

At the end of this debate in the late evening of September 18, the draft resolution presented by Mr. Prud'homme and the amendments put forward by various national groups (including Canada) were sent for study and report to the Political Committee.

4. The development of parliamentary institutions with respect for the Constitution and their work in the sphere of international relations (Item 4 on the agenda)

Debate on this item opened on the morning of Thursday, September 16. No fewer than 45 delegates spoke, including Mr. Gérald Laniel for the Canadian Group. Hon. Bryce Mackasey, who worked actively on the Canadian amendments, did not wish to add to Mr. Laniel's excellent intervention.

Mr. Laniel pointed out that although the draft resolution (see Appendix H.1 - Part A, p. 60) under consideration should win the support of the vast majority of the delegates, the Canadian Group was proposing two amendments (see Appendix H.2, Part A, p. 64) designed to improve the final resolution. The following is a summary of Mr. Laniel's speech:

Mr. Laniel said that he felt sure that the draft resolution, (unanimously adopted in Lagos) would be supported by the great majority of the delegates present. Each country was, of course, free to have its own ideas on the development of parliamentary institutions and their role in the sphere of international relations, a freedom which was indeed implied in the actual wording of the item under discussion. At the same time, the aims of the draft resolution were perfectly praiseworthy and the Canadian delegation was prepared to give the text its full support.

The Canadian Group had, nevertheless, tabled two amendments. The first referred to paragraph 6 of the draft resolution, which as it stood might constitute a threat to the traditional democratic institutions of the countries of the Union. The fact that parliaments had not always succeeded in exerting sufficient influence over international relations did not justify setting up new bodies to carry out that task and institutionalising them. Outside elections, governments were answerable for their acts to the elected representatives and to them only. Their responsibilities with respect to foreign policy should therefore be increased and not diminished, so that the Canadian delegation suggested referring to influence rather than power. It would also prefer the bodies proposed in the draft resolution not be financed directly by the state.

The second amendment was aimed at institutionalising and strengthening the participation of parliamentarians in the work of the United Nations. This seemed to be a legitimate objective for the Union in view of its representative nature. Parliamentarians should also be associated with both the Regular Sessions and Special Sessions of the United Nations so as to increase the influence of national assemblies over the activities of this Organisation.

Mr. Laniel continued explaining that as far as the Canadian parliament was concerned, its own development had led it to increase its work in the sphere of foreign policy. It was admittedly not authorised by the Constitution to sign treaties, but there was no doubt that the Canadian government had to answer to Parliament for its management of both foreign and home affairs.