

“ The said Conference should be held at the same place as the second session of the General Assembly in 1947 and should begin work immediately after the conclusion of the Assembly.

“ 2. To appoint a special committee composed of representatives of all members of the United Nations which, before 1st February, 1947, express their desire to serve on the committee, the said committee to consider and report to the General Assembly what amendments would make the United Nations a more effective instrument to maintain world peace and security, and to invite the organs and agencies of the United Nations and interested official and private organizations to submit to the Committee their observations and proposals.”

It will be observed that neither the word “ veto ” nor the expression “ unanimity of the Great Powers,” which came to be used as fighting slogans in the debate, appears in the text of the Charter. It is clear, however, from the text of Article 27 of the Charter that, with certain limited exceptions, each permanent member of the Security Council does possess the power of holding up decisions by its single dissentient vote or even by refraining from voting—that is, that it has in effect the power of “ veto.” The text of the Article is as follows :—

“ 1. Each member of the Security Council shall have one vote.

“ 2. Decisions of the Security Council on procedural matters shall be made by an affirmative vote of seven members.

“ 3. Decisions of the Security Council on all other matters shall be made by an affirmative vote of seven members, including the concurring votes of the permanent members ; provided that, in decisions under Chapter VI, and under paragraph 3 of Article 52, a party to a dispute shall abstain from voting.”

The debate ranged far and continued long. It was generally felt to concern the central issue before the United Nations : could the Security Council, the body which under the Charter had prime responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, be made to work ? The following main attitudes all found clear and effective expression in the discussion :—

(i) The dislike felt by the great majority of members of the United Nations for the “ veto ” clause ;

(ii) The willingness of Cuba and a certain number of other members to press for immediate revision of the Charter with a view, particularly, to revise the “ veto ” clause ;

(iii) The determination of the Soviet Union and its associates to regard any proposal for the revision of the Charter as a threat to the existence of the United Nations ;

(iv) The conviction of a large number of members that the Charter itself had not been applied according to its letter and spirit ;

(v) The implied support afforded by all the Great Powers, except the Soviet Union, to the point of view expressed in (iv) above.

The representative of Australia (Mr Hasluck) opened the debate. The Australian delegation, he explained, considered that measures to