CANADIAN DELEGATION TO THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

(EIGHTEENTH SESSION)

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STATEMENT BY
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PRIME MINISTER OF CANADA
IN THE GENERAL DEBATE AT THE EIGHTEENTH SESSION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
NEW YORK - SEPTEMBER 19, 1963

Mr. President:

Some years have passed since I last had the honour to represent my country at the United Nations.

My first words on my return must be to reaffirm Canada's strong and continuing support for our world organization and our desire to do what we can to help realize the ideals of its Charter.

From this rostrum, I am happy to recognize many old friends and respected colleagues. But I am also conscious that the Assembly of 1963 reflects the great changes that have taken place in our organization since I was here and which, in turn, reflect changes that have taken place in the world. Not the least of these changes is the admission of many newly-independent states whose distinguished representatives now add their wisdom and influence to the Assembly's deliberations.

Their presence is a reminder, which we should not need, that there can be no enduring peace and security in the world until all men are free, with the right to determine their own form of political life and the responsibility that alone gives meaning to freedom.

For eighteen years now, the United Nations has continued the search for effective ways to promote the purposes and principles of its Charter. In the broad balance sheet the credit column remains favourable, even if limited by international fears and misunderstandings. Our task remains - as it has always been - to reduce and ultimately sweep away those limitations.

Of all the changes of the past few years, none has been more dramatic than the emergence of new and free nations in Africa. This emergence has had a profound impact on the political evolution of the United Nations and on international affairs generally. It has added heavy responsibilities to our

organization in many fields of activity. It has given new and urgent emphasis to two major questions of our time - colonialism and racial discrimination; both of which can exist in many forms and have no common political pattern.

New states have brought United Nations membership closer to the goal of universality. They have also brought inescapable problems of growing pains. This process of growth and adjustment is bound to be difficult. It requires patience and tolerance and understanding on the part of all members; new, as well as old.

Many of the newer members are small states with large problems of political, economic and social development. But the old, big Powers have also been facing new and gigantic problems. Many of these result from their own great strides in science and technology. These advances have given entirely new dimensions to the threat of war and even to human survival. They have also made possible a new era of progress and plenty, surpassing any previous human accomplishment. The challenge to the world community, then, is a dual one.

The problem of armaments, especially nuclear armaments, must be solved before scientific advances move it beyond man's reach. The disparity in economic and social development between nations must be corrected before it creates an unbridgeable gulf between have and have-not nations.

It is the duty and interest of all members of the United Nations to see that this swift march of science and technology does not lead either to the universal destruction of war or to intolerable differences between nations in human welfare. Only through constructive and co-operative international endeavour can these two fatal results be avoided.

The Congo crisis has once again shown that these two things, security and welfare, are inter-related. That operations in the Congo were sustained in the face of great odds and obstacles is a stirring tribute to the courage and devotion of the servants of the United Nations. It is a witness also to the determination of the majority of its members that the United Nations should not fail in its Congo mission. This mission, broadly stated, was to cushion the transition from dependent to independent status - a pattern which may again be needed in other colonial situations not yet dealt with.

The Congo mission has, however, raised in an acute form the main problems of peace-keeping by the United Nations; problems of political control, executive direction, financial means, and administrative co-ordination.

From the Congo, new experience - not yet fully assessed - has been added to that gained from earlier peace-keeping operations.

Canada does not share the doubts which have been raised about the nature and purposes of this United Nations action. We felt that intervention in the Congo was a response which this Organization had to make; a duty which it could not shirk.

We believe that this kind of important, if limited, peace-keeping activity has now moved beyond the stage of first experiment. It has become a practical necessity in the conduct of international affairs, and should be provided for as such.

A main task of our Organization, therefore, should be to strengthen and improve its capacity in this field; learning from the failures and successes of the past and seeking more effective ways to perform this function in the future.

There will, of course, always be some situations in which the UN should not be asked to intervene because failure is bound to be the result. There are tasks which are undesirable or impossible for the UN. But there will be other situations where its intervention will be important, and even essential, for keeping the peace; for preventing small conflicts developing into big ones. For these, there should be the advance international planning and preparation without which no national government would think of acting.

I am aware that a few members disagree categorically with this peace-keeping concept of the United Nations. They argue that most of the peace-keeping operations of the past have been illegal. They would have us believe that the most challenging phrases of the Charter preamble are hollow; that the first purpose enunciated in Article 1 has no practical application. Other members are cynical, doubtful or indifferent. Both categories reflect attitudes which have compelled the Organization to improvise in carrying out tasks which have been imposed on it by the decision of the Assembly or the Security Council. Those who are responsible for the necessity of such crash action are often the first to criticize when the results are disorderly, delayed or inadequate.

The Secretary-General in a recent speech has emphasized the advantage it would be "if countries would in their national military planning make provision for suitable units which would be made available at short notice for UN service and thereby decrease the degree of improvisation necessary in an emergency".

We should now support this appeal by putting into effect these arrangements, which are increasingly becoming necessary. These would include a compact planning team of military experts which would provide the advice and assistance which the Secretary-General should have for organizing emergency peace-keeping operations.

National governments can also improve their own arrangements for assisting such operations. My own country now maintains forces, trained and equipped for the purpose, which can be placed at the disposal of the United Nations on short notice anywhere in the world. In case we are required to do more, we have recently given the Secretariat detailed information on what we can most readily provide to meet requests for assistance.

In this co-operative peace-keeping activity, we have been associated with many states and in many places - in Kashmir, in Palestine, in Gaza and Sinai, in Lebanon, in the Congo, in West New Guinea and Yemen. Each situation has posed its own problems and suggested its own solutions.

But always, our own experience has taught us one thing; the importance of advance planning and organization; both within our national establishment, and within the international organization.

We would be happy to share our experience with others who have participated with us in UN peace-keeping operations in the past, as well as with those who might wish to do so in the future.

To this end, we propose that there should be an examination by interested governments of the problems and techniques of peace-keeping operations. This could lead to a pooling of available resources and the development in a co-ordinated way of trained and equipped collective forces for UN service to meet possible future demands for action under the blue flag of the United Nations.

The Scandinavian member states, in their formation of a composite Nordic contingent for UN police and peace duties, have shown the way. We should now make further progress along those lines.

There are other fundamental UN questions to be dealt with; of constitutional reform, organization and administration; of financing and procedural methods. At the root of all of them lies the question of basic attitude toward the Organization. "What kind of a United Nations do we want?"

We believe that most members want the United Nations to be an effective international instrument for practical and positive action in carrying out UN decisions.

To this end, a comprehensive reappraisal should be made of certain basic questions of function and organization which have been pushed into the background of our thinking because of recurring tension in international relations leading to the fear that the questions themselves may contain the seeds of possible further friction.

This is the reason why year after year we have postponed the holding of the Charter Review Conference set for 1958.

I am not proposing that this Assembly should decide that the Charter should now be reviewed with a view to making drastic changes and reforms. I am suggesting that at this session, in order that the United Nations can act more effectively in its fields of responsibility, we should make a conscious effort to deal with certain problems which we have been avoiding.

I have already mentioned the need for adequate and balanced representation in the main organs of the United Nations. Since the membership first began to expand in 1955, we have recognized that there had to be some adjustment and enlargement in the composition of the Councils, and of the Secretariat, to reflect the changed geographical pattern of membership.

To be fully effective, United Nations machinery and organization should adequately reflect the present membership, without giving undue weight to any single factor, whether it be military or industrial strength; population or financial contribution; politics or race or geography.

To this end the Security Council and ECOSOC should be enlarged in order to permit a better balance in their composition. We should not confine our interest, however, to representation. We should be even more concerned about powers and functions.

I am thinking particularly of the Security Council. Its record in recent years has been one of diminishing returns. We are all aware of the main reason for this - the lack of the essential unanimity among the Great Powers.

That unanimity is still lacking but this year, for the first time in the post-war period, we can perhaps begin to hope that improved political relations between the Great Powers may make possible the restoration to the Security Council of the high executive function it was designed to fulfil.

We might also consider how to modify the Council's function to make it more effective as the instrument of political action for the United Nations. Indeed, the time may be at hand for a Security Council which can keep continuing watch on the affairs of the Organization as a whole in much the same way as the executive committees operate in the Specialized Agencies.

If the enlarged Security Council were given a properly balanced composition with sufficient safe-guards as regards voting rights, it could conceivably become the main arena for political decision on questions which require urgent action. It could assume responsibility for many of the items which now lie heavily on the agenda of the General Assembly. Such a Council could be in session virtually throughout the year and make it possible to cut drastically into the excessive time and energy now consumed by Assembly proceedings.

There is another change that might be considered.

The United Nations will inevitably remain the central world forum for international discussion and recommendation on a wide range of subjects. We already have on the other hand, regional groupings of states - in Europe, Africa and Latin America. Other groupings conceivably may be formed. The time may have to come to correlate the activities of these regional groupings more closely with those of the United Nations. It is possible to envisage a stage in the evolution of the UN when regional assemblies may be used to deal with regional problems in search of local solutions or in the preparation for broader treatment at the United Nations.

The Charter acknowledges the part to be played by regional arrangements or agencies in the conduct of international relations. In the economic and social field there is a growing tendency to delegate responsibility and authority to the UN Regional Commissions. Why not adopt a similar approach to some, though obviously not all, of the political questions which may face us in the United Nations?

The United Nations, however reorganized to become more efficient, can never function effectively unless it has adequate financial resources. Far from possessing these, it faces a financial crisis. Temporary expedients have been found to meet this crisis. But the basic problem, arising largely out of the refusal of some states to pay their share of peace-keeping expenses, remains untouched.

I am aware of the explanations of their negative attitude to this problem given by the members concerned. But most of the arguments advanced have little to do with the real issue which is that, if the United Nations decides in accordance with recognized procedures to engage in peace-keeping operations, the expenses should be borne collectively by the whole membership in accordance with Assembly decisions on apportionment.

If we do not give the Organization the financial support it needs for discharging its responsibilities, its very existence will be endangered. In particular, the efforts of the United Nations and the Specialized Agencies to render economic and social assistance might be brought to an end.

The first concern of the United Nations, I know, is the keeping of the peace. If we were to fail in that, the whole brave human experiment will have failed. But, second only to the keeping of peace, the great purpose of international statesmanship today must be to help to improve the living standards of all the world's peoples. The role of the United Nations in this field is necessarily limited. But if we wish, it can be one of great and lasting significance.

Experience is more and more underlining the central significance and compelling urgency of economic and social questions. Their importance is rightly symbolized, as the Secretary-General has reminded us, in the naming of this as the Decade of Development. It is now focussed on the forthcoming United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. Canada has been honoured to serve on the preparatory Committee for that Conference.

The problems of economic development and those of trade expansion are fundamentally the same. This is easy to forget, when the development policies of individual countries so frequently call for reduced imports of particular commodities. But the purpose of development is to raise the level of real incomes. And, important though it is to reduce the barriers which limit trade, yet the main impetus to expanding trade must come from the improvement of incomes. In other words, economic development - raising real incomes - is itself the underlying basis for trade expansion.

Higher incomes within a country do not, however, automatically improve a country's ability to trade. The improved incomes must be related in the long run to increased international earnings through exports. Aid programs, essential as they are, are only a means of bridging a gap until export incomes increase.

For this reason, and for others, we should do all we can in this Assembly to lay foundations for the success of next year's Conference. That Conference will be concerned, obviously, with recommending practical ways of raising, and stabilizing the earnings that the less developed countries derive from exports of primary products. It is hardly less important to enlarge the earnings open to all countries through trade in manufactured goods. For that purpose, barriers to trade must be reduced and, in order to make this effective, measures may be needed to improve international currency arrangements and lessen the exposure of so many countries to balance-of-payments troubles.

In the complex structure of the world economy today, trade and aid are tightly linked. No amount of aid will create permanent, stable growth unless it is soon accompanied by developing means of increasing exports. Accordingly, all the members of the United Nations - developed and developing economies alike - have a common interest in seeking two-way co-operation which will benefit giver and receiver alike.

The success of this and other similar efforts, essential for peace and prosperity in the world, will largely depend on freeing economic and technical co-operation from political controversy.

The Specialized Agencies, the functional and regional commissions, the other bodies dealing with economic and social problems, should be given the opportunity to concentrate on the special tasks which they were set up to perform. Recently, their work has been diverted and delayed by the injection of controversial political questions into their deliberations. There have been attempts to achieve political aims at the expense of the economic and social benefits which would accrue from the vigorous pursuit of the technical programmes. The recent crisis at the ILO governing body was a case in point. But it was only one of several which give cause for concern.

I believe that the Specialized Agencies and other functional bodies of the United Nations should leave political matters to the bodies designed and intended for political debate and decision; the General Assembly and the Security Council. If a moratorium on political controversy in the Specialized Agencies could be accepted by all concerned, it would enable those agencies to get on with their practical projects of co-operative assistance. The developing countries would have the most to gain from that result.

Some members directly concerned with certain political issues involving human rights and fundamental freedoms sincerely, indeed passionately, believe that their cases should be aired whenever and wherever the opportunity occurs. We can understand and fully appreciate the depth of feeling aroused by racial and colonial issues without accepting the wisdom or desirability of all the methods proposed for dealing with them.

The Charter does not require, or even authorize, sanctions, including expulsion, to be applied merely because one member of the United Nations follows policies, such as apartheid, considered abhorrent and degrading by the others. Quite apart from the practical and legal arguments against such action, by majority vote, where will this course lead? There may be - indeed there are - other governments represented in this Organization which follow policies and adopt practices that are discriminatory and violate human rights. Are voices to be raised in the Assembly for imposing sanctions, including expulsion, on the governments concerned? I hope not.

The fundamental aim of this Organization should be to hold the nations together in an international system as nearly universal as possible. We should be seeking to increase the membership, not to decrease it.

Today, the world around us is filled with uncertainties and risks from a wide and worrying variety of unresolved issues. Many of them do not appear on the Assembly agenda. Some may no longer be susceptible of United Nations treatment; and can best be dealt with, at least for the time being, by the parties most directly concerned.

In its approach to international affairs, the United Nations has to take into account the reality of world politics; which in some cases makes direct negotiations preferable to UN involvement.

There are certain questions, however, which are the direct concern and responsibility of this Assembly. There are old questions such as disarmament; the elimination of racial discrimination; freedom for peoples who never have had it and for others who have lost it. There are also new questions raised with each passing year. Whether old or new, they have their place in United Nations priorities. They pose the question with a compelling urgency; how can this collective United Nations response to international challenge best be fitted into the future pattern of world affairs?

we must soon find the right answer to this question, for time may be running out. While most members recognize the proven value of the United Nations and want it to continue in effective being, with a substantial role in our world, there are signs of decline and deterioration which could threaten its future use, its very existence.

Fortunately, there are also signs of improvement in relations between the "super-powers" which give the UN a new opportunity. There is a little more benevolence, a little less bitterness.

The United Nations is a unique political mirror reflecting, often magnifying, occasionally distorting, the dreams and the distresses of men. So what will the 18th Assembly show?

The picture could be a more cheerful one.

The feeling today of crisis and collision is not as oppressive as it has been in the recent past. There is an encouraging contrast between the international climate at this General Assembly and that which hung like a dark shadow over the last.

None of the great issues has been resolved. There is recurring tension in and around Berlin; in Laos and Vietnam; in parts of Africa; along the Sino-Indian frontier; in the Caribbean and elsewhere. But there seems now to be more of a will to seek peaceful settlements. This improvement may soon fade before the test of policy and action, but it exists now. And we should take full advantage of it.

Its most striking evidence is the recent partial nuclear test ban treaty between the three nuclear powers, since adhered to by more than 90 states.

Even by itself, that treaty is immensely valuable in putting to an end the poisoning of the atmosphere which sustains all life on our planet.

But it must be viewed beyond its own terms. It showed that great powers were able to agree on something important in spite of the fears and tensions of cold war. The global sigh of relief that followed the treaty was due not only to the ending of atmospheric pollution but to a feeling of hope for

further progress toward peace. In particular, the time seemed closer when the long frustration of disarmament negotiations might be replaced by some positive measures of agreement.

It would be intolerable if our hopes for a rational response to the challenge and the fear of universal destruction were once more to be dashed.

I cannot believe that this will happen. I cannot believe that there are not sensible solutions to the problems of the relations of seven hundred millions of Chinese with their neighbours; or to those of a divided Germany, a divided Korea, a divided Vietnam. I do not accept the permanence of the Berlin Wall as a symbol of a divided world. I reject the theory that Arabs and Jews must forever be hostile. I do not believe it is the destiny of Cuba to be permanently alienated from former friends and neighbours on this Western Hemisphere; or for whites and non-whites to be permanently embittered in Africa because of racial policies which are bad and bound to fail.

I do not claim that there are quick and easy solutions to these problems. There are none. But there is a better atmosphere in which to begin the earnest and persistent search for them.

In this search, the United Nations can play an effective role, but only if it puts its own house in order.

It is not the sole instrument for international co-operation. It has no supra-national authority. It is no substitute for national foreign policy, nor bilateral diplomacy. The Charter rightly recognizes that there are other peaceful means of solution, regional and limited collective arrangements, outside the United Nations but consistent with its principles which member states can employ.

Nevertheless, the United Nations alone serves us all. It provides the only world assembly to protect and advance human rights and freedoms and welfare; reduce and remove the causes of conflict.

Whether it can discharge its great role, fulfil its great responsibilities, depends on us.

When the United Nations fails, its member governments fail.

When it succeeds, the people, the plain and good people of all the world, succeed.

The League of Nations was 18 years old in 1938. That was the year of appeasement; of unawareness; of failure of heart and nerve.

The 18th year of the United Nations begins with a better balance sheet in a better climate.

This is the Assembly of opportunity.

It could be the Assembly of achievement and action - action for peace.