

MEMBERSHIP OF U.N. Organs

Statement in the General Assembly by  
Mr. Arthur R. Smith, Canadian  
Representative on the Special Political  
Committee, on November 25, 1959.

...The Canadian Delegation did not make a statement in the Special Political Committee when that body was discussing the three items now before us - these items which concern the possible enlargement of the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, and the International Court of Justice. However, my Delegation listened to this important debate with close and sympathetic attention. We should like at this stage to make a few brief comments.

In the Committee, the Canadian Delegation found itself in the fortunate position of being able to vote in favour of both the resolutions before the Committee. We believe that the views expressed by the distinguished representative of El Salvador reflected an obvious and general interest in the Committee for their desire to enlarge the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, and thus allow for the rapid growth in the membership of the United Nations. Such a move would enable the newer Member States, particularly those of Asia and Africa, to play their full role in the deliberations and decisions of these two major organs of the United Nations. The resolution presented by El Salvador, however, went beyond the recognition of the need for expanding the Councils and the simple, though important, recommendation to the Assembly to continue to give this problem its earnest attention. The El Salvador resolution called for the establishment of a small committee empowered and instructed to study the possibility of arriving at an agreement which would facilitate amendment of the Charter so as to increase the membership of these two Councils.

...We considered it unrealistic to expect any progress to be achieved in this field by the proposed committee considering the circumstances under which the latter would operate. Several representatives in the Committee debate shared our views in this respect, and we believe it is not necessary here to repeat the various arguments which they set out. It was for these reasons that we abstained in the vote of the Special Political Committee whether the proposed smaller unit should be retained or dropped. Our opinion proved not to be that of the majority, and it became apparent during that voting that no fewer than 35 delegations favoured setting up this small committee, partly in the expectation that it could be of practical use and partly, it seemed to us, in order to demonstrate in some way dissatisfaction with the existing state of affairs with regard to Security Council and ECOSOC membership, and their hope of breaking out of the deadlock which has prevailed in the Assembly for so long. We sympathize with the natural desire to take some concrete steps, even if their chances of success appear tenuous. Since so considerable a group of conscientious and vigorous delegations wished to establish a body to study the possibility of amending the Charter so as to expand the Councils, my Delegation, though with some mental reservation, in the final vote of the previous debate did not oppose the establishment of such a committee, and we are prepared to vote in the same sense today.



Similarly ... we were able to support the resolution submitted by twelve delegations representing nations in Africa and Asia. We were not unmindful of the cogency of the arguments that this twelve-power proposal in some substantial respects duplicated the provisions of the El Salvador resolution already adopted. On the other hand ... we recognized that the principal purpose of enlarging the Councils was to provide for more adequate representation for the new member countries. My Delegation was, therefore, inclined to support the measures sponsored by the twelve members from Asia and Africa - since this resolution in no way conflicted with the El Salvador proposal, and could have been regarded as a testimonial to the sincerity with which its authors are pursuing the objective of contributing more fully to the operations and activities of the United Nations. Considering that there was a substantial divergency of opinion in the Committee on the merits of the texts of each of the resolutions presented, we thought there was some virtue in accepting both, which, considered together, faithfully reflected the general consensus in the Committee - and I believe in the Assembly - that the membership of the two Councils should be enlarged and that the Assembly should go on endeavouring to find ways and means of enlarging them.

...We have before us an amendment to the draft resolution that brings together in closer proximity the divergent views of the proponents of the proposals referred to. We congratulate the respective sponsoring delegates in that they were able to reconcile their differences in presenting what would appear to be an acceptable compromise. As we have already registered our one reservation with respect to the advisability of establishing a committee to achieve such an important objective, it is unnecessary for us to make any other comment on the amendment itself. The Canadian Delegation is prepared to support any reasonable resolution that will produce a small increase in the two Councils, but we would oppose a large expansion of the Councils, as we feel this would be such an important step that its consideration must await the expected general review and revision of the United Nations Charter.

I ask your indulgence ... to add a word in regard to the third of the three items grouped together on our present agenda - the question of increasing the number of judges in the International Court of Justice. Although it appears in neither of the resolutions before us, there was some advocacy, at the Committee stage, for this proposal. I can only say ... that, if such a proposal had been formally presented, my Delegation would have opposed it. We should have done so for the same reasons put forward by many delegates speaking on this proposal in the Special Political Committee. It is necessary for me now merely to mention them. The first is that the membership of the International Court of Justice under its Charter is based upon wholly different principles from those which determine the membership of the Councils. These two principles - the adequate representation of the different forms of civilization and the principal legal systems of the world, and (secondly) the high personal qualifications of the individual judges - are quite capable of being carried out under existing arrangements. Our second reason for opposing the expansion of the Court is that in our view it is large enough now for its efficient operation. To increase it would, in the opinion of my Delegation, hinder rather than assist it in its performance.

As to the amended resolution now before us, I repeat ... that my Delegation will take pleasure in supporting it.



Similarly... we were able to support the resolution submitted by twelve delegations representing nations in Africa and Asia. We were not unmindful of the cogency of the arguments that a twelve-power proposal in some substantial respects duplicated provisions of the El Salvador resolution already adopted. On the other hand... we recognized that the principal purpose of supporting the Committee was to provide for more adequate representation of the new member countries. My Delegation was, therefore, inclined to support the measure sponsored by the twelve members from Asia and Africa - since this resolution in no way conflicted with the El Salvador proposal, and could have been regarded as a testimonial to our sincerity with which its authors are pursuing the objective of distributing more fully to the operations and activities of the United Nations. Considering that there was a substantial divergence of opinion in the Committee on the merits of the texts of each of the resolutions presented, we thought there was some virtue in accepting a compromise which, considered together, faithfully reflected the general consensus in the Committee - and I believe in the Assembly - that the membership of the two Councils should be enlarged and that the Assembly should go on endeavouring to find ways and means of enlarging them.

...We have before us an amendment to the draft resolution which brings together in closer proximity the divergent views of the opponents of the proposals referred to. We congratulate the respective sponsoring delegates in that they were able to reconcile their differences in presenting what would appear to be an acceptable compromise. As we have already registered our one reservation with respect to the advisability of establishing a committee to achieve an important objective, it is unnecessary for us to make any further comment on the amendment itself. The Canadian Delegation is prepared to support any reasonable resolution that will produce a fair increase in the two Councils, but we would oppose a large expansion of the Councils, as we feel this would be such an important step that its consideration must await the expected general review and revision of the United Nations Charter.

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As to the amended resolution now before us, I repeat... that my Delegation will take pleasure in supporting it.