

External Affairs
Supplementary Paper

No. 53/42 REVISION OF THE UNITED NATIONS CHARTER

Text of a statement made on October 26, 1953, by the Canadian Representative in the Sixth Committee of the United Nations General Assembly, Mr. Alan A. Macnaughton, Q.C., M.P., on agenda items 58, 70 and 72. These items deal with preparatory work with regard to the possible holding of a General Conference on Revision of the United Nations Charter.

The Canadian Delegation has been happy to join in co-sponsoring the draft resolution of Argentina, Cuba, the Netherlands, New Zealand and Pakistan.

Since Canada is pledged to the cause of the United Nations, we desire to see it function effectively. We recognize that no element in such functioning is more vital than that of the goodwill of Member States, and their determination to make the United Nations work; without such goodwill and determination the most perfect constitution may be set at naught. Few will claim that our Charter is in every respect perfect. It is, however, a very difficult question as to whether the realities of the international situation will permit the Charter to be changed in order to remove any imperfections it contains. The question as to whether it is or is not practical to improve the Charter is however one which we do not consider requires an answer at the present time.

We shall, however, in two years' time, be obliged to consider this question and it is realistic to consider undertaking such preparatory work now as will make our task at that time easier and more securely founded on factual premises.

The draft resolution approaches this task from two directions, each complementary to the other. Firstly, it provides for the publication in a systematic and organised fashion of the documentation of the founding conference. I think that delegates have conceded the need for such work. This material might usefully have been made available before now, for its international value is apparent, quite apart from our present purposes. Not only our own successors but historians as well, may derive benefit from this material when it is accessible and properly indexed.

Secondly, paragraphs 2 and 3 provide for the expression of the preliminary views of Member States, with regard to the possible review of the Charter, and for the due circulation of such views. These provisions should at once reassure those Delegations which have expressed doubts

as to the political wisdom of the resolution before us and who consider it as an attempt to undermine the Charter. Each Member State will have the opportunity of expressing its views. These paragraphs are in fact in accord with the general purpose of the draft resolution, namely that of preparing all Member States for the discussions, which under the provisions of the Charter, we must initiate in 1955.

My delegation has noted with regret the attitude taken on this subject by the distinguished delegates of the Ukraine, Poland, Byelorussia and Czechoslovakia. If my memory serves me correctly, the distinguished delegate of Byelorussia referred to the supporters of this draft resolution as "tools of one set of great powers to be used against other powers". Mr. Chairman, these are unkind words. Canada does not see herself in such a role. We are not party to a mischievous plot to subvert the principles of the Charter. We have merely taken note of the obligation which is imposed on all Member States to discuss revision, under the terms of a Charter to which the countries of these distinguished delegates are also party.

Now I should make it clear that my delegation does not entertain extravagant hopes as to the contribution which preparatory work on the Charter revision will make towards resolving present international problems or tensions. Our proposal is of a procedural nature, we have no views to put forward at the present time upon substantive amendments to the Charter, nor can we even yet know whether the climate of opinion in 1955 will be such that we would wish to undertake a conference on Charter revision at that time.

Whilst adopting this cautious, but, we feel, realistic attitude, we would like to think that there is in fact a real prospect of that slackening of tensions which has been an encouraging feature of recent months. We hope further that this may lead to the emergence of a world atmosphere which would be propitious for bringing about that desirable goal of making this organization ever more effective as an instrument of international comity to which we are all pledged.

In that spirit we will vote for the resolution before Committee and trust that it will have the support of all delegations.

Note: The following is the text of the resolution adopted on November 5, 1953 by the Sixth Committee on questions relating to revision of the U.N. Charter. It is an amended version of a resolution which Canada co-sponsored along with Argentina, Cuba, Netherlands, New Zealand and Pakistan. The final text was approved by a vote of 48 in favour (including Canada); 5 against (Soviet bloc) and no abstentions. (Two additional paragraphs were originally passed by 24-23, but were deleted by the chairman's ruling after the delegation of Ethiopia announced that it had abstained when it should have voted against. There is a possibility that these two paragraphs will be restored when the resolution comes up for consideration in plenary session.)

"The General Assembly,

Having regard to the provisions of Article 109 of

the Charter under which a proposal to hold a general conference of the members of the United Nations for the purpose of reviewing the Charter is to be placed on the agenda of the tenth annual session of the General Assembly if such a conference has not been held before that session,

Considering that the examination of such a proposal will require considerable preparation on the part of both the Secretary-General and member states,

Considering that study of the legislative history of the Charter and of the practice followed by the various organs of the United Nations is one of the best methods of acquiring knowledge of the Charter and will greatly facilitate consideration by the tenth annual session of the question of calling a general conference,

Having regard to the memorandum by the Secretary-General in Document A/C.6/343,

Requests the Secretary-General to prepare, publish and circulate among the member states during 1954, or shortly thereafter:

(A) A systematic compilation of the documents of the United Nations conference on international organization not yet published;

(B) A complete index of the documents of that conference on the lines envisaged in part II and part III C of the memorandum by the Secretary-General;

(C) A repertory of the practice of United Nations organs appropriately indexed."

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