

External Affairs
Supplementary Paper

No. 53/29 MEASURES TO LIMIT THE DURATION OF

REGULAR SESSIONS OF THE GENERAL

ASSEMBLY

Statement made on October 6, by Mr. Alan A.

MacNaughton, Q.C., M.P., Representative of

Canada in the Sixth (Legal) Committee.

Since the item "Measures to Limit the Duration of Regular Sessions of the General Assembly" was first debated some years ago, the Canadian delegation has consistently taken the position that it would support any practical and effective measures to limit the duration of regular sessions of the General Assembly and would support any proposal which it considered would lead to economy in the time and expense of carrying out the work of the United Nations. My delegation has also emphasized, and we once again emphasize, that we will oppose any move or proposal which we consider would unnecessarily restrict freedom of discussion and the inviolable right of any member state to freely and adequately express its view on all issues which come before the United Nations. We stated last year during the debate on this item in this Committee that the Canadian delegation "would be among the first to oppose any moves which would have the effect of preventing free and full discussion or deny the right of any representative to be heard. In this sense, we are opposed to any unreasonable suggestions or proposals to limit debates in the General Assembly or any of its committees."

On the other hand, the Canadian delegation maintains that there must be limits and reasonable restrictions on the right of debate if we are to conduct our business in an orderly and effective manner and in the best interests of the United Nations as a whole. This right must not be abused. There have been incidents in the past which have convinced us that this right has been abused with the result that regular sessions of the Assembly and the different committees were unduly and unnecessarily extended. I think we can assume that these abuses will continue to occur unless we take steps to prevent their recurrence. One effective method to achieve this is to amend the rules of procedure where such amendments can be made without the danger of infringing the sovereign right of a member state to freely present its view on any given issue before the Assembly. We do not believe that the best interests of the United Nations are always best served by those who speak the most and the longest. We share the view of those delegations which pointed out that our rules of procedure, no matter how perfectly drafted, and measures which of themselves would automatically limit the duration of regular sessions, may be useless and self-defeating unless they are accompanied by an improvement in methods and practices and particularly a genuine willingness on the part of all delegations to cooperate in their enforcement.