

VOTE ON QUESTION OF ALGERIA

Statement in the First Committee of the United Nations
General Assembly by Mr. W.B. Nesbitt, Vice-Chairman
of the Canadian Delegation, on Tuesday, December 7, 1959.

We in the Canadian Delegation have been struck by the strong note of unanimity of purpose which has inspired this year's debate on the Algerian question.

There has been wide recognition that an acceptable basis for a solution has been established, and tribute has been paid to the efforts being made to solve the practical difficulties which still stand in the way of its application.

Opinion in the Committee has, however, been divided on what, if anything, the United Nations can and should do to advance a solution.

We are not, of course, all agreed on whether the United Nations has a right or duty to perform on this issue. But we are agreed that it would be tragic if anything were now to prevent the developments toward a solution which are in progress.

The question which we must, therefore, ask ourselves is whether our action here will indeed aid in the ardent and difficult search for a solution in which those directly concerned are now so seriously and deeply engaged. Would the adoption of a resolution accelerate a solution which is so much desired? Or would it disturb the delicate balance of interests which now seem to be moving in the right direction?

This ending of the conflict and agreement on a definite settlement rest, in fact, in the hands of those directly concerned and can come from their judgment alone. Hence the most the United Nations could do would be to attempt to influence these judgments by recording an opinion on how the issues should be resolved. A specific resolution would, therefore, intentionally or unwittingly favour one side or another - and this would amount to assuming the responsibility of judgment which we are neither authorized nor competent to exercise.

You could say that this might not be so, that a resolution could be a balanced, non-partisan plea addressed to all concerned to co-operate in finding a solution. But given the clear signs that this is just what they are now ardently and actively trying to do, would such a resolution be meaningful? I submit it would add nothing to their determination to continue in the search for a solution so strongly dictated by their natural interests.

At this critical stage when each side is convinced that it is doing all it can in seeking agreement while protecting its legitimate interests and assuring the continuation of the necessary popular support on which its authority is based, a resolution could easily increase rather than reduce the practical difficulties of detail which have yet to be cleared away to permit effective consultation between them.