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CANADA AND THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, 1947

A brief survey^x of the Canadian attitude to some of the main issues discussed at the Second Session of the United Nations General Assembly, held at Lake Success, N.Y., September 16 - November 29, 1947

Canadian Attitude at the Second Session of the General Assembly

The Canadian delegation contributed to the constructive work of the Second Session of the General Assembly, giving its support to measures which were designed to strengthen the structure and operation of the United Nations and using its influence as much as possible to help offset the efforts of delegations which sought to obstruct the business of the Assembly. It also endeavoured to avoid the premature development of issues which might divide the Assembly to the point where the existence of the United Nations might be endangered.

In line with this policy, it supported proposals for increasing the usefulness of the Assembly, because of the extensive use of the veto, contentious issues for which the Security Council was intended to take primary responsibility were not being discussed or settled. Canada agreed that a continuing committee of the Assembly (subsequently set up as the Interim Committee of the General Assembly) could carry on some of the Assembly's functions between sessions and also provide the opportunity for frank discussion and thorough investigation of important issues not being dealt with by the Security Council. It also supported resolutions which called for the establishment of special commissions of the Assembly to investigate and observe and also assist in working out peaceful solutions to disagreements in the Balkans, Korea and Palestine.

In his opening statement before the General Assembly, the head of the Canadian delegation gave renewed assurances that membership in and support of the United Nations was a basic principle in Canadian foreign policy. Because it was considered by the Government that Canada should accept the responsibilities as well as the benefits of membership in the U.N., Canada decided to accept election to the Security Council. (Canada was elected to the Council on the first ballot with 41 of a possible 57 votes.) This decision was taken in full realization of the heavy obligations which would result, and of the Council's inability so far to provide any adequate means of ensuring international peace. It was suggested by the head of the delegation that if this failure continued, member nations in their search for peace and co-operation might have to seek greater safety in "an association of democratic and peace-loving states willing to accept more specific international obligations in return for greater national security." These could be formed within the United Nations. While not desirable, they might prove the only effective alternative to lack of international peace and security.

^x The Department of External Affairs Report on the Second Session of the General Assembly (Conference Series, 1947, No.1) "Canada at the United Nations, 1947", will be available by May 31, 1948, and may be ordered from the King's Printer, Ottawa. Price, 50 cents.