



CANADA

CANADIAN WEEKLY BULLETIN

INFORMATION DIVISION • DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS • OTTAWA, CANADA

March 24, 1965

Vol. 20 No. 12

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A FRESH LOOK AT THE ROLE OF ECOSOC

The following is a statement made on March 23 to the thirty-eighth session of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations by the Permanent Representative of Canada and Chairman of the Canadian Delegation, Mr. Paul Tremblay:

...The review and reappraisal of the role and functions of ECOSOC now before us is one of the most important and most difficult items on our agenda this year. We have no grand plan, nor even specific proposals to offer at this stage. Indeed, I think it would be ill-judged to do so because this is a subject which, more than most, will benefit by a preliminary and frank exchange of views. Any action which may flow from our debates here must emerge as the consensus of all the representatives around this table acting in the interests of the entire organization. No such consensus will emerge if we do not first probe each other's thinking and exchange suggestions offered with no commitment beyond the belief that they might possibly point the way to constructive revision and change. It is in this sense of thinking out loud that I make the following tentative comments. They represent the accumulated impressions of a country which has followed the Council's work with intense interest since the United Nations began, but which for the past six years has witnessed its operations from the side-lines.

IMPORTANCE OF REVIEW

Every organization, every human enterprise, must stop periodically to take stock of the work it has done and the work it was set up to do. Otherwise

it runs the risk of becoming stagnant or, even worse, superfluous to the society in which it exists. The immediate need to review and reappraise the work of the Council has arisen not only because of the passage of time. To a certain extent it is an inevitable result of our collective decision to establish as an organ of the General Assembly the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. This is perhaps the most important decision the United Nations has taken in the economic field in recent years. In our view, UNCTAD's establishment will have an effect on ECOSOC that will be profound and should be beneficial. If we do not revise ECOSOC's role and methods in the light of UNCTAD's establishment, we shall be shortsighted indeed.

A PROCESS MANY YEARS OLD

The establishment of UNCTAD is part of a process that has gone on for many years within the UN system — the creation of a series of specialized expert bodies set up to address themselves directly and expressly to those economic and social problems that seem susceptible of international solution. Starting with the Functional Commissions, we have elaborated and refined this network within the United Nations itself to include the governing bodies of the specialized assistance programmes, the Committee for Industrial Development, the Advisory Committee on Science and Technology and now — the boldest gesture to date — UNCTAD. *En route*, we have made periodic changes in an effort to bring this burgeoning network into some sort of logical order. The Council has recommended

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