

the action which this Assembly will take to-day by adopting this resolution might in a year's time, or two years', be considered as one of the constructive decisions of this first session.

The delegation of Canada was charged, when it first introduced its proposals, with the hidden aim of preventing drawn-out speeches at the General Assembly, limiting freedom of speech and hindering criticism of the anti-democratic character of a number of draft resolutions submitted to the Assembly. The Canadian proposals were labelled as proposals for "limiting freedom of speech and having an anti-democratic character." Anyone who knows anything about my country, or the people of my country, knows that these charges can have no foundation. The delegation of Canada does not wish to restrict freedom of discussion. The basis of democracy in international as in domestic politics is freedom of competition between political ideas, but, in a deliberative body of this character, unrestricted liberty of discussion cannot be attained without running the risk that the whole international deliberative process will be stultified and brought into contempt.

Each member of the Assembly has the right to express its views fully, but no member ought to exercise this right in a way which would destroy the rights of other Members. The rights of one member are limited by the rights of others and by the just requirements of a democratic Assembly. It is, moreover, unrealistic to contend that the Assembly has to choose between unrestricted freedom of discussion and a system of closure. Experience has demonstrated that an international conference which begins with unrestricted freedom of discussion ends by operating under the most rigid rules for limiting the length and number of speeches.

One thing I wish to make perfectly clear is that my Government has never suggested that the sessions of the General Assembly should necessarily be brief. They should, in the opinion of the Canadian government, be as long as is necessary for us to do the work. The sessions of the Assembly, could, however, be shortened by eliminating unnecessary debates on procedure and unnecessary repetition of arguments, by the careful drafting of resolutions and conventions and by recognizing in the election of committee chairmen, the necessity of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence, and integrity. Unnecessarily protracted sessions will moreover affect the calibre of national delegations. It will become increasingly difficult for the Members of the United Nations to send adequate delegations to sessions of the General Assembly if it is demonstrated that much of the time of representatives is taken up unnecessarily.

The representatives and advisers we all want to see at the sessions of our Assembly are persons whose services are needed at home to help solve pressing domestic problems, and to deal at home with problems of foreign policy. The time of these men is precious. It is not in the general interest that it should be wasted. The problem is not merely one of unnecessary protraction of Assembly meetings. There is the much more important problem of how we can more efficiently use the time at our disposal. This session of the General Assembly has followed, I am afraid, the same pattern as has almost every other international conference, large or small, which has been held during the past few years, in spite of the fact that we have had as our presiding officer here, I am sure, the ablest man that we could possibly have obtained to do the job.