us but rather by the determination that we show in dealing with the pressing issues of our times and in carrying out the decisions that we make. In this spirit, on behalf of Canada, I pledge sustained and vigorous support of the United Nations.

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