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STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

Speech by

The Right Honourable Joe Clark,
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to the United Nations Association

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Canada

Thank you very much.

I am honoured to have the opportunity to be with you and particularly with Archbishop Scott and to be part of a ceremony that does honour to you.

I was thinking on the way in tonight through Pearson International Airport that Lester Pearson must be wondering just what it was that people had in for him when they named things like that airport in his honour. I think he is substantially redeemed tonight by the medal that is offered not only in his name, but offered in acknowledgement of principles for which he stood and through him became identified with the country. Principles which were certainly embodied by Archbishop Scott.

I think the language of the Pearson Peace Medal is very appropriate. It reads that it is an award presented to "a Canadian who through voluntary and other efforts has personally most contributed to those causes for which Lester B. Pearson stood - aid to the developing world; mediating between those confronting one another with arms; succour to refugees and others in need; and peaceful change through world law and world organization."

Many of us have had the privilege of working with Archbishop Scott or have known him for some time. I first came to know him a quarter century ago. Our closest work, naturally, has been since he accepted the invitation of the Prime Minister to serve as the Canadian member on the Eminent Persons Group which went, at a time of very real tension and searching, into southern Africa on behalf of perhaps "the" organization which has the best auspices, the best chance of drawing people together in that very troubled subcontinent. They went in and looked for solutions and talked to people and emerged with a set of observations and recommendations that still in our judgment provide the best basis for a peaceful end to Apartheid in South Africa.

I think it is worth reviewing briefly the specifics of their recommendations because they do remain the best basis for an agreement. The Eminent Persons Group called on the South African government to:

- (a) declare that the system of Apartheid will be dismantled and specific and meaningful action taken in fulfilment of that intent;
- (b) terminate the existing state of emergency;
- (c) release immediately and unconditionally Nelson Mandela and all others imprisoned and detained for their opposition to Apartheid;

- (d) establish political freedom and specifically lift the existing ban on the African National Congress and other political parties.
- (e) initiate, in the context of suspension of violence on all sides, a process of dialogue across lines of colour, politics and religion, with a view to establishing a non-racial and representative government.

Words are often important. The words in that final formulation initiate in a context of suspension of violence on all sides a process of dialogue. It has proven to be among the stubborn and highly elusive elements of progress in southern Africa.

There is a professed agreement on the part of the South African Government and indeed representatives of the African National Congress that dialogue would be helpful. There is still sharp disagreement as to what exactly is involved in the implementation of the phrase of suspension of violence on all sides and how that would be accomplished and who would take the leadership.

But it is a formula, a negotiating concept that remains the best we have. It would not have occurred had the Commonwealth not taken the initiative that it did and that initiative would not have born fruit had we not had available to us people of the quality, the wisdom, the judgment, and the tolerance, if I may, including a determination to look beyond the rhetoric and the antagonisms of the moment, of Archbishop Ted Scott.

Since his participation in that effort, with energy perhaps peculiar to the clergy, Archbishop Scott has invested himself heavily not only in raising Canadian consciousness on the issue of Apartheid, but in galvanizing opinion and in raising money. He had to raise money from the public since the Government of Canada was such a skin flint in some of these areas.

His focus today is not simply on ending Apartheid but on the other enormous and absolutely critical task of helping to build the society that will emerge after Apartheid in southern Africa so that all of its members can share fully in the opportunities which the future will bring.

I am very honoured to be here tonight with Archbishop Scott. I am also pleased and I don't want to miss the opportunity to say a few words to the United Nations Association about the United Nations and about your association.

It goes without saying that the UN is important. I think it is important to say, as Archbishop Scott did, that so is this Association. One of the lessons that I have learned in the conduct of foreign policy is that it is easier to take initiatives and to carry them out if you have public support. Very often that public support for institutions or for initiatives comes more easily from people other than a government who operate at some arm's length from a government.

I think that the work that you have ahead of you is immensely important because it is related directly to our capacity to take advantage of the opportunities that are open to us in the United Nations.

As we all know, Canada was elected three months ago to the Security Council for a two year term that began this month. We won on the first ballot. We won against strong competition. We won with 80% of the votes cast by member states.

That can be a source of pride, and it is. But I think what is more important is that it is an indication both of the esteem in which Canada is held throughout the world and it is a very sharp reminder of what is expected of Canada by other member countries of the United Nations including some of the nations that have been its most strenuous supporters.

I don't need to recite particularly here Canada's contribution to the United Nations. It goes back to the earliest days of the institution, to its creation in San Francisco.

Canadians have been involved in the brightest and the darkest days of the United Nations since its beginning. Mr. Pearson, General Burns, Dr. Chisholm, John Humphrey, Maurice Strong, Therese Paquet-Sévigny - they are but a few of the Canadians who have distinguished themselves and their country through their dedicated service in the U.N. family of agencies.

Peacekeeping, of course, has been a special Canadian vocation. I was out on the west coast between the months of September and November this year and after one of my meetings a chap came up to me who was one of the 80,000 who had served in the blue berets of the United Nations. He was not a person whose name or visage would be known on national television, but a person who had nonetheless contributed as directly and in ways perhaps more importantly than any of us in this room because he had not only served in peacekeeping forces, but he understood why Canada was there, what the peacekeeping concept was about and sought to gain understanding for that in his community.

As we speak here tonight Canadian military and civilian personnel can be found in U.N. sponsored peacekeeping operations around the world. I expect that Canadian Forces' personnel will join the U.N. force that will soon go to Namibia as that country at long last becomes independent. We will surely be called on in the future to continue what we have done so effectively in the past.

Support for the United Nations has not always been automatic or easy. Just a few years ago the UN seemed to be in disarray if not in full retreat. It appeared unable to contribute to resolving regional disputes or to contribute to the resolution of the problem of excess armaments. It had failed to promote a North/South dialogue. Several areas of the U.N. family - notably UNESCO, the Food and Agriculture Organization and indeed the Secretariat generally - were becoming increasingly ineffective. A budgetary crisis loomed.

The problems in the UN at that time, not long ago, were stark: so too was the response of some countries stark. The UK and the U.S.A. withdrew from UNESCO. The American Congress, displeased by the UN's inefficiencies and by its perceived anti-Americanism, voted to hold back American payments to the UN. We too were unhappy and we too could have left but we did not, believing instead that reform from within was possible.

We have pursued our reform agenda on four tracks:

First, to address the UN's budgetary crisis, we devised a comprehensive set of budgetary systems and procedures to improve budgetary and financial practices that promise the UN greater financial stability and monetary effectiveness.

Second, through our membership in the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination we have pressed for the adoption of new priority-setting and decision-making processes.

Third, we are instrumental in having ECOSOC take on a full review of UN activity in the social and economic areas, a review designed to result in more simplified and rationalized operations.

Finally, we have taken the lead in the specialized agencies such as UNESCO and the FAO to improve programs, to control expenditures and to set new and effective direction to their activities.

One of the clichés about the United Nations is that, if it did not exist, we would have to create it. Let me suggest a variant to that cliché: If the present climate in world affairs didn't exist, the friends of the United Nations would want to create that climate. Because there are great opportunities now for the United Nations to prove its worth to skeptics, and opportunities to change permanently some of the national habits that have exacerbated conflict before.

Some of the regional conflicts in the world that, not long ago, appeared insoluble are now moving towards solution. That is immensely important in itself but it also allows the UN process to demonstrate its capacity to solve practical problems.

It is one thing to celebrate the idea of international co-operation; it is vastly more persuasive to see that idea actually working. The more the UN is seen to work, the stronger it becomes, and the greater the likelihood that nations would use its auspices to solve international problems.

Opportunities like this don't arise often. They exist today primarily because of a new and more conciliatory relationship the two superpowers have adopted. We, Canadians, have to encourage the superpowers to continue on that more conciliatory course, and we can have some real influence on each of the superpowers. But we must also work to ensure that the UN does not miss this unusual opportunity to prove its worth.

I want to note that it is particularly gratifying that both the Soviet Union and the United States are placing greater weight on the United Nations. The Soviet Union has come to play a more constructive and cooperative role on the Security Council, and is now paying its arrears to the Organization. It has also put forward a number of ideas on how to reform the U.N., and to improve some of its activities like peacekeeping.

For its part the USA appears to be taking a timely and fresh look at multilateralism, generally, and at the United Nations particularly. Last fall President Reagan promised payment of past and current American dues. And now the U.S. is working with the USSR on resolving a number of regional conflicts where the U.N. is involved.

It was not so long ago, and it is worth remembering, that President Bush represented his country as Ambassador to the United Nations. He understands the Organization and its aims, even as he has had first hand experience with some of its shortcomings. We must hope that the Administration will continue to reverse the years of U.S. antipathy toward the United Nations Organization, and seek creatively to use it for the purposes intended by its founders.

It is in these circumstances of a different attitude towards one another and towards the international responsibilities of the superpowers and of a period of really unusual opportunity for the United Nations as an organization, that Canada finds itself once more on the Security Council.

I do not know what issues will arise next week, next month or next summer. That's part of the fun of being there. I am told that a student once defined history as being "one damned thing after another". And that is certainly what it's like being on the Security Council.

And if I did know what issues were coming up I could not, with any degree of precision, tell you how we would react. That will depend on a multitude of factors - the issue, its timing, its connection to other issues, and the crucial question of what is finally possible.

That question - what is possible - does not unfortunately, always conform to what is desirable. We will face the choice of working and voting for imperfect compromises that have some chance of success as opposed to speaking and voting for resolutions that sound great but cannot be applied. This Government has no illusions but that some of our positions in the Security Council will from time to time displease some segments of the Canadian public.

We knew that when we sought election to that Council. We understand it now. We believe that is no excuse to shirk from our responsibility to the world community. I can promise you that Canada brings to its Council Chair objectivity and imagination. I can promise you that we are working closely with others on the Council to contribute to finding solutions. We will continue to search for ways to improve the mechanisms of the U.N., especially in the area of peacekeeping.

We will also continue to use our position and our credentials to hammer out the compromises that are so often needed to arrive at agreement. In the course of this month - our first on the Council - we have been actively engaged in promoting agreement over the size of the UN force to be put into place in Namibia. In so doing we have been able to serve as a kind of intermediary between those wanting to cut costs of the operation and those who have wanted to adhere to plans crafted a decade ago under very different circumstances. Our own position is quite simple - the UN operation in Namibia must be equal to the task at hand, no more and no less.

We have been able, following that principle, and using the good offices that have accumulated to Canada, to play a constructive role in the decision not as to whether the United Nations should be active which is one thing, but just how the United Nations can be effective which is in many cases a more challenging task.

More generally anyone searching for the principles that will guide Canada's conduct on the Security Council need only to look to the history of our involvement in the U.N. and in the world community over the last half century.

We have fought when necessary to preserve the independence of nations.

We have surrendered sovereignty when necessary to join with other countries in working for world peace, global prosperity, a sound environment and human rights.

For example, when you establish a treaty on the ozone layer you are involved to some degree in surrendering sovereignty as we classically and narrowly define it. That part of the nature of what we try to do effectively internationally which is inherently part of the nature of who we are at home has to do with finding creative ways in which countries collectively are prepared to sacrifice some of their sovereignty in the interests of a more effective order.

We have contributed ceaselessly as a country to peacemaking, to peacekeeping and to the attack on the socio-economic conditions that breed war and instability.

We have contributed to arms control since the days when Canada was the first country with the capacity to make nuclear weapons to renounce all intention of doing so.

We have contributed to international development and reconstruction since World War II and have sought to make our assistance effective and impartial, targeted on those who needed it most.

We have reached out to our partners in the Commonwealth and La Francophonie to bolster their role on the world stage and to make common cause with them on issues such as Apartheid.

We have worked ceaselessly to make the U.N. an effective instrument for pursuing the lofty goals which remain the dream of mankind.

And we have been able to balance conflicting pressures from alliance partners and countries and communities around the world to the satisfaction of the great majority of members of the world community.

That is no mean feat. That is why we were elected to the Security Council. Those are the principles that will guide us when we face the "one damned thing after another" that makes up the daily diet of U.N. activities.

It has been a great privilege to have the opportunity to be with you and particularly to be part of a presentation honouring Archbishop Scott.