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Items Nos. 90 and 91 - Question of the Representation of China in the United Nations. Statement by Senator Alfred J. Brooks, P.C., Q.C., Vice-Chairman of the Canadian Delegation, in the Plenary Meeting on Friday, December 8, 1961

Mr. President,

For more than a decade the question of the representation of China has posed a dilemma for this Organization. It has provoked sharp differences of opinion in this Assembly. There is no simple solution. Had there been one, we would not still have the undecided question before us.

It is precisely because the question is so complex, and because opinions on its solution have differed so widely, that this Assembly has not previously thought it wise or timely to take a decision on the substance of the matter. Now, however, for the first time, we are concerned with the real issues. I should like to state the views of my delegation on these issues.

Let me say plainly at the outset, Mr. President, that the Canadian delegation is ready to consider carefully any proposal to settle equitably the question of Chinese representation.

I stress the word "equitably". There are those who claim that wrong has been done to one of the parties concerned. They are entitled to that opinion, but I cannot believe that any delegation in this Assembly would seriously seek to right what it considers to be one wrong by the creation of another.

It is the firm opinion of my delegation that there must be preserved for the people of Formosa the right to self-determination. The right of all peoples to a voice in their own destinies is one that is fundamental to the purposes of the United Nations.

Subject to due respect for that right in this matter before us, the Canadian delegation will, I repeat, give the most earnest attention to any proposals which may be advanced.

Mao Tse-Tung, the Chairman of the Communist Party of China, said some months ago in an interview with a foreign correspondent - and I quote "Taiwan is China's affair. We will insist on this." It is quite clear that what he meant was that the future of Taiwan was Peking's affair and no one else's.

My delegation, Mr. President, cannot accept that claim. We believe, on the contrary, that the future of Formosa is the affair of the people of Formosa. Canadians would never understand or accept a solution by which this Organization sanctioned the forcible extinction of the political identity of Formosa. Canadians have always been led to believe that the United Nations function is to prevent the imposition by force on any people of a political regime unacceptable to them;

On another occasion, the head of the Government in Peking, Chou En-Lai, said - and again I quote - "This question is relatively simple. If the so-called 'Taiwan clique' is to appear in the United Nations, under whatever form and in whatever name - be it the Chiang Kai-shek clique or some other clique - we will definitely refuse to take part in the United Nations and sit together with them."

So far as the delegation of Canada is concerned, that is an unacceptable condition. Believing that the people of Formosa have a clear and inalienable right to decide their own future, we cannot for a moment agree that there is any justice or reason in the claim made by the Government at Peking that they can impose, as a condition of their own representation, denial of the representation of the people of Formosa. I would remind delegations that the population of Formosa is greater than that of about two-thirds of the members of this Organization.

Mr. President, the only conditions which apply to membership in the United Nations, and consequently to representation in it, are the conditions set out in the Charter.

There are important provisions of the United Nations Charter which my delegation believes deserve special attention when considering the question of the representation of China. Members are required to be peace-loving and to refrain from the threat or use of force in their international relations. We have no desire to exacerbate differences, Mr. President, but we feel bound to emphasize that the record must give cause for grave doubts about the acceptance of that principle in Peking.

Canada believes that, as far as possible, representation in the United Nations should be comprehensive, embracing all nations without distinction as to the form of Government

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or social system adopted. This does not imply recognition of any particular government or approval of its policies, however; nor does it exclude the governments concerned from criticism which we consider valid.

Those who seek representation in this Organization, and who also seek to impose their own conditions for doing so, cannot complain, therefore, if the shortcomings in their own record are held up to scrutiny.

Two draft resolutions are before us for consideration. The first calls upon delegations to express an opinion on the importance of a change in Chinese representation within the meaning of Article 18 of the United Nations Charter.

Mr. President, can there be any doubt about the importance of this question? It concerns the competing claims to representation in the United Nations General Assembly of hundreds of millions of people. It concerns ultimately the disposition of a permanent Security Council seat and, by extension, of seats in the Economic and Social Council and in all subsidiary organs of the United Nations which by custom are held by permanent members of the Security Council.

Such a decision cannot be taken lightly. It must be accorded its due importance. It is patently of immediate importance both to the people who are ruled from Peking and to the inhabitants of Formosa. In the final analysis, it will have a profound influence on the effective functioning of the United Nations itself.

Any question which has remained unresolved for the past twelve years and which has attracted so much international attention must not be settled by recourse to any narrow voting majority. A just and peaceful solution must be found which is generally satisfactory to members of this Organization.

For these reasons, the Canadian delegation will cast its vote in favour of the resolution before us, declaring any proposal to change the representation of China to be an important

question.

It follows that it would be altogether unjust to decide the question on the basis proposed in the draft resolution put before us by the delegation of the USSR. This resolution attempts to prejudice the issue by speaking of the restoration of rights which most members of this Organization have never yet agreed existed.

Such a resolution would not only be inequitable but also quite contrary to the interests of this Organization. The Canadian delegation will therefore vote against the Soviet draft resolution.

My delegation does not believe that a decision recognizing the importance of the question constitutes, as has been suggested in some quarters, a new form of moratorium. We would not regard the simple adoption of one resolution and the defeat of the other as a satisfactory outcome of this debate.

My delegation has entered this debate ready to consider carefully any proposals designed to settle equitably the question of Chinese representation. Unfortunately, neither of the draft resolutions before us offers scope for such a settlement.

What is needed most, Mr. President, is some further time for full examination, by whatever means may be found generally acceptable, of all the elements of this complicated question, so that by the next session we can look forward to a solution that will serve the general judgment and carry the cause of justice and peace.