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Question of Equitable Representation on the  
Security Council and on the Economic and Social Council

Statement by Mr. Jean Chapdelaine,  
Representative of Canada in the Special Political Committee  
of the General Assembly, December 13, 1963.

...I thought when I prepared this statement that the Committee would be agreed on the necessity, nay the urgency, of action to give adequate representation to new member states on two of the principal organs of the United Nations - the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council - even if there were to be some variants as to how best to achieve this most desirable end. The statement of the distinguished delegate of the U.S.S.R. on Tuesday has shattered this most reasonable of assumptions. The spokesman of this important group in these United Nations, one whose government has it in its power to refuse its assent and thus prevent a ratification of a proposal for enlargement of the Councils, has interposed his veto, a compounded veto, a Peking/Moscow veto. This veto is starkly directed at the rightful aspiration of the Africans and Asians to equitable representation on the Councils.

However, ukase or no ukase, it nevertheless remains of the utmost importance that the United Nations maintain its comprehensive character and that all groups and shades of opinion be adequately reflected in the composition and membership of the various organs of the United Nations. This is particularly so in the case of the Security Council, which, from time to time, is called on to deal with potentially-explosive situations in many parts of the world. It also holds true for the Economic and Social Council, which is continually dealing with questions of far-reaching importance. The ECOSOC not only deals with questions which affect the relations between the economically-advanced nations and the less-developed countries; it also is concerned with the whole field of human rights and with the almost unlimited range of social questions. The need for a balanced representation of member states on the Councils, therefore, cannot be over-emphasized. The claim of the new members in this respect is valid and just. But...the older members have an equally valid and just claim that this be not done improperly at their expense. With the increase in membership of the United Nations, from 51 at the beginning in 1945 to 111 today (and the number grows), it is obvious that mere redistribution of existing seats on the Councils would leave some groupings without representation from time to time, and even permanently. It would make it particularly difficult for most countries to be represented even once in a generation, many of which, because of their contribution to the purposes of the United Nations, have a definite claim to have a voice more frequently in its Councils. It would be difficult, if not impossible, in such a case, to achieve real representativeness on the Security Council. The equitable solution is, therefore, not redistribution of the existing seats but expansion of the Councils.

As we all know, present arrangements for the Security Council under the Charter provide for five permanent members and six elected members who hold their seats for two years. In accordance with the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1946, the six elected members are to include one representative from the Commonwealth, one from the Communist states of Eastern Europe, two from Latin America, one from Western Europe, and one from the Middle East. This arrangement was made when the membership of the United Nations stood at 51. Today the United Nations includes 111 members and additional members are expected to join shortly. Consequently, it is more than understandable that we should be considering as a matter of urgency in this Committee today ways and means of dealing with the changed situation.

In ordinary circumstances, it would be expected that the question of adequate representation on the Councils would be dealt with as part and parcel of a general review of the Charter. This is an undertaking of the utmost importance. Canada would have preferred that expansion of the Councils should take place in that context. In a general review, all implications of one change would, and could, receive thorough consideration and the consequences drawn in other sections and articles before the change was effected. Obviously, the membership of the Councils is but one facet of the Charter review made desirable by the profound changes which have taken place in the world, and the additional heavy responsibilities which the organization has assumed since San Francisco. Any change will have important effects on the other facets, and it would be preferable if the carefully-balanced construction which the framers of the Charter sought to erect was to be looked at in its entirety and not piecemeal.

As my Prime Minister, Mr. Pearson, said in his speech in plenary on September 19, on the assumption that we must make, that we, and I quote, "want the United Nations to be an effective international instrument for practical and positive action in carrying out United Nations decisions, a comprehensive appraisal should be made of certain basic questions of function and organization which have been pushed into the background of our thinking because of recurring tension in international relations leading to the fear that the questions themselves may contain the seeds of possible further friction". And later, he said: "To be fully effective, United Nations machinery and organization should adequately reflect the present membership, without giving undue weight to any single factor, whether it be military or industrial strength, population or financial contribution, politics or race or geography."

However, it seems clear from the report submitted by the Committee on arrangements for a conference for the purpose of reviewing the Charter - Document A/5487 of September 4, 1963 - that a majority of member states believe that international circumstances at the present time are not propitious for the holding of a general conference to review the Charter under Article 109 of the Charter. This would seem to indicate that we cannot expect a general review of the Charter in the immediate future and that we must therefore deal with the matter before us on an ad hoc basis by enlarging the Councils through an amendment to the Charter under Article 108. As I indicated earlier, ...this is the only equitable solution. Nevertheless, it is earnestly to be desired that Charter review will not be unduly delayed. The changes now contemplated in adjusting the composition of the Councils would, in this perspective, be regarded as ad hoc and interim arrangements, which the whole membership of the United Nations may wish to review in the not too distant future, when the Charter is reviewed as a whole.

Whatever the arrangements contemplated, I should like to make it clear that my Delegation could not accept that the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1946 should be regarded as having been overtaken by events and be scrapped without the concurrence of the parties to that Agreement. The Gentlemen's Agreement is still valid, and cannot be modified without the concurrence of the parties to it. As a member of the Commonwealth, Canada is not prepared to give this concurrence, and surrender its claim to representation on the Security Council. Could the Eastern European group, whose seat was considered as counterbalancing the Commonwealth seat under the Gentlemen's Agreement? And would the Latin American group, the Western European group, or even the Middle Eastern group?

New seats must be provided to accommodate the new members and to give them the representation, the equitable representation, to which they are entitled. The urgency of doing this has already been demonstrated by the "liberties", if I may use that expression, which have been taken in recent times with the agreed allocation of seats. If I understood the Soviet representative correctly in his statement on Tuesday, it was to these "liberties" that he objected. He did not contemplate the disappearance of the East European seat. In fact, he wanted a full one, all the time, for a group whose numbers are in a mathematical ratio not fully sufficient to warrant it. And, in the General Committee, again, he was providing for a Vice-President every year, for a Chairmanship every year, and for a rotation of the Presidency purely on a group basis, irrespective of whether a group was of eight or 16 or even 32.

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Certainly the arrangements for recasting the Councils will call for the most careful consultation of all the interests concerned. This could be achieved by the establishment of a negotiating body, the desirability of which could become evident in view of the multiplicity of the interests involved and the considerations which have a bearing on the allocation of seats within the expanded Councils.

In considering to what extent the Councils should be enlarged, my Delegation considers that the figure decided upon should take into account not only geographical factors but also the institutional needs of the Councils. Adequate geographical representation on the Councils is, of course, essential. But the geographic aspect should not be inflated to the point where it obscures other important factors which should also be taken into account in determining a member state's eligibility to serve on the Councils. That was never the intention of the United Nations Charter. In fact, Article 23 of the Charter provides that "the General Assembly shall elect six other members of the United Nations to be non-permanent members of the Security Council, due regard being specially paid in the first instance to the contribution of members of the United Nations to the maintenance of international peace and security and to the other purposes of the organization, and also to equitable geographical distribution". In the opinion of my Delegation, the criteria of Article 23 should continue to apply to elections to an enlarged Security Council. The language of the Article was obviously the result of careful thought by the framers of the Charter and it is understandable that they should have taken the reasonable position that the best interests of the United Nations would be served by giving first priority to capacity to contribute, and making geographical distribution a secondary consideration.

When one considers all the factors mentioned in Article 23 of the Charter, the contribution made by the Commonwealth as a group is substantial indeed. For example, if I may be permitted to cite a few statistics (these statistics are restricted to the 15 Commonwealth countries eligible for non-permanent membership in the Councils, exclusive, therefore, of the United Kingdom), the percentage of the combined contribution of the Commonwealth countries ranges from 8.41 per cent (Canada 3.12) for the regular budget of the United Nations to 15 per cent (Canada 9.8) for the regular programmes of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Commonwealth members contributed 7.7 per cent of the budget of the Special Fund (Canada 3.4), 9.9 per cent of the budget for UNICEF (Canada 3.15) and 9.8 per cent of the Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance budget (Canada 4.75). Voluntary contributions to meet the shortfall for UNEF and the United Nations Congo Operation on the part of three Commonwealth members have been substantial indeed: over 9 per cent (Canada 5.52). The Commonwealth countries have contributed on a large scale in terms of money, of men and of equipment to United Nations peace-keeping operations. Canada, amongst others, has provided military personnel for every one of the 15-odd peace-keeping operations undertaken since 1945. In July 1961, two Commonwealth countries, Canada and India, made up 43 per cent of the total UNEF force. In October 1963, this percentage was even slightly higher, 44 per cent. In the Congo, as of September 1962, the Commonwealth contribution constituted 61 per cent of the United Nations force; six Commonwealth countries, Canada amongst them, were supplying nearly 11,000 officers and men. In November 1963, this Commonwealth contribution, by only four countries, including Canada, was still of 2,166 officers and men, that is 31 per cent of the force. In West Irian, Pakistan provided the bulk of the force in which Canada also participated.

Commonwealth countries have also played a prominent and useful role in the work of the Economic and Social Council. In these circumstances, it is perhaps not out of place...to ask the question: "Can the General Assembly expect member states to contribute substantially to the political, economic and social activities of the United Nations unless it is prepared to offer them a reasonable prospect of representation on the organs controlling these activities?"

With the emphasis in recent years on geographic loyalties - almost to the exclusion of all others - there has grown a tendency in some quarters to write off the Commonwealth as a group in the United Nations. My Delegation...does not accept this viewpoint. In our view, the Commonwealth represents a happy combination of both geographical and functional considerations, which make it eminently suitable as a group for purposes of representation on and effective contribution to the work of the Councils. I would also remind the Committee that the Commonwealth group itself in the United Nations, which consisted of a small number of six members at the birth of the United Nations, in 1946, has since grown to a total of 16. In a few days, there will be two other applicants for membership, both from the Commonwealth. And the number is not closed. My Delegation is therefore firmly opposed to any suggestion which does not take fully into account the existence of the Commonwealth and its contribution to United Nations affairs. Indeed, it would be ironical if the United Nations failed to recognize a group of nations dedicated to international co-operation over and above regional and racial differences. After all, this is one of the main objectives which the United Nations itself is pursuing.

The task before us is to give adequate representation on the Council to the new members who have joined the United Nations since 1945. We want to do this. There is not the slightest doubt in our minds that enlargement is the answer to the problem, and that it must be adequate in both the Security Council and in ECOSOC, to permit an equitable allocation of seats. This equitable distribution of seats cannot be based exclusively on geography but must take full account of the criteria set out in Article 23, the most important of which, as I have noted, is the contribution of members to the maintenance of international peace and security and to the other purposes of the organization. It must, therefore, take into account the existence of the Commonwealth and of its contribution to UN affairs, a consideration to which my Government and the people of Canada attach the utmost importance. Finally, we must remember that the membership of the United Nations has more than doubled since 1945 and is still growing. It is apparent, therefore, that while avoiding undesirable inflation we should move in the direction of restoring the ratio between the total of the membership and the number of seats open to election in order to satisfy each grouping - those provided for under the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1946, and the new members.

Expansion, which would make for a just re-distribution (and provide adequate representation on the Councils for all groups, the old members and the new members) may be prevented unless the Soviet Delegation reconsiders its attitude. If it does not, it will be responsible for this injustice to the members from Asia and Africa. But it is to expansion and equitable representation for all that we have to address ourselves now, in order that we may lay the ground for a happier and more fruitful future in this organization, remembering however that a patch-up job in these last days of an Assembly may do more harm than good. It is in this light that my Delegation will examine all concrete proposals put before the Committee for expansion of the Security Council and



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