

Editorial

WE DRAW ATTENTION in this issue to the state of the “global negotiations” which were to be held under the auspices of the 11th Special Session of the General Assembly in 1980, but have been stalled as it has been impossible to agree on the agenda, the procedure or the time frame. As long ago as the summer of 1980 what would seem to be a reasonable compromise was formulated, whereby only those resolutions dealing with important matters where there had been an agreement by consensus would be binding. This was acceptable generally, including most of the member states of the Community that had been negotiating as a group, but not to Britain and West Germany which broke ranks and joined the United States as the only objectors to it. Since then many efforts have been made to secure agreement, and although the economic summits have repeatedly declared readiness for global negotiations it has not been possible to reach any conclusion.

The fact which seems to emerge is that the United States is not prepared at the moment to enter into global negotiations with the rest of the world, and it has adopted its customary response of refusing to participate. Such a policy rarely seems to benefit the United States and usually does not last for very long. It would seem that the instinct of the majority of the Community is right, and that every opportunity should be taken to support and strengthen the United Nations system, and while Britain and West Germany have staunchly come to the aid of their ally it must be questionable whether this is of value on the occasions when the United States veers from its position of world leadership into that of isolationism.

In view of the close connection between the world problems involving raw materials, energy, trade, development, money and finance, which are the topics selected for the global negotiations, it is unlikely that the issue will go away, and indeed the pressure is mounting from the developing countries that it should be pursued. In the *Buenos Aires Platform* containing the proposals of the ministers of the Group of 77 for UNCTAD VI in Belgrade, the ministerial declaration calls for an immediate launching of the global negotiations. The declaration also stated:

Questions relating to the world economy, to international economic relations and to development are directly related to those of peace and stability. To treat them separately will prove damaging for world security not only in military and strategic terms but also because of the grave economic consequences, national and international, that it will generate. A world wide relaxation of tensions, the halting of the arms race, and effective disarmament measures which would release sorely needed resources for development, are vital necessities for global economic development.

The Ministers are convinced that these complex problems of our time call for a stronger and more vibrant United Nations system, together with a

determination to put it to more efficient use . . . The need is more compelling than ever to breathe new life into the United Nations system, to mobilize political will to that end, and to provide it with the necessary means of action.

Such a statement deserves a serious and considered response from the West as well as from the East. Peace and stability are the essential long term interests of the whole world for which it is worth paying a substantial price in economic terms.

Institutional changes must however be considered with care, and while there is room for the reform of the present institutions in order to make them more effective this is scarcely any substitute for action. The issues of commodity prices, protectionism, exchange rates, rates of interest and debts are all fully canvassed today and what is required are some decisive acts on the part of governments to contribute to their solution. In the past, summit meetings between heads of governments used to mean the transaction of important business, but now they seem to amount to little more than family reunions. Excessive too are the long drawn-out conferences with a large attendance doomed predictably from the start to achieve little.

Protectionism is still one of the greatest impediments to prosperity. At the Brussels conference in April sponsored by this Journal, Mr. William Barraclough, deputy chief of the U.S. mission to the EEC, declared that the only way the international debt crisis could be solved was by retaining the open market and bringing the developing countries into the trading system. In the past the West had encouraged that trade, but now the time had come when the West would have to take active steps to promote it. At the same conference Mr. Michael Welsh, a member of the European Parliament, roundly condemned the activities of the Commissioners Haferkamp and Davignon in Tokyo by entering into the agreement with respect to video tape recorders. Under this the Japanese would limit their exports to the Community to 4.55 million units this year and maintain their price at the level of the European manufacturers (Grundig, Philips and Thomson). This, said Mr. Welsh, might not only deprive some consumers of the opportunity of purchasing such recorders, but those that did would be paying a bonus to the Japanese which would be utilized towards their next assault on the EEC market.