

A Word with You

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Is the United Nations a success? a failure? or "something in between," as careful speakers like to say?

Proponents point to the many constructive achievements of the U. N. to date — international arbitration, relief, rehabilitation, cultural exchange, various adjustments and agreements. They remind us that these have tended to be overlooked, and small wonder. The two giants thundering at each other in the center of the arena make everything else look strictly bush league.

One of the medium-sized ripples the U. N. made was its Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This was received with jubilation in some quarters as the herald of a new day a-dawning; and with consternation in other quarters as the signal for the creeping revolution to quicken. This piece of botch-work was an unwieldy compromise between the ideas of socialism and the ideas of individualism. Whatever spark of liberty it expressed was stated more clearly by an older Declaration.

Good Intentions

But it seems almost quaint to be talking about it now. It and other U. N. pronouncements are already beginning to have the stale unused odor of the Locarno pact, etc. Again people are wondering what good it does for the high contracting parties to come together and sign gushy manifestos.

And yet let us admit that much of this is done in good faith and with a lofty motive. It may be that most activities in the U. N. consist of national representatives finding out what other nations are planning and thinking so that their own nation's interest can be better served. But even this is something. If it all looks pretty stupid at times, just suppose the world in the state it's in without the U.N. Not much better, is it?

To the other extreme. Suppose the world as it should be, with equal freedom and opportunities for all, and full free trade between nations. Would a U.N. fit into the picture? Well, yes. Representatives from different parts of the globe might very well come together to mull over various things.

The U.N. is probably "something in between." In spite of all the turmoil, conflict, wrong ideas, false hopes and hogwash, it may be contributing to a concern about our common humanity. It may yet turn out to be a step toward a somewhat better world.