

External Affairs
Supplementary Paper

No. 53/30

Question of factors which should be taken into account in deciding whether a territory has attained full measure of self-government. (Agenda item 33)

Statement made on October 6, 1953, by the Canadian Representative in the Fourth Committee of the eighth session of the General Assembly, Mr. G.S. Patterson.

The Canadian delegation to the seventh session of the General Assembly last year found it necessary to vote against the resolution establishing the Ad Hoc Committee which has now reported to our session. This Canadian attitude was prompted not by any particular objection to the Ad Hoc Committee itself, but by the fact that the resolution contained a number of declarations of principle with which the delegation was unable to agree. It is with much regret that my delegation now finds similar declarations of principle inserted in the draft proposal submitted by the delegation of Brazil and to an even greater extent, in the amendments outlined in Document L-273.

Like many delegations around this table, my delegation is fully aware of the industry which the members of the Ad Hoc Committee displayed in their efforts to fulfill the task assigned to them by the Assembly. My delegation is therefore fully appreciative of the work accomplished by the Committee. As we have pointed out before, my delegation has furthermore no objection in principle to the study which has been made of a list of factors nor to the list itself which has resulted from this study. We have no doubt that the present list may have a useful bearing on some of the questions pertaining to the work done both by this Committee and by the Trusteeship Council. The work accomplished in this field has not been wasted, and my delegation agrees that it can be of service to those countries which have responsibilities with respect to non-self-governing territories. To that extent, the first two paragraphs of the operative part of the Brazilian proposal are acceptable to my delegation.

As I have already suggested, however, and for the same reasons which the Canadian representative in the Fourth Committee outlined last year, I must take exception to the principle in Paragraph 6 and to those which are implied in Paragraphs three and seven of the operative part of that proposal.

Paragraph six of the Brazilian proposal would re-affirm that a territory cannot be deemed to be self-governing in economic, social or educational affairs unless its people have attained a full measure of self-government.

It will be recognized that this is a principle which can hardly be accepted by representatives of a country - I mean my own country - which at one stage in its constitutional evolution did, in fact, enjoy complete autonomy in its economic, social and educational affairs while it had not yet, by its own account, attained a full measure of self-government. By the same token, we find it difficult to share the views of those delegations which have attempted to justify this principle on the basis of an interpretation of Chapter XI of the Charter.

With regard to the problem raised by the wording of paragraphs three and seven of the proposal, the position of the Canadian delegation has already been explained a number of times. The Canadian delegation cannot agree that the United Nations alone have a right to determine whether a territory has ceased to be non-self-governing, nor that every Administering Power should continue to transmit information until such time as the provisions of Chapter XI of the Charter are fulfilled. In the view of my delegation, it is indeed to be expected that non-self-governing territories will normally be found to be advancing towards self-government by stages and that at a given moment they will reach a stage at which the Administering Power no longer exercises effective and practical control over the social, economic and educational matters on which information is to be submitted. In such cases the Administering Power's obligation to transmit such information will logically be at an end, although such a situation would not imply that the Administering Power has no longer the obligation, under Chapter XI, to promote a full measure of self-government in the territory concerned.

Like a number of representatives who spoke this morning, we too would commend the efforts of our Brazilian colleagues towards formulating a proposal which was likely to command the widest possible support. For this, we are grateful to the Brazilian delegation. We are also grateful that the Brazilian proposal does not call for a continuing study by a special committee on this question of factors since we seriously doubt whether any further study of this problem can be expected to bring forth a solution any more satisfactory than the present one.

But the objections, Mr. Chairman, which I have outlined bear on issues too fundamental to make it possible for us to support the Brazilian resolution in its present form. Subject to these observations, my delegation is prepared to approve the list of factors contained in the report of the Ad Hoc Committee on the understanding that the list is to be used exclusively as a guide and that it is not meant to be a rigid pattern to be automatically applied to the General Assembly to all non-self-governing territories.

I might add in conclusion, Mr. Chairman, that my delegation will be obliged to oppose any subsequent amendment to the Brazilian proposal which would appear to run contrary to the basic principles that guide my delegation on this question.

