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THE CHINESE ISSUE AT THE UNITED NATIONS

Part of a Speech by the Secretary of State for
External Affairs, the Honourable Paul Martin, to
the Toronto Junior Board of Trade, November 29, 1966.

...What has rightly been called the "Canadian initiative" of last week at the United Nations started out several months ago with a series of diplomatic consultations with many friendly countries. These discussions were pursued in Rome on the eve of my trip to New York. There arose no specific consensus as a result of these talks but a broad understanding that there should be an attempt to move away from the past inertia.

What I did basically last week in my New York speech was to reject the traditional framework in which that issue has presented itself at the United Nations and to put forward new ideas on how the problem could be solved. We refused to go along with the position which denies that mainland China exists. We also refused to agree with the idea that the existence of Formosa should in future be ignored by the international community. We indicated our support for a new proposal designed to set up a special committee of United Nations members to explore the situation and to report to the next United Nations General Assembly. Although we played an active part in initiating consultations which led to that proposal, we unfortunately had to make it clear that it did not go far enough in meeting our objectives.

While affirming the right -- indeed, the duty -- of the two governments directly concerned to resolve the dispute which divides them, I put forward a proposal which we think reflects the fundamental realities of the situation. We suggested the following guide-lines as a basis for a reasonable interim solution: participation of both the Republic of China and of the People's Republic of China in the United Nations General Assembly as members representing the territories over which they exercise effective jurisdiction, and the participation of the People's Republic of China in the Security Council as a permanent member.

We did not expect a majority in the United Nations or even a large number of countries to rally immediately around these proposals. Audacious suggestions are seldom accepted overnight; they may take a long time to succeed. Although we think our proposal is a perfectly realistic and sound one, it may be that, in the course of time, its main virtue will prove to have been the impetus it gave to fresh thinking on the issue. It is quite clear that such ideas must

be given time to germinate. I am satisfied, on the basis of conversations I have had with representatives of several countries since we have put our suggestion on record, that they recognize the merit of our proposal and consider that it has already had its effect in starting a new train of thought.

I firmly believe the United Nations will not return to its previous immobility on this problem. The door has been opened. A consensus may be developing. This is what we had in mind. You cannot resolve a question like this merely by votes in the General Assembly of the United Nations. What has taken place in New York during the last few days -- and we have been in the forefront of those developments -- has given an impetus towards the essential efforts which must be made outside the United Nations by the parties primarily involved. These parties, together with other countries like the United States and Japan, must eventually achieve an agreement or an arrangement which would then be followed by formal action in the United Nations.

S/C