

# U.N. WATCH

## Cutting the Fat

There have been rumblings before about the growing U.N. budget, but the 1981 meeting of the General Assembly may be the first in which the budget is a major topic. An expanding U.N. and its subsidiary agencies spend about \$2.5 billion a year. More than half the funds come from the industrialized nations of the West, with the U.S. contributing 25 per cent. This is peanuts compared to military expenditures, but the industrialized nations are fighting inflation, rising unemployment, and depressed economies.

There are, of course, some legitimate reasons for the increases in expenditure. The U.N. has more than tripled in membership since its founding, and specific areas, such as the refugee program, continue to expand. But as in any large bureaucracy, there is certain to be inefficiency and waste. In Geneva, the U.S. representative said U.S. budgets frequently have "too much fat"; and Vice President Bush, who was U.N. ambassador from 1971 to 1973, said the U.N. is funding obsolete projects and that "budgets continue to rise without a corresponding increase in services." Considering one of C. Northcote Parkinson's laws, this is not surprising. He discovered that as the British Navy shrank and there were fewer men at sea, the Navy's land-based establishment kept getting larger.

Within the U.N. itself there have been efforts to reduce the astronomical printing bill. (Almost every word at the U.N. not spoken in the rest rooms is printed in six languages.) At the same time the costs of conferences held all over the world—requiring travel, housing, meeting halls, and yet more printed matter—have reached a ridiculous level.

As yet there has been no threat by U.S. representatives of a reduction in contributions, but there is a strong demand for budgetary discipline.

## God Helps Those . . .

Conflicting signals have come out of the meetings at Cancun, Mexico, where industrialized nations met—once again—to discuss the economic problems of the undeveloped countries. The U.S. has participated in these discussions (also known as "global negotiations") reluctantly, maintaining that the U.N. is not the proper forum.

After the two-day session in Mexico in early August attended by twenty-two foreign ministers, including fourteen from developing nations, Secretary of State Haig left the impression that the U.S. had changed its position and recognized the need for new economic policies. A few days later an aide to Secretary Haig said the Reagan administration was opposed to Third World plans to shift wealth from rich countries to poor ones. Developing countries in Latin America, Africa, and Asia, he explained, should create their own wealth instead of asking for a handout. And in true American style, he added: "There is no such thing as a free lunch."

As if by design, in the same week the World Bank, a U.N. affiliate, issued its annual report. It concluded that the poorer countries had survived the oil crises and a depressed international economy through their own efforts, but that self-help in a time of world-wide declining growth would not be enough to prevent disaster in the poorest countries.



"Here are your pills, sir . . . 'impending crisis,' 'crisis,' 'lid blown off!'"

## The Deep Blue Sea

Just say "the common heritage of mankind" to corporations who want to mine the oceans, and they see red—not blue. The phrase was used by some genius during the early U.N. meetings on the sea law, and perhaps because it has a certain Biblical ring, delegates to the sea conferences toss it out like the Eleventh Commandment.

For eight years, 154 nations struggled to write a law of the sea convention; but after a draft of 440 articles was finally agreed upon, the Reagan administration asked for renegotiation on major issues. Russia has accused the U.S. of trying to torpedo the treaty, and the Group of 77 (over a hundred Third World nations) protested the reopening of issues already negotiated. The chief U.S. delegate to the U.N. Law of the Sea Conference in Geneva told conferees that the U.S. Senate would reject the seabed mining articles as they now stand.

Points of dispute center on the creation of a global authority under U.N. sponsorship that could obstruct private development of seabed mining. Industrialized countries also have reservations about a plan to transfer advanced technology to the Law of the Sea authority.

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