CANADA AND THE UNITED NATIONS*

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The United Nations after Ten Years

IT is now just a little more than ten years since the fifty-one nations represented at San Francisco approved the Charter of the United Nations which had been hammered out after prolonged discussion. Speaking broadly, the new organization had three objectives — the preservation of peace, the development of friendly relations among nations, based on their respect for equal rights and self-determination of peoples, and the achievement of international co-operation in solving international problems of economic, social, cultural and humanitarian character. It was perhaps natural that, under the circumstances, when we were just emerging from the most destructive war of history, men should have placed very high hopes on the new Organization. No one, I suppose, would now claim that it fulfilled all these high hopes, but I trust that none here would assert that it has been a failure.

The main disappointment has been the inability of the United Nations so far to ensure international peace and security. In the main, the responsibility for this function was placed upon the Security Council. It was hoped that the Security Council would be the organizer of the collective force of member states so that it could preserve the peace by force if need be; that it would be a forum for the settlement of dangerous disputes between nations; that it would promote disarmament. Successful functioning of the Security Council assumed continued co-operation and agreement among the five great Powers, who had been the organizers of victory and who were now permanent members of the Security Council. But the United Nations had no sooner got underway than the inherent conflict of interests between the U.S.S.R. and the West virtually deadlocked the Security Council. Although it has some worthwhile achievements in the settlement of disputes, as for example, the cases of Indonesia and Palestine, it proved impossible to organize the means of collective security envisaged in the Charter. The hope for disarmament has so far been frustrated; indeed, something of an armament race is in progress; and the world still hovers under the shadow of possible atomic warfare. No country today would rely upon the United Nations alone for its defence. We have had to look to other means for providing security — to regional collective defence al-

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liances, such as NATO, rather than to the universal system as contemplated in the Charter.

Deadlock in the Security Council has also led to a search for the solution elsewhere for many of the most serious problems threatening international peace. The question of the future of Germany has never come before the Security Council, nor has the question of Indo-China. Again and again the great Powers have by-passed the Security Council in an endeavour to reach agreement on major issues among themselves outside the United Nations, but unfortunately all too often without success.

The real difficulty is not any constitutional defect of the Security Council; it is not, for example, the veto possessed by the five permanent members — as has been sometimes suggested. The fact is that if a great Power persists in disagreeing, it can scarcely be coerced into agreement, except of course by force, and force used against a great power almost certainly means a general or world war, which the United Nations was established to prevent. The veto, indeed, simply mirrors the facts of international life; that power is still centred in individual nations, not the United Nations.

Nevertheless, we should not write off the United Nations entirely as an instrument of collective security. We should not forget Korea. There, for the first time, members of the United Nations co-operated to resist aggression and to restore the *status quo*. The operation was made easier because of the absence for the time being of the U.S.S.R. from the Security Council. It was thus impossible for it to exercise the veto. Canada, as everyone knows, promptly and effectively joined in this collective action. Korea was an extremely important precedent. If a similar case now arose, could United Nations members, or at least those Western members who participated in stopping aggression in Korea, stand by and see a small country become the victim of aggression? Procedural arrangements agreed upon in the Assembly would now make it technically possible for the Assembly to take action in the event of aggression if the Council were unable to act, and it should be remembered that there is no veto in the Assembly. Nevertheless these procedural arrangements are a far cry from what was hoped in 1945, and the fundamental question still remains — what would happen if in the event of aggression the West and the U.S.S.R. found themselves on different sides of the question as to who is the aggressor; or as to whether collective action should be taken against him; and if, in addition, both felt the issue so important that his candidate or views must be supported by force of arms?

The General Assembly

Whatever the expectations with regard to the Security Council, there can be no doubt that the General Assembly is today the more important, the more dynamic, the more influential body. All countries are represented there. It meets yearly, normally for a period of about three months. It may discuss any question or any matters within the scope of the Charter, or relating to the functions or powers of other organs. It acts by recommendation to the members, or to the Security Council, or other organs. It is not subject to the veto of the great powers, although on important matters it can act only on a 2/3 vote.

It is often said that the Assembly is "the town meeting of the world," or again, that it is "the conscience of the world". This, of course, is an exaggeration: the world is not yet all represented there. Despite the accession of sixteen new members last session, there are still great nations outside — notably Germany and Japan, and Communist China, if it can be called a nation. Nevertheless, there is a great deal of truth in regarding the Assembly as a world forum, precisely because there the smallest and least important member does have the opportunity of giving vent to his grievances. There too even the smallest member state has the opportunity by voice and vote to exercise some influence on the great issues of world affairs. There too even the great Powers find it necessary to explain their stand on many issues of policy. And there can be little doubt that national policies are often modified because of possible or actual criticism voiced by other nations in the Assembly. In a very real sense, the General Assembly debates are indices of world opinion.

Also important has been the opportunity which the Assembly has provided for the representatives of the Iron Curtain world and of the West to meet and work together on the solution of common problems. Indeed, for many years when the West and the Soviet world were barely on speaking terms, the Assembly was almost the only place for personal contact between representatives of the two groups, and the only forum for discussion of common problems. Often the Assembly has been used by both sides merely as a forum for propaganda rather than a place to achieve a meeting of minds. But propaganda speeches are declining in length and number, on both sides, and co-operation increasing. The Tenth Assembly, that held last autumn, heard less propaganda and counter propaganda, and achieved, I think, closer cooperation between the Iron Curtain world and the West than perhaps any previous Assembly.

A measure of the importance of the Assembly is, of course, the attention paid to it by member nations. It is normal practice for all the great Powers, and for many lesser ones as well, to be represented in the Assembly, for at least a part of its session by their Foreign Ministers. So long as Foreign Ministers feel they must attend, whether to explain and defend their government's position, or even to meet other Foreign Ministers, the Assembly will remain an important world forum. We may begin to worry about its future when Foreign Ministers decide they can safely stay away from its sessions.

There are, of course, other important organs of the United Nations besides the Security Council and the Assembly, and a whole host of subsidiary committees, commissions, administrative units and so on. Time permits only a brief examination of two of these — The Trusteeship Council and the Economic and Social Council.

The Trusteeship Council

Members of the audience who were subjected years ago to Political Science 2, will recall that we used to spend a good deal of time on a subject called "Mandates." These were the colonial territories taken from the enemy powers during World War I and entrusted for administration to certain of the more advanced nations. All previous mandates in the Middle East have, of course, disappeared, or rather have become independent states. But those in Africa still remain, while other territories taken from Italy and Japan have been added to this group. Under the United Nations these are now called trust territories. In addition, nations with colonial territories may, if they wish, place these territories under trusteeship arrangements. One of the principal organs of the U. N. is the Trusteeship Council, of which nations administering trust territories automatically are members, while an equal number of non-administering powers are elected thereto periodically. The function of the body is to watch over the administration of trust territories in the interests of the peoples therein, and, broadly speaking, to facilitate their development towards political freedom and independence.

This Trusteeship Council is a very active body. It is, in a real sense, both the appeal court of subject peoples in trust territories, and a forum where other nations with special sympathies for subject peoples can vent their criticism on the administering powers. The colonial issue is a very live one in the United Nations, partly because many U.N. members were very lately colonies and tend to be sentimentally disposed towards those

peoples who have not yet won their independence. Colonialism has also been linked historically with the problem of colour, and still is in the minds of many former colonial peoples. The colonial issue is one that can be easily exploited by the U.S.S.R. and its satellites to make trouble for the West, and they miss few opportunities.

This complex of colonial trustee and colour issues constitutes perhaps the most delicate problem the United Nations has to face. You will recall that at the last Assembly, France walked out because the Assembly decided to discuss the trouble in Algeria, and South Africa because a committee of the Assembly passed a very mild resolution deploring South Africa's policy of apartheid. Neither question was technically a trusteeship matter, but both were questions concerning the governance of underdeveloped peoples, as are trusteeship questions. In the minds of some at least they were all a part of the colonial and colour issue with which many members of the United Nations have become increasingly concerned. We shall no doubt hear much of this issue from time to time in the coming years in the United Nations.

Canada is not a colonial power; it has not been given any trust territory to administer, though last week I saw a petition from people in South West Africa, which as you know, is administered by South Africa, asking that S. W. Africa be made a trust territory under Canada's administration. We have never served on the Trusteeship Council, though I can well imagine if we let it be known that we wished to we would quickly be elected. We have many friends in both camps — some of our closest friends are administering trust territories, notably the United Kingdom, the United States, France, Australia and New Zealand. We have also friends in what is sometimes called the anti-colonial camp, notably India and Pakistan. Trusteeship and colonial issues are therefore often embarrassing to us. But they are issues on which, in the coming years, it may be impossible to avoid taking a stand.

The Economic and Social Council

I now come to the Economic and Social Council which, unlike the Trusteeship Council, has always been of special concern to Canada because of its functions. Article 55 of the Charter of the United Nations, which is sometimes called its General Welfare Clause, expressly provides that the United Nations "shall promote (please note the word is "shall", not "may")

(a) higher standards of living, full employment, and con-

ditions of economic and social progress and development;

(b) solutions of international economic, social health, and related problems; and international cultural and educational co-operation; and

(c) universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedom for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion.

At the San Francisco Conference, Canada strongly urged that there was not much point in including such high objectives in the text of the Charter, if no provision was made for a special organ with responsibility to carry them out. Several other nations felt likewise. In consequence, a special Economic and Social Council was provided for, consisting of eighteen members, six elected each year for a three year term.

In addition, the Charter provides for the association with the United Nations, through the Economic and Social Council, of specialized agencies, that is to say, special organizations set up between governments to deal with special problems or to provide special services. Two such bodies are the World Health Organization (WHO), and the International Labour Organization (ILO), both of which are survivors from the old League of Nations days. Others are the International Bank and Fund, the International Civil Aviation Organization, established shortly after the war. Under the aegis of the Economic and Social Council, also a number of special relief organizations have been established — the International Refugee Organization, to deal with displaced persons in Europe (IRO), the Relief Agency for Korea (UNKRA), and another for Palestine refugees (UNWRA). More recently, the Technical Assistance Administration has been established to provide training for personnel and technical advisers to under-developed countries, and special economic agencies have been set up in Asia, the Near East, and Latin America.

But I shall not weary you with a list of all these bodies. I merely mention some to illustrate that the United Nations has now become an extremely important service organization for dealing with a wide variety of international problems and that its operations in this broad field reach around the world. The Charter is extremely flexible with regard to the type and functioning of these various bodies, and they have been developed and have been adapted to circumstances as the need arose. This welfare and service aspect of the United Nations is perhaps its most successful development. I venture to predict that if

there were no United Nations we should now have to create one to fulfill this function, simply because of the growing interdependence economically, culturally, and socially of the nations of the world.

As I have said, we have always taken the work of the Economic and Social Council seriously. We have served two terms as a member and are now beginning a third. We have always been represented and have been active in several subordinate bodies. From time to time we have contributed, too, to relief projects falling broadly under the Council — to I.R.O. (Europe), UNRWA (Palestine), UNKRA (Korea) and to the Technical Assistance Programme. In comparison with contributions from the United States, our contributions have been small, but over the years they have totaled some $217 million, a not inconsiderable sum in these years of astronomical budgets. By most members of the United Nations we are regarded as a wealthy and prosperous country, a "have" power in short — most members regard themselves as "have nots", as indeed they are in comparison with Canada. When the hat is passed for worthwhile causes at the U.N. we may therefore expect it will be passed to us. And, on the whole, I think most Canadians feel we should do our share. Indeed, I have met very few Canadians who would say we are doing too much.

Some General Reflections

Canada's prestige in the United Nations stands extraordinarily high, indeed, so high that it is almost embarrassing at times. If we look for reasons, I think one is that at least until the present, Canada has always been ably represented at the United Nations and particularly at the General Assembly. Our first permanent representative was General A. S. L. MacNaughton, perhaps Canada's most distinguished living public servant. General MacNaughton is still remembered in the U.N. circles. Delegations to the General Assembly have always been headed by a Senior Cabinet Minister, usually accompanied by a colleague as deputy leader. Mr. King, then Prime Minister, lead the delegation to San Francisco when the Charter was drafted, and to the first Assembly.

Assembly delegations since then have been headed by Mr. Ilsley, who was then Minister of Justice; by the present Prime Minister, who was then the Secretary of State for External Affairs; several times by the present Secretary of State, the Honourable L. B. Pearson; and from time to time by the Honourable Paul Martin, Minister of Health and Welfare. Mr. Pearson, three years ago, was elected President of the Assembly. A number of distinguished Canadians have joined the United Na-

tions Secretariat in various capacities, or have taken on special tasks, among them General Howard Kennedy, who was the first Director of Relief for Palestine Refugees, Dr. H. L. Keenleyside, who is at present the Director of the Technical Assistance Programme, and Major General E. L. M. Burns, presently Chief of Staff to the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization in Palestine. Such men as these, whether as members of the U.N. Secretariat or as representatives at the Assembly have brought prestige both to Canada and the United Nations.

But there is another reason: Canada is a singularly fortunate country, and its good fortune is inevitably reflected in its position in the United Nations. We have no unfulfilled territorial ambitions, as have many countries. We have no colonies or colour questions. We have no irridentist population, wishing to unite with Canada, or whom Canadians long to bring into their country. We have no traditional enemies, and no history of violent struggle for freedom, either of which may well poison a country's relations with other countries. We are sufficiently strong economically that we are neither jealous of the prosperity of other nations, nor dependent on them for our economic existence. Our standard of living is second highest among the peoples of the world being exceeded only by that of the United States. Although we, in many respects, may be regarded as an under-developed country, we are starved neither for capital nor for technical knowledge, as are many of the under-developed countries of the world. We are neither a great power, nor yet a small one dependent on the goodwill of others. Although we are partners of the United States in the defence of North America, we have taken a sufficiently independent line from time to time that I doubt if even the Soviet would now regard us as a satellite of the United States. Although we are members of a world-wide association of the Commonwealth of Nations, no one any longer regards us as a colony.

But if we are a singularly fortunate country, our fate is inextricably linked with that of other nations. We can no longer live to ourselves, if indeed we ever could. Economically we are a part of a world-wide trading system, and our economic future is highly dependent on expanding international trade. In this atomic age, we cannot be indifferent to the problems of peace and world order — if for no other reason than that geographically we lie between two great power centres of the modern world, a sort of North American Belgium if you like. We cannot therefore escape the responsibility of doing our share in promoting a stable world order and in preserving it if need be. This is the basic reason why we take our membership in the United Nations

seriously, why, as has been so often pointed out by our political leaders, support of the United Nations is a cardinal principle of Canadian foreign policy.

Our fortunate position gives us a rather unique position and perhaps special responsibilities in the United Nations. Sometimes, indeed, we find ourselves in the position of "honest brokers," seeking to reconcile conflicting views of other members, or groups of members. We played something of this role in the early days of the United Nations in the case of Indonesia and Palestine, and more recently on such questions as disarmament, the establishment of an atomic energy agency, and on the question of new members. It is a role that not always makes friends, even if it influences people. It is not one that we have sought to play merely for the sake of playing it, or for the sake of reaping prestige for ourselves. But it is one which sometimes we can play, should play if it is in the general interest of the United Nations.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I can perhaps do no better than read you a brief extract from the address of my Minister, Mr. Pearson, at the tenth anniversary session of the United Nations held last June in San Francisco:

"The United Nations is a remarkably flexible and adaptable mechanism. It is led and staffed by a group of able, trained and dedicated men and women whose zeal and devotion will in time deteriorate if we do not make the fullest use of their capabilities.

"Let us, then, make more use of the organization we have, not following too slavishly the original blueprint where we find it impracticable or outdated, not aiming to run before we can walk, but aware that the United Nations has unique and unexplored potentialities if we treat it as it was meant to be treated, as an instrument through which our conflicting interests may gradually, one by one, be harmonized, and our mutual understanding may grow. Here in our world organization — better than at any other place — can we meet the challenge of the nuclear age; co-destruction or co-operation.

"If we fail in this supreme challenge, there will be no occasion in 1965 to celebrate our twentieth birthday; or, possibly, to celebrate anything else.

"Our week of commemoration now ends. But our Charter, which is today before us as signed in this place on June 25, 1945, — our Charter remains; as the international Bill of Rights, as imperishable as Magna Charta itself. It enshrines for all time man's hope — so long deferred — that he may live his life in peace and freedom; in dignity and security."