

GENERAL
ASSEMBLYASSEMBLEE
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ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

MEASURES TO ECONOMIZE THE TIME OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The following letter has been addressed to the Secretary-General by the Ministry of External Affairs of Canada:

OTTAWA, 24 September 1946

Sir,

1. I have the honour to request that the following item be included in the Agenda of the Second Part of the First Session of the General Assembly:

"Measures to economize the time of the General Assembly".

2. The large number of international conferences which are being held makes it difficult for states to provide adequate representation at each conference. This difficulty is increased if the conferences last for a long time. Moreover, unduly protracted international conferences diminish the prestige of the international organizations which are responsible for calling them.

3. During the present period, when new international organizations are being formed, it is difficult to reduce the number of conferences which must be held. It is therefore all the more important to ensure that the various conferences accomplish their tasks as expeditiously as possible. The General Assembly of the United Nations should set an example to all other conferences by the efficient and expeditious conduct of its business.

4. It is of paramount importance that the time of representatives in the General Assembly be economized to the greatest possible extent. The General Assembly can be successful in carrying out its important tasks only if delegations include Ministers responsible for the formulating and carrying out of policy. The chances of these Ministers being able to be present during the whole period of a session of the General Assembly will be greater

if the sessions are not unduly prolonged.

5. The Canadian Delegation will therefore propose under this item of the agenda that the General Assembly, as early as possible in its proceedings, elect an ad hoc committee of about fifteen states to consider and make recommendations to the General Assembly on measures it might adopt to economize its time.

6. It is the hope of the Canadian Government that all the members of the General Assembly will be able, by the time this committee is set up, to make specific suggestions to the committee. The following six specific suggestions have occurred to the Canadian Governments:-

- (a) Each speaker in the opening debate in plenary session on the Secretary-General's Report might be limited to ten minutes with the right to have his remarks extended in the verbatim record.
- (b) A report of a Main Committee to the General Assembly should not be debated unless one third of the members of the Committee request a debate.
- (c) The Main Committees should, at their first or second meetings, establish a number of sub-committees of ten to fifteen members to study various questions referred to them by the Committee and to report back to it. In order that these sub-committees may meet simultaneously, each sub-committee should have its own chairman.
- (d) The General Committee, in discussing matters related to the agenda of the General Assembly, should not debate the substance of a question but should confine itself to discussing whether or not it should recommend that an item be included in the agenda of the General Assembly.
- (e) The General Committee should be required to submit its report to the General Assembly on the inclusion of an item in the agenda within, say, forty-eight hours of receiving a request that the item be included in the agenda. (The General Committee's report, being a recommendation, is debatable by the General Assembly but agreement might be reached that the debate be limited to two hours at most.)
- (f) In order to lessen the danger that committees waste their time on procedural debates, a number of improvements in the rules of procedure on the conduct of business might be made. Thus it might be desirable to insert a new rule on the order in which resolutions, as distinct from amendments, should be put to the vote. Changes in the existing rules of procedure might be required to implement some of the suggestions made above. It might also be useful if the Secretariat prepared

for the guidance of chairmen of committees and sub-committees
a commentary on the rules of procedure governing the conduct
of business.

Accept, Sir, the renewed assurances of my highest consideration.

(Signed) L. ST. LAURENT

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for External Affairs

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