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ADDRESS BY SECRETARY-GENERAL DAG HAMMARSKJOLD TO INTERNATIONAL LAW ASSOCIATION, AT McGILL UNIVERSITY MONTREAL, WEDNESDAY, 30 MAY 1956

It may be appropriate for me on this occasion to share with you some thoughts about one of the greatest international problems which face our post-war world.

It has often been pointed out that two of the major revolutionary developments of our time are aimed, on the one side, at realizing the principle of self-determination and, on the other hand, at improving the economic and social conditions of life of that vast majority of mankind which, so far, have not shared in the advantages of modern technology.

These trends are closely related. A new national state needs a fair chance to develop its own international economic and social life in such a way as to give a stable basis for its new position in the world community. On the other hand, when peoples who have been held back by poverty experience an improvement of economic and social conditions, the demand for self-determination will gain added strength.

Both of these developments -- and the problems they present to statesmanship -- are quite generally recognized. But, I fear, we must also recognize that, so far, the efforts made to deal with them have not been equal either to the scope or to the character of the problems. What we have done so far has been on the margin of the real difficulties. The time has come, I think, for us to reconsider our position.

Whatever may be our political philosophy we all recognize that it is impossible within any nation today to defend for long an inequality of economic conditions which the majority of the people believe to be unjust. This is true even when the average standard of living is so high that those who are less well off also have the possibility of a decent life. It is all the more true when conditions are such that the poorer people cannot meet the most elementary needs. Such differences render impossible the sound life of a nation.

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What is a cause for unrest within a nation may become just as much a cause of unrest and instability in the international community. The problem has to be tackled. Neither its formidable dimensions, nor the fact that it has been with us for so long, is in any way an excuse for escapism.

In the beginning, I referred to two revolutionary tendencies; one in response to the economic problem just mentioned, the other one in the direction of self-determination. I pointed out the links between the two trends and how they mutually conditioned each other. The problem of self-determination with its deep roots in newly developed national feelings and the wider recognition of fundamental human rights is not less formidable nor in any lesser need of constructive solution than the economic problem. In fact, because of the relationship, the two problems must be tackled together and within the framework of a consistent philosophy.

Within a nation the natural solution to the problem of how to achieve a satisfactory income structure is to be found through efforts to improve the mechanisms of economic and social life so that the result is a more desirable balance. To keep the major part of the population on what amounts to a dole can never be a lasting solution, nor indeed is it even a sound, short-term approach except in a situation of acute emergency. One part of society should not live on gifts from the other part any more than one part of society should live on the exploitation of others.

Again there is no difference in this respect between the life of the international community and the life of the nation. Our ultimate aim must be to level off the dangerous and unacceptable differences between the standard of living and of economic development in various countries by means integrated in and natural to the normal working of the mechanisms of international economic life. It is only as an emergency measure that the industrially developed countries can or should be asked to help the others by assistance decided upon as a measure of political policy.

In the international sphere, the development of economic mechanisms removing the need for such direct assistance is difficult and time-consuming. It is enough to recall that the techniques which have been widely adopted for such purposes within nations during the last decades include elements which could have no application in the international community. In the international field we must rely exclusively on measures to promote and accelerate the advancement of the poorest. When trying to level out prevailing differences in standards of living it is, of course, not our task to lower the ceiling. The aim is to raise the floor.

The period during which international political measures for transfer of

capital from the more developed countries to the countries in need of it will be necessary, is likely to be longer than would be tolerable within a national state. Whatever the time we may have to wait, we should never lose sight of the fact that until the free flow of capital, skills, commodities and people can itself maintain the necessary economic balance between various countries, we shall not have solved our problem. We must likewise remember that whatever political arrangements we may choose, they should always be such as to lead as rapidly as possible in the direction of an economically self-sustaining sclution.

It would take me too far to attempt to discuss here tonight why the international economy does not at present function in a way which gives promise of a speedy solution of the problem of unequal distribution of wealth in the world community. It would take me too far into the history of the last hundred years and, in particular, the disruption of previous patterns of trade and capital movements caused by more recent political events. Let us, instead, simply note the fact that whatever international economic machinery there may once have been, it has broken down and that, short of a major effort, new mechanisms necessary in order to safeguard the general interest in stability are not likely to come into being. Let me also repeat that as this process will be a time-consuming one, even if we devote to it our best efforts, we have for a period of some length to take upon ourselves the burden of seeking to cope by extraordinary means with the dangerous situation.

In the last few years a lot has been done on a multilateral basis through international organizations like the United Nations or in the forms of which the Colombo Plan offers an example, or on a bilateral basis, as is the case with the United States technical assistance, internationally most often referred to as the Point Four Program. When I said that what has been done so far is not adequate, this does not imply that I would in any way belittle the wisdom and the generosity shown by those who have initiated and carried through such activities. On the contrary, what has been done has been pioneer work deserving of the highest praise. It has given us valuable experience. It has demonstrated to the economically under-developed countries the sense of responsibility of the industrially developed countries. It has laid the foundation on which all further efforts must build.

The present pattern is one of mixed bilateral and multilateral approaches. For reasons which are natural in the light of national politics, there has been a strong emphasis in practice upon a bilateral approach while, at the same time, the advantages of the multilateral approach have been recognized in principle.

The advantages of a bilateral approach to the problem of economic assistance are obvious to all and need no elaboration. The disadvantages seem to be less fully recognized. For the assisting country it is of course an advantage to fly its flag, but it is a disadvantage when this leads to a competition with other countries that

only too easily takes on strong political overtones. It is a disadvantage also when, in a way only too well known from individual life, it puts a strain on the relationship between the giving and receiving countries. We should not forget that it may be more difficult to live on the dole than to pay it. Few friendships survive a long drawn-out economic dependency of one upon the other. Gratitude is a good link only when it can be given and received without an overtone of humiliation.

If we recognize that the question of how to level out the economic differences which endanger the stability of our world is of equal importance to all parties, there should, in fact, be no question of either generosity or gratitude. We face a situation where an improvement of present conditions is clearly in the common interest. Again I am tempted to draw a parallel with national life. Private benevolence and generosity have a part to play, but it is not until we move on from these to forms of assistance which are regarded as a necessary part of sound social organization that we reap the full benefits of what is being done.

The disadvantages of bilateral aid give also the chief reasons in favor of a greater internationalization of aid. In a body like the United Nations, or its sister agencies, we have institutions in which all members share the responsibility. Assistance rendered through such organizations is free from most of the weaknesses attached to bilateral aid, without eliminating the chief benefit to be reaped by those who contribute -- that is, a more stable world for which such gratitude and pride as belong to any partner in a great constructive undertaking will be forthcoming.

The two approaches to international assistance, thus, have both advantages and disadvantages. However, there is no basic conflict between them and they should not be permitted to compete. As pointed out by, among others, the Canadian Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. Lester B. Pearson, they can and should be coordinated and mutually support each other. On this point I believe it is necessary for the governments and the peoples to review the position and to find a sound basis for the reconciliation of the natural national interest with those international considerations which also come into play.

I have linked the question of assistance for economic development, as a tiding-over operation pending a more normal solution, to the parallel problem of the emergence -- or re-emergence -- into self-determination of a great number of peoples and nations. To a large extent, although not fully, the two problems cover basically the same regions of the world. Apart from the mutual relationship which exists between the two problems, they have one factor in common to which we should give special attention. This is a factor which, in my view, presents the greatest difficulty, though so far it is the least discussed and least recognized aspect.

Nations emerging from long foreign rule generally lack an independent administrative tradition and a social structure within which it is easy to build up a class of national administrators. This is a major problem not only for such nations, but also for many other countries which seek to achieve a major economic and social reconstruction and to use international economic assistance in the best possible

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It may be said that this question of administration, linked as it is to the related question of the social structure, constitutes the main bottle-neck which must be broken in any soundly conceived policy aimed at solving the problems of self-determination and economic balance.

Nearly all the nations whose independence as modern states is of recent date are to be found in the economically underdeveloped areas of Asia and Africa. Their social organization and, in many cases, their administrative arrangements and the available trained personnel fall far short of their needs. No one who has spent even a short time in any of those lands can fail to have been impressed by the magnitude of the task with which the new leaders are grappling, or by the truly heroic character of the effort which some of them are making to establish more secure foundations for their country.

While the need for an expansion of economic aid is now generally recognized and the debate has, by and large, turned from questions of principle to a discussion of ways and means, insufficient attention has, I think, been given to this administrative difficultuy in the path of economic development. The capacity of a country to absorb large-scale economic assistance or to make the best use of its domestice resources is in no small measure determined by its administrative arrangements. It is significant, for example, that in every one of the reports of the economic survey missions sent out by the United Nations and the International Bank, some reference has been made to the handicap imposed by poorly developed public administration and the shortage of competent officials. It is no disparagement of any of the countries concerned to note that the existing governmental organization is insufficient to carry out the greatly expanded public investment and development programs that are needed. Most of these countries have had only a short period to replace the arrangements of the former administering power with their own organization and to create a public service at once efficient and responsive to their will.

It is true that in some of the countries concerned, the former administering authority has bequeathed a valuable legacy in the form of an efficient administrative apparatus and sizeable cadres of experienced local officials at many levels. But this is by no means generally so. Even where it is, it does not meet the needs of peoples whose awakening has stirred far deeper feelings of hope and endeavor than were felt under the most enlightened colonial regime. Great economic development programs have been planned which are held back more by lack of men to direct them than by lack of capital. Great national programs of social welfare are failing to move forward primarily for lack of experienced officials to undertake the manifold administrative tasks which they entail.

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In the long run national training programs for officials and workers will doubtless meet the needs of the new nations for administration of their development plans. But the long run may be very long and the need is urgent. It is for this reason that I welcome the suggestion of the Canadian Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. Pearson, that we should consider establishing what he describes as "an international professional and technical civil service of the United Nations with experts especially trained for work in the underdeveloped areas". This far-sighted proposal stands, I feel, side by side in importance with the proposal recently made by the French Foreign Minister, M. Pineau, who has called for the establishment of a new United Nations agency for world economic development.

Mr. Pearson's proposal might seem, at first glance, to call for no more than an extension of existing technical assistance activities of the United Nations. To my mind, however, it should, in the light of the immensity of the problems we are facing, imply a new departure along lines rather different from those we have hitherto followed. An essential feature of a new international service adequate for the task would be this: it would be a career service under international responsibility for qualified men and women of any nationality, who were prepared to devote a significant part of their lives to work in the less-developed countries of the world as public officials integrated in the national administrations of these countries while maintaining their international status. (In fact, such an arrangement was foreshadowed as early as 1951 in the Report of the United Nations Technical Assistance Mission to Bolivia, where it was proposed that "the United Nations assist the Bolivian Government in obtaining the services of a number of experienced and competent administrative officials of unquestioned integrity drawn from a variety of countries, and that the Bolivian Government appoint these officials on a temporary basis to positions of influence and authority as integral members of the Bolivian civil service".)

The highest standard of selection would rightly be demanded for such a service with special emphasis on quality of character and social outlook as well as upon intellectual background. Can it be imagined, though, that there would be any lack of candidates, well qualified and eager to take part in such an absorbing, so worth-while a venture?

Before an international service of this kind on anything like the scale needed could be established, it would be necessary to clarify the principles which would govern its operation and to examine a number of legal and practical considerations to which such a program would give rise. Above all, it would be essential to remove any latent ambiguities in the relationships which will come into being between such

officials enjoying the special responsibilities and status of an international official and the governments to which their loyal and devoted service would be due.

Quite apart from the other considerations which prompted M. Pineau to put forward his proposal for a new world economic development agency, the task of establishing and administering an international professional and technical civil service of the kind here envisaged seems to call for a reconsideration of our organizational approach to international aid and technical assistance. From such a reconsideration it may well emerge as M. Pineau assumes that these questions cannot be tackled in a satisfactory manner and on a sufficient scale without the establishment of a special administration.

A new agency, if established, would have to be brought into a relationship with the United Nations itself so close as to permit continued, intimate cooperation. Its main task would be a new one. It would place heavy emphasis on the strictly administrative problem of how best to establish, maintain and run an international service which, on a secondment basis, could meet the need for qualified experts and officials in those countries which now have to develop independently their national life and, with international assistance, to build up a strong and sound economy.

In the present world situation, we have had a tendency to give much attention to the need for a wider movement of capital to areas in need of economic development. We are right in doing so. The needs are enormous. But even more important than the money are the skills. The greatest contribution to the creation of the world we want to see come into being is to put at the disposal of the less developed countries our own human resources. Fundamentally, man is the key to our problems, not money. Funds are valuable only when used by trained, experienced and devoted men and women. Such people, on the other hand, can work miracles even with small resources and draw wealth out of a barren land.

It should not be overlooked that even with the best of men half-hearted and timid measures will lead nowhere. The dynamic forces of history will overtake us unless we are willing to think in categories on a level with the problem. That is why we must be prepared to envisage such departures into new fields as those which have been suggested by the two distinguished political leaders to whom I have referred, proposals which I have permitted myself to link together and to develop somewhat further here tonight in a way which should not seem radical to those who have measured the full dimensions of the problem.

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