

CURRENT ISSUES FACING THE UNITED NATIONS

(Remarks to be tape-recorded by Senator Humphrey for Ninth Annual Industrial Relations Center Labor Conference, University of Minnesota, February 15, 1957.)

First, let me tell you how much I regret that I cannot be present in person. I know that your discussions will be stimulating and worthwhile, and I wish that I could take a more direct part in them. But my duties as a Senator and as a member of the Democratic National Advisory Committee make it impossible for me to be in Minneapolis during your conference. Much as I regret my absence, I am glad that I can send this message via tape-recording.

I have been asked to talk to you about current issues facing the United Nations. Simply to list these issues is to catalogue the problems of the world today--the Suez Canal, the Arab-Israeli conflict, Soviet intervention in Hungary, Kashmir, disarmament, Algeria, and many others.

The fact that these issues are facing the United Nations is in itself evidence that the U.N. is a vital, significant force in the world. If the U. N. were not such a force, nobody would bother to bring such momentous issues before it. This is important. We may like or not like--but we cannot ignore--the way the U. N. deals with these issues.

I have had the privilege of serving as a United States delegate to the session of the General Assembly which is now drawing to a close. As a result of that experience, I am more than ever convinced of the value of the U.N. as an instrument for peace in the

world. It has its limitations, but it also has great potentialities which we have only begun to utilize.

The United States delegation to the General Assembly consists of ten members. It is headed by Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr., our permanent representative to the U.N. Each member of the delegation is assigned primary responsibility for some of the more than 60 items on the Assembly's agenda. I was most directly concerned with the problem of disarmament and with certain economic questions, such as the proposed establishment of a world food reserve. It is these matters particularly that I would like to talk to you about tonight, but first a word about how our delegation to the Assembly functions.

It is an instructed delegation. That means that the delegation itself does not determine the United States position on issues before the Assembly. The U. S. position is determined by the Department of State in Washington--ultimately of course by the President--and is communicated to the delegation in a series of position papers which tell us what to do on almost every conceivable question that can come up. It is then the delegation's job to try to see that the U.S. position becomes the U.N. position.

It is also the delegation's job to report to the State Department on what other delegates are saying and thinking and to advise the Department as to what our position should be. But the decision in the last analysis rests with the Department and the President, and the delegation is bound to follow their instructions.

This is as it should be. When a United States delegate speaks in the U.N., he is not simply voicing his personal opinion; he is stating the position of his government. Now our government obviously can have--or should have--but one position; and that has to be the position of the President, who is the constitutional officer with ultimate responsibility in foreign affairs.

Now a word as to the U.N. itself. The U.N. is no more and no less than what its members make it. It is a collection of sovereign states, and it is a useful mechanism for expressing the consensus of its members. But it is not an independent entity separate and apart from its members. Before the General Assembly can express an international consensus, its members themselves obviously have to have some notion of what they want it to express. This particularly applies to those members who are looked to for leadership on specific questions.

The point here is that it is all very well to say, as the President has said--and I commend him for it--that the United States will rely on the U.N. to deal with certain international problems, such as those in Eastern Europe and the Middle East, and that we will follow U.N. leadership on these matters. But if we are to rely on the U.N., then we ourselves should have some clear idea of what we think the U.N. ought to do. And before we can follow the leadership of the U.N., we have to give leadership to the U.N.

In this respect, I regret to say, the United States has not always exercised as much imagination and ingenuity as it might have.

Let me mention briefly just two or three problem areas in which I think a fresh and more forthcoming approach from the United States is called for.

I wonder, for example, if the time has not come to reconsider our attitude toward the related questions of disarmament, at least insofar as Europe is concerned, and of the unification of Germany. Recent events, especially the accumulating evidence of unrest in Eastern Europe, make solutions to these problems more urgent than ever. So long as Germany remains divided, it contains the constant danger of a third world war. A revolt in the Soviet zone of Germany, whether of the violent nature of Hungary or the milder nature of Poland, could very well set off an explosion such as the world has not seen before.

But whereas Germany divided presents an immense danger, Germany united could be a great force for peace and stability. Could German unification be brought about by the withdrawal of Soviet troops from the East and the withdrawal of American and other allied troops from the West? A unified, free, democratic Germany, with full membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, seems to me very much in the interests of the United States. In the present state of the world, I would certainly not advocate the withdrawal of American troops from all of Western Europe. But they might safely be withdrawn from Western Germany, IF Soviet troops are withdrawn from Eastern Germany and IF Germany is unified and IF a unified Germany continues as a member of NATO. These are important ifs, and the Soviets might not agree to them. But something has got to be done

about Germany. The danger grows every day the status quo continues.

Another problem area in which our policies have been too negative and require reconsideration is the general field of economic development of underdeveloped countries. Acting on its own, the United States has spent a great deal of money in this field. Although I fear we have not always spent our money wisely, we have achieved some measurable results. But other nations of the world clearly think that more should be done through the United Nations. Their desires in this respect have too often been met by a completely negative response on the part of the United States. I am not suggesting that the United States should carry out all of its foreign economic assistance through the United Nations; but I am suggesting that the United States should at least be willing to consider, to talk, and to negotiate on proposals to do more through the U.N.

We ought, for example, to be willing to reconsider our opposition to the proposal for establishment of a world food reserve. We certainly ought to give more thought to the constructive use of our agricultural surpluses, and this seems to be one way of doing it.

We ought, also, to be less negative and more constructive in our approach to the proposal for a Special United Nations Fund for Economic Development.

Finally, I think we ought to give more thought to a regional, international approach, under U.N. auspices, to the economic problems of the Middle East. I would be a great deal happier about the President's for economic aid without strings to this area

if it were going to be channeled through a Middle East Development Authority in which the countries of the area and perhaps other interested countries as well would participate. The Middle East badly needs economic development, not merely to raise its pitifully low standards of living, but also to provide a constructive outlet for the energies of the people--energies which are now diverted into local quarrels that threaten the peace not alone of the area but of the whole world. Further, most of the Middle East's economic problems are international in scope, and a regional authority, under U.N. sponsorship, seems a better way to meet those problems than to proceed through a series of bilateral agreements with individual countries.

I have not had time to do more than merely touch upon some of the current issues facing the U.N. and upon the United States approach to those issues. If what I have said seems critical of the U.S. approach, it has also, I hope, been constructive. Americans can well be proud of the role their country has played in the United Nations. All I am saying is that, by exercising more imagination and resourcefulness, we could perhaps play it even better.

In conclusion, let me tell you again how much I regret not being able to be with you personally. I send my most cordial best wishes for a successful conference. Thank you.



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