CANADIAN MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

Statement No. 78

December 1, 1966

PERSONNEL QUESTIONS

Text of the statement delivered by the Canadian Representative in the Fifth Committee, Miss Margaret B. Meagher, on Item 81(a): Personnel Questions - Composition of the Secretariat, on Thursday, December 1, 1966

The Canadian delegation has not participated in the debate on this item and I do not intend at this stage to enter into the substantive discussion. I may say, however, that we have listened with great interest to the points of view expressed by other delegations and have given careful consideration to the various proposals which are now before us. We appreciate the motivation behind these proposals and we have a good deal of sympathy with the objectives which they are designed to achieve. The purpose of my intervention at this point is to record briefly the position of my delegation in respect of the draft resolutions and amendments which have been tabled.

The draft resolution contained in Document A/C.5/L.879/Rev.2 is in general acceptable to the Canadian delegation and I intend to support it. We have some reservations on operative paragraph 2, but these reservations relate more to the language than to the intent of the paragraph, as we understand it. We assume that the sponsors would not expect preference to be given to candidates merely because they belong to under-represented countries, but that such candidates would have to possess satisfactory qualifications for particular posts. I am quite sure that what the sponsors are seeking is preference for qualified candidates from under-represented countries and on this understanding the Canadian delegation will vote in favour of the resolution. I may add, Mr. Chairman, that speaking as I do for a country whose representation on the Secretariat is numerically well below the upper limit of its desirable range and whose representation at the senior level is composed of 1 DI, I could hardly oppose the proposition that preference be given to qualified candidates from under-represented countries.

In our view, the revised wording of the draft amendment contained in document A/C.5/L.881/Rev.1 is preferable to the earlier version on which we would have abstained. My delegation has no quarrel with the concept, that seniority of rank should be taken into account in determining relative representation in the Secretariat. In our view, the draft amendment indirectly reaffirms this principle, and thought it may be argued that such a restatement is unnecessary, it is, in

our view, unobjectionable. The amendment goes further to request a study but without prejudging the result. My delegation would oppose any rigid formula laying down numerical values for each rank on the grounds that it would be both unworkable and would undercut the Secretary-General's authority. However, in the light of the neutral wording of the amendment and the assurances given this morning by the representative of Pakistan, we shall vote in favour of the amendment.

I should like to turn now to the draft resolution contained in Document A/C.5/L.883. As a bilingual country, Canada appreciates the desirability of ensuring a more equitable balance among the working languages of the UN and we subscribe to the view that the objective which this draft resolution is designed to achieve will enhance the harmonization of relationships within the Organization. It is our belief that this can only serve to strengthen the cohesiveness and efficient functioning of the Secretariat. I intend, therefore, to support this resolution.