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Question of Equitable Representation on the  
Security Council and on the Economic and Social Council

Statement by Mr. Jean Chapdelaine,  
Representative of Canada in the Special Political Committee  
of the General Assembly, December 13, 1963.

...I thought when I prepared this statement that the Committee would be agreed on the necessity, nay the urgency, of action to give adequate representation to new member states on two of the principal organs of the United Nations - the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council - even if there were to be some variants as to how best to achieve this most desirable end. The statement of the distinguished delegate of the U.S.S.R. on Tuesday has shattered this most reasonable of assumptions. The spokesman of this important group in these United Nations, one whose government has it in its power to refuse its assent and thus prevent a ratification of a proposal for enlargement of the Councils, has interposed his veto, a compounded veto, a Peking/Moscow veto. This veto is starkly directed at the rightful aspiration of the Africans and Asians to equitable representation on the Councils.

However, ukase or no ukase, it nevertheless remains of the utmost importance that the United Nations maintain its comprehensive character and that all groups and shades of opinion be adequately reflected in the composition and membership of the various organs of the United Nations. This is particularly so in the case of the Security Council, which, from time to time, is called on to deal with potentially-explosive situations in many parts of the world. It also holds true for the Economic and Social Council, which is continually dealing with questions of far-reaching importance. The ECOSOC not only deals with questions which affect the relations between the economically-advanced nations and the less-developed countries; it also is concerned with the whole field of human rights and with the almost unlimited range of social questions. The need for a balanced representation of member states on the Councils, therefore, cannot be over-emphasized. The claim of the new members in this respect is valid and just. But...the older members have an equally valid and just claim that this be not done improperly at their expense. With the increase in membership of the United Nations, from 51 at the beginning in 1945 to 111 today (and the number grows), it is obvious that mere redistribution of existing seats on the Councils would leave some groupings without representation from time to time, and even permanently. It would make it particularly difficult for most countries to be represented even once in a generation, many of which, because of their contribution to the purposes of the United Nations, have a definite claim to have a voice more frequently in its Councils. It would be difficult, if not impossible, in such a case, to achieve real representativeness on the Security Council. The equitable solution is, therefore, not redistribution of the existing seats but expansion of the Councils.

As we all know, present arrangements for the Security Council under the Charter provide for five permanent members and six elected members who hold their seats for two years. In accordance with the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1946, the six elected members are to include one representative from the Commonwealth, one from the Communist states of Eastern Europe, two from Latin America, one from Western Europe, and one from the Middle East. This arrangement was made when the membership of the United Nations stood at 51. Today the United Nations includes 111 members and additional members are expected to join shortly. Consequently, it is more than understandable that we should be considering as a matter of urgency in this Committee today ways and means of dealing with the changed situation.