

UN Finances

No. 61/7

Statement by Senator F.M. Blois, Canadian Representative on the Fifth Committee, on Tuesday, April 18, 1961.

... My Delegation would like at this time to make some observations about the draft resolutions before us and also to explain to the Committee what my Delegation had in mind when it tabled the draft resolution contained in Document L.664.

The discussions we have had here so far have encouraged my Delegation greatly. There has been a free and frank exchange of opinion and much thoughtful analysis of the problems with which we are faced both in the particular case of Congo finances and in the more general context of the finances of the organization as a whole. My Delegation has been heartened by this discussion since from the beginning of this session it had hoped there would be an opportunity for the Fifth Committee to examine a number of general questions bearing on the financial stability of the organization. Unfortunately, for one reason and another, our Committee began its work late and we have not had the opportunity which the Canadian Delegation would have liked to look at some of the broader implications of our work.

The Canadian Delegation has said before, and wishes to repeat now, its firm conviction that what we do in this Committee now and at the sixteenth session, or what we fail to do, to put our financial house in order will have far-reaching consequence, the full extent of which we may not even be able to assess at this time.

My Delegation has spoken of the interdependence of the various activities of the United Nations - how the support or lack of support for one aspect of the United Nations has direct repercussions on the effectiveness of other facets of the organization's work. It seems to me that most of the members who have spoken in this debate have recognized this interdependence, and the support which has been given to the ideas which we have put forward have encouraged my Delegation to introduce a draft which would have as its objective the initiation of a discussion at the sixteenth session on the many inter-related aspects of the work of this organization insofar as we, in this administrative and budgetary Committee, can discuss them.

... At the outset of our discussions this Committee heard a most important statement delivered by the Chairman of the Latin American group in which, in the name of that group, he put forward certain ideas and suggestions which were later incorporated in the draft resolution contained in Document L.658. The analysis which the Chairman of the Latin American group made for the Committee, and which was later developed by many members of that group, raised many of the fundamental points which the Canadian Delegation wanted to have discussed at this resumed session. The principles upon which the Latin American proposal is based, and the preoccupations which were expressed merit the attention of us all, since they represent a serious and thoughtful attempt to get to the root of the problems which beset us and find answers which not only satisfy short term and temporary requirements but which must be found if the sort of long-term solution that my Delegation considers essential can be devised.

The Canadian Delegation takes particular note that the Latin American group has formally placed itself on record on two principles which all of us must consider to be fundamental to any undertaking of this organization. The first is that the operation in the Congo must succeed not only in order to bring about the resolution of the problem which it has designed to meet, but so that the organization can acquit itself with honour, and demonstrate that it is capable of meeting new challenges as these arise. In the second place Ambassador Sosa Rodriquez declared the adherence of the Latin American group to the principle of the collective responsibility of all member states for the joint undertakings of the organization. The Canadian Delegation endorses these principles wholeheartedly. Indeed, in our view any attempt to find a long-term solution which does not contain these two elements cannot be valid.

The Chairman of the Latin American group also noted in his intervention that those countries which must devote the greatest part of their substance to economic development must be assured that their adherence to the spirit of international co-operation enunciated in the Charter does not require of them a price in terms of the resources available to them that is too great for them to bear. Once again, the Canadian Delegation must agree that any method of payment to be generally acceptable by the membership at large must contain this assurance.

I do not wish to give my Delegation's views on the details of the Latin American resolution at this time. We would do so later, however, should the occasion for an explanation of vote arise. There are, as I have said, certain aspects of this resolution which my Delegation favours. On the other hand, there are some important elements upon which the Canadian Government would like to reflect either with a view to suggesting alternatives to meet the basic aim, or with a view to arriving at an agreement on the principles concerned. The Canadian Delegation would, therefore, very much hope that it is not called upon to vote on the Latin American resolution at this time, since it is not in a position to support it.

We are grateful to the representative of Tunisia who introduced yesterday another draft resolution, and for the lucid and persuasive way in which he introduced it. The resolution is, in essence, similar to the ad hoc resolution which was introduced by his Delegation and that of Pakistan before Christmas. We are aware of the hard work and negotiation which has gone into the resolution, and what we have to say now in no way detracts from our gratitude for the difficult task which the Tunisian and Pakistani delegations have undertaken in an attempt to reconcile the many divergent views in this Committee as to how the Congo operation should be financed. The distinguished Representative of Tunisia made clear that this was an ad hoc resolution and that he was hopeful that there would be an early general discussion of the financing of peace-keeping operations, and, indeed, the whole question of United Nations financial methods in the light of the new conditions with which the United Nations is faced at this time.

The Canadian Delegation made clear before Christmas how it would have hoped that the Congo operation would be financed. At that time, however, in the realization that some fairly widely acceptable compromise must be passed, the Canadian Delegation supported an ad hoc solution to the problem, about which the Canadian Delegation had important reservations. In particular we had strong reservations about the establishment of an account outside the regular budget. Again we are faced with the necessity of supporting an ad hoc solution and deferring once more the consideration of the fundamental principles of a scale which would be generally accepted for all such peace-keeping operations, and which could be

applied without the annual search for new and ad hoc formulae, based partly on principle and partly on expediency, combined with other controversial elements, agreeable to this or that group, but which inevitably cause opposing reactions in other groups.

The need is for a method of financing which will contain the three fundamental principles enunciated by the Chairman of the Latin American group: the need to ensure the success of any operation, the affirmation of collective responsibility, and the safe-guarding of the position of the countries who must devote all their energies and substance to economic development. It follows from the first principle that reliance on voluntary contributions from one or two countries is undesirable. We should not, of course, exclude any gestures on the part of any member state aimed at reducing the collective burden, but it would be unwise for us to base our assessment scale on the expectation of such contributions.

We are aware that the percentage for assessment in the Tunisia-Pakistan draft depends upon just such voluntary contributions. I hope that my Delegation does not sound ungrateful if we say that we accept this only because it is a necessity for what is, in our opinion, the overriding consideration: the success of the Congo operation at this time. But we do not consider, I repeat, that this sort of financing is, in principle, sound or desirable.

Nor do we consider desirable the singling out for special contributions of individual states or groups of states, whatever the political judgment is on the effects of their actions. This observation applies in varying degree to both draft resolutions before us. In the case of the Latin American resolution, states having investments in the Congo are specially assessed, and in the Tunisia-Pakistan draft, Belgium is singled out. In any scale that we construct, which will be valid for all operations and which can be applied in any new circumstance with a minimum of political judgment involved, we should look to capacity to pay, and the effect of the bill on the economies of the member states.

I do not wish to enter into details now of what should or should not be in the resolution that we pass at this time. In spite of our reservations, the Canadian Delegation will support the Tunisia-Pakistan draft resolution provided it is not amended so as to take it even further from our position. We believe this resolution as it is now worded offers the best possible solution - what we might call a balance of dissatisfaction - under the present circumstances. We accept it, and I wish to make this very clear, only as an interim solution, and we do not wish our acceptance to be construed in any way as an acceptance of any part of the resolution as a principle for future resolutions. We wish to be very sure that the examination which our resolution calls for will be based on consideration of all points of view, without any attempt to use this or that ad hoc resolution which we have adopted in the past, to sanctify this or that method of apportioning costs.

... While insisting that the resolution which the Canadian Delegation will support be considered ad hoc, we insist at the same time that it is still a financing resolution to be passed by this Assembly under the authority given to it by Article 17, Paragraph 2, of the Charter. My Delegation cannot admit, therefore, the right of any state to decide whether or not it should pay its share of these costs, such as has been announced by two permanent members of the Security Council and others. Nor can my Delegation contemplate the imposition of conditions by member states under which they would not pay their assessed share, such as were imposed by the Representative of Belgium.

... After these preliminary remarks on the resolution before us, I should like to introduce the resolution put forward by my Delegation in Document L.664. The resolution starts by recalling some of the main purposes of this organization. These are not spelled out in detail since, after all, all of us who are members of the organization are aware of the Charter and its purposes and, by our signature of the Charter, we have indicated that we adhere to them. We recall certain general purposes in order to indicate the scope of our organization: the maintenance of peace, the settlement of disputes, and international economic and social co-operation. These are great and far-reaching purposes, and the extent of the purposes of the organization should always be before us when we take actions which affect them. I come back to the theme which I have developed concerning the interdependence of the various activities of the organization.

In the second preambular paragraph the resolution recognizes that in order to fulfill purposes and principles, however noble, there must be adequate financial resources and orderly and generally recognized procedures to deal with the financial problems which result from the activities undertaken to fulfill these purposes.

The resolution goes on to recognize also that, despite the many efforts made over the years, the financial situation facing the organization has become more serious. This is a statement of fact which cannot be re-stated enough.

Passing on from this rather sombre recognition, we affirm a more optimistic belief: that the organization will continue to grow and develop and that the demands upon it will increase. An organization is viable in direct proportion to the demands made upon it and to the extent that these demands can be met successfully. This instrument which has grown out of the Charter, for all the shortcomings that one might attribute to it, is still a remarkable development. All of us can think of examples of how, on the political side, the organization has mitigated tensions and moderated feelings. On the economic and social co-operation side we can point to the large and growing number of successful programmes and projects which have in no small degree changed the lives of people in all countries of the world. We should pause and reflect most seriously before, in haste or with insufficient consideration, we attempt to impose financial and administrative procedures which bear directly on these activities.

In the first operative paragraph, the resolution places the Assembly on record as requesting an agenda item for the forthcoming Assembly, and the importance and urgency of the administrative and budgetary procedures of the organization is underlined. My Delegation has no intention of limiting the elements to be examined under this item, but we seek only to spell out some of the matters which might warrant particular attention. The two main elements to be examined are divided into two groups in operative Paragraph 1. Group (a) deals with the cost of peace-keeping operations of a kind for which the Assembly has set up special or ad hoc accounts. In Group (b) we ask for an examination of the relationship between possible new administrative and budgetary procedures to deal with the peace-keeping activities of the organization and the existing procedures of the organization.

In operative Paragraph 2, the resolution requests the President of the General Assembly to appoint a working group to look at both (a) and (b) mentioned in operative Paragraph 1. We have suggested that the working group might consist of nine members, since we believe that a small group would be able to give us a more compact report, but we recognize that in this organization of 99

members it has become increasingly more difficult to balance the membership of small bodies, and we are willing to consider any suggestions for the composition of this group which will meet with general approval. We would hope, however, that the group could remain small.

In operative Paragraph 3, the resolution requests the Advisory Committee, in assisting the working group, to examine, within its terms of reference, the relationship between these new elements and the existing procedures. The Canadian Delegation has always had the highest respect for the Advisory Committee, and we would hope that this Committee could reflect on the problems besetting the organization and give us the benefit of their reflections on this relationship, and perhaps on other measures which might occur to them that would ensure the financial stability of the organization.

In the fourth operative paragraph we spell out once again that by this resolution we exclude no expression of opinion and that, in fact, we should like to have the discussion and exchange of views so that the principles and procedures which come out of our deliberations at the sixteenth session will have taken into account all views. We request member states to submit in writing, for consideration by the working group, their views on the methods of dealing with peace and security costs and on any other matters relevant to study requested of the working group.

In requesting consideration by the working group of the principles to be applied in determining a special scale of assessment, we do not, of course, expect the working group to devise the scale but only to recommend principles, which could later be converted into a scale by the technical group which has advised this Committee over the years on the scale of assessment. I refer to the Committee on Contributions. This group will this year be conducting its triennial review of the scale, and it might be appropriate if either in the summer or later this year, on the basis of principles submitted to it, the Committee on Contributions might construct an illustrative scale or scales which would reflect these principles so that the Assembly would be aware in concrete terms of the effects of the adoption of this or that set of principles.

The last preambular paragraph underlines once again our wish to have all opinions taken into account in our study. Several important statements have been made during the fifteenth session, and important principles have been placed before our Committee. Notable among these is, of course, the proposal of the Latin American group which my Delegation recognizes as the sort of attempt which the Committee must make in arriving at a scale which will be valid under all circumstances. We would hope that the Latin American group would consent to have this draft resolution passed on to the sixteenth session intact, without putting it to the hazard of a vote which, under the present circumstances, may well result in its defeat, since many delegations here have indicated that, although they are sympathetic to many of the elements contained in it, they are not prepared at this session to subscribe now to such far-reaching decisions as are contained in the draft. My Delegation recalls that the Latin American delegations and also the Delegation of Spain introduced five years ago a resolution similar to the one which they have introduced at this session. These delegations have waited patiently for reactions to their suggestions. Their patience has been rewarded by an increasing understanding on the part of other delegations of their point of view. This is certainly true of the Canadian Delegation, and it is true also of others. We would hope that the Latin American group, with their customary courtesy, would be prepared to be patient for yet another few months so that

we can reflect on their proposals and come to the sixteenth session fully prepared to meet their fundamental preoccupations, which the Canadian Delegation has already said it shares and appreciates.

In conclusion ... the Canadian Delegation introduces the resolution contained in Document L.664 in the hope that it will assist this Committee to bridge the gap between this resumed session, where time does not permit us to discuss with sufficient thoroughness the financial and administrative consequences of the new situation in which the organization finds itself, and the sixteenth session when we hope that these matters can be examined with the attention they deserve. We would hope that all delegations will understand the spirit in which the resolution is tabled and that it will receive general support, since its purpose is not to point directions nor slant opinions but rather to bring out views with the purpose of reconciling them, after due examination and careful thought.



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