

Inadequate Afro-Asian Representation

The political and economic developments that have taken place in the world since 1945 and the great increase in the number of member states have created a situation by which the composition of the two Councils of the United Nations no longer adequately reflects the interests of Africa and Asia. The Canadian delegation has long believed that these countries were not proportionately represented on the Councils, and that the only satisfactory way to remedy the imbalance was to enlarge their membership to an extent consonant with efficiency of operation. It seems incredible that this legitimate wish on the part of the majority of states represented at the United Nations has been frustrated these past five years; that debates on the subject have been diverted into fruitless examinations of unsatisfactory substitute half-measures that would only postpone a realization of proper representation for all areas; and that action has sometimes been prevented for the most irrelevant of reasons. As has been so clearly stated already, if we question the legality of an Assembly decision reached without the participation of a non-member, we shall have to be consistent and question every other Assembly decision reached since 1945. But the large number of new members at this session makes it urgent and imperative that we make progress now. My distinguished colleague from Nigeria has already made eminently clear that the under-representation of Africa cannot be permitted to continue any longer, while other delegates have drawn attention to the fact that postponement of a decision will only prolong unnecessarily the inevitably deliberate procedures of Charter amendment.

First Things First

In this connection, I should like to call attention to the suggestion of my distinguished colleague from Argentina that, since Article 108 of the Charter comprises a two-stage procedure for amendments, we in the Assembly should get on with the first stage without delay and adopt an amendment acceptable to all parties. Then will be the time to concern ourselves over obtaining ratifications, when we are halfway to our goal. In this respect, Article 69 of the Charter could perhaps be of aid in bridging the interim period between voting and ratification, by enabling additional representatives from the now under-represented areas to participate in the deliberations of ECOSOC prior to their formal election.

It is quite clear from the statements made so far on this item that it is generally recognized that the African and Asian areas are at present seriously under-represented on the Security Council and ECOSOC, and that additional seats should be provided for these areas. I think that the statements have also reflected a primary interest in the enlargement of ECOSOC which, as a functional body, is of very immediate practical value in assisting the development of new states. Also, because the