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External Affairs  
Supplementary Paper

No. 54/23

CYPRUS

Statement by the Vice-Chairman of the Canadian Delegation, to the United Nations General Assembly, Mr. Paul Martin, made in explanation of the vote on the question of inscribing item 62: Cyprus

The Canadian Delegation has given very careful study to the question of whether or not item 62 should be inscribed in our agenda. We have noted and tried to weigh objectively the conflicting and persuasive arguments submitted by Mr. Selwyn Lloyd on behalf of the United Kingdom Government and by Mr. Kyrrou on behalf of the Government of Greece.

The generally accepted interpretation of the Charter does not, in our judgment, preclude the inscription of the Cyprus question. From the past voting record of the Canadian Delegation, it is clear that we have consistently taken the position that the General Assembly has very wide competence to discuss. Although Canada has always supported in principle the right of discussion of matters of international concern, we have reserved our right to oppose any item which we think should not be discussed at a given time. Nothing in the Charter compels us to agree to discuss anything and everything within the Assembly's competence.

For example, in defining the attitude of the Canadian Delegation on the Tunisian question in the First Committee on December 9, 1952, I said that the right of discussion must not be abused, "It must not become the right to slander, the right to incite revolt or rebellion, the right to use the forum of the United Nations to give encouragement to political parties or movements in a given country with whose views one happens to agree. Such an abuse of the right of discussion would be harmful to the United Nations and we would have to reconsider our position on the question of discussion if it appeared that the United Nations was being weakened and its prestige was being damaged in this way".

In his statement in the general debate yesterday, Mr. Pearson underlined once again the necessity for forming a judgement as to priorities so as to avoid overloading our agenda with items which it is either untimely or futile to try to settle here. But I should like to make it quite clear that this is a judgement which, in our view, has to be made on the merits of the case and not, insofar as the Cyprus question is concerned, a judgement on the competence of the United Nations.

The Canadian Delegation has come to the conclusion, as a matter of practical judgement on the overall situation and not on grounds of competence, that the inclusion of the item is likely to do more harm than good in Cyprus, in the region of Cyprus, and in the United Nations. We shall therefore oppose the inscription of this item at this time.

We are sustained in our conclusion by the wording of the proposed item and of the supporting memorandum. We are not asked by the Government of Greece to consider merely the question of Cyprus. We have been asked to apply under United Nations auspices, the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples in the case of the population of Cyprus. We feel that those who propose the inscription of this item are virtually asking the Assembly not merely to discuss the question of Cyprus but to consider action of a particular kind, nothing less presumably than a United Nations sponsored plebiscite for Cyprus as requested by the Government of Greece. Even if we were prepared to discuss the question of Cyprus, we are certainly not prepared to put a question on the agenda which, by its very wording, prejudices the issue and presupposes intervention contrary to the Charter of the United Nations.

September 24, 1954.

The generally accepted interpretation of the Charter



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