CANADIAN DELEGATION TO THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

(EIGHTEENTH SESSION)

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STATEMENT DELIVERED BY
SENATOR THE HONOURABLE T. D'ARCY LEONARD,
CANADIAN REPRESENTATIVE ON THE FIFTH COMMITTEE
ON THE QUESTION OF UNITED NATIONS OPERATION IN THE CONGO:
COST ESTIMATES.

OCTOBER 9, 1963.

Mr. Chairman:

May I begin by expressing my appreciation to the members of this Committee for the honour that they have done to Canada in electing one of my country's most distinguished citizens as its chairman.

And may I also commence the Committee's wise choice of its Vice-Chairman and Rapporteur. While I am a newcomer to this Committee I understand it has traditionally elected officers of outstanding qualities and keenly interested in the work of the Committee. This tradition has again been maintained. The wide experience and intellectual abilities of Mr. Atson, our Vice-Chairman, and Mr. Boudjakdji, our Rapporteur are well known, and with their help and guidance, the burden of our tasks in the days ahead will be lightened.

Turning now to the item of the cost estimates of the United Nations operations in the Congo, the Canadian Delegation appreciates the efforts of the Secretary-General and the Advisory Committee in providing, on such short notice, two reports which contain the necessary information relevant to the two issues at hand. These two questions are, first, what are the financial implications of the continuation of ONUC for the period January 1 to June 30, 1964 and, second, how to provide the Secretary-General with the funds he requires. These tasks are not new to this Committee since the questions have been before us on at least four previous occasions.

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Perhaps the one factor which has contributed more than anything else to our past difficulties has been the lack of general agreement on the basic question of the procedures to be followed by the competent organs of the United Nations in the establishment, direction and financing of United Nations peace-keeping activities. While Resolution 1874 which was adopted last June was a step in the direction of clarifying certain of these procedures, it does not yet have the support of all Member States, nor is it completely adequate. Moreover, according to paragraph 1 of that resolution, the principles set forth in A are not applicable to existing operations. In spite of these factors my Delegation hopes we are approaching the time when we can dispense with provisional and partial expedients and can take a further step in developing a generally acceptable set of procedures to facilitate the Organization's ability to meet effectively its primary responsibilities as outlined in the Charter. However, in the meantime we are faced with another ad hoc financing arrangement.

Since the establishment of the force, assessments totalling more than 260 million dollars have been made and many individuals, including the late Dag Hammarskjold, have made the supreme sacrifice. And so the United Nations has a considerable interest and investment in peace in the Congo. However, while the clouds of the recent storm over the Congo are beginning to disappear, it seems too soon to tell whether the skies will remain clear.

As a result of this uncertain situation the Congolese Government, as is its prerogative, has indicated that it would prefer to have the United Nations force remain in the Congo during the first six months of 1964. Understandably, this request has received the full support of the other African nations and my Delegation finds itself in sympathy with the view that it would be most unwise for the United Nations to risk unduly its monetary and human investment in the Congo operation by withdrawing its assistance before there are more positive indications that peace and stability may be maintained in that troubled land. It is for these reasons that my Delegation intends to support draft resolution A/C.5/L.793, which is

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co-sponsored by 16 African states and which was so ably and eloquently introduced by the distinguished Delegate of Nigeria.

Becoming more specific I would like to summarize the position of my Delegation towards the Congo force cost estimates. While some members have had doubts and disagreements on this question in the past, the Canadian Delegation has consistently supported the United Nations in its efforts to achieve the tasks outlined for ONUC in the resolutions adopted by the relevant and competent organs of the United Nations. Canadian military and civilian personnel have seen service with the United Nations in the Congo since 1960 and the Canadian Government is willing to continue to provide such personnel during the period that we now have under review.

It follows from what I have said that, in addition to its normal assessment under the terms of this draft resolution, the Canadian Government is prepared to consider the request contained in paragraphs 7 and 9 of L.793 regarding voluntary contributions. However, I should point out that the Canadian Government considers the method of financing contained in draft resolution L.793 like that in Resolution 1876 to be only a provisional and temporary expedient, and is not a precedent for the future.

We have noted the suggestions advanced by one or two delegations that the amount to be appropriated should be 1 million dollars less than that considered necessary by the Secretary-General and that the assessment of the economically less-developed countries, in paragraph 5 of draft resolution L.793, should be 20 per cent of the regular scale rather than 45 per cent.

With respect to the first of these suggestions the Canadian view is that it would be more prudent to proceed on the basis of the Secretary-General's estimate of the maximum amount required. The Advisory Committee's opinion on the possibility of a reduction was couched only in tentative terms and we are confident that, as in the past, the Secretary-General will keep expenses to a minimum.

With respect to the suggestion that the rate of assessment for the economically less-developed countries should be lowered, I should like to associate my Delegation with the comments of the distinguished Representative

of Ireland when he spoke last Monday. The Canadian Government has supported United Nations peace-keeping efforts both by participating in such operations and by helping to pay for them. It has done so because Canadians believe that maintaining peace is a collective responsibility of the whole membership of this Organization and is, therefore, just as much in the interest of nations far from the scene of trouble as those in the immediate vicinity. Canada has also recognized that the heavy costs of large scale peace-keeping operations justify the special consideration given by the General Assembly to the situation of the less-developed countries in determining the scale of assessments to provide for such operations. It must be said, however, that the principle behind this consideration can be pushed too far - to the point where we would be paying lip-service to our collective responsibility while in fact abdicating it.

Thus, Canada is prepared to support the financing arrangements envisaged in draft resolution L.793 because we are convinced that pending the further studies to be carried out by the Working Group of 21 and bearing in mind the limited time at our disposal the cost-sharing formula evolved last June is the one which will carry the largest measure of support, both from those governments benefiting from the special scale of assessments and those governments whose voluntary contributions are necessary if the formula is to be implemented. Any proposal involving a lower rate of assessment for less-developed countries than that contained in draft resolution L.793 could not be supported by Canada.

The Canadian Delegation welcomes the effort of the Government of the Congo to do its part in resolving the difficult financial problem resulting from the maintenance of ONUC by offering to meet up to the equivalent of 3.2 million dollars in local costs. It is to be hoped that other Member States will not overlook paragraph 8 of the draft resolution and may take this opportunity of demonstrating their support for the Organization, particularly those with developing economies or those who place a relatively high priority on United Nations endeavours.

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May I conclude, Mr. Chairman, by suggesting that we remind ourselves that in adopting this resolution we have dealt only partly with the problem of maintaining the effectiveness of the United Nations peace-keeping machinery. The other element which is just as important is the liquidation of the very large accumulation of arrears. In this connection my Delegation listened with interest to the statements of the distinguished Representatives of Bolivia and Belgium and looks forward to receiving the report of the Secretary-General on Resolution 1877 in the hope that further progress will be made in the liquidation of arrears.

Mr. Chairman, the Canadian Delegation earnestly hopes that the same spirit of co-operation and understanding which characterized the deliberations at the Fourth Special Session will be evidenced during our consideration of the urgent question now before us. With this spirit I am certain that we could act with the same feeling of responsibility and concern for international peace which was so vividly demonstrated at the time ONUC was originally established and thus could respond favourably to the urgent plea of the Prime Minister of the Republic of the Congo as expressed yesterday when he said to the General Assembly: "The retention of the blue helmets of the United Nations force is imperative".

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.