

United Nations

Nations Unies

UNRESTRICTED

**GENERAL
ASSEMBLY**

**ASSEMBLEE
GENERALE**

A/570
20 August 1948

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

INFORMATION FROM NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES

Summary and analysis of information transmitted
under Article 73 e of the Charter

Report of the Secretary-General

SUMMARY OF INFORMATION TRANSMITTED BY THE
GOVERNMENT OF DENMARK

By letter of 13 August 1948 the permanent delegation of Denmark to the United Nations forwarded information transmitted by the Government of Denmark under Article 73 e of the Charter in respect to Greenland.

A summary of the information follows. It is classified under the main headings which are contained in the Standard Form for the guidance of members in the preparation of the information.

GREENLAND

I. General Information (Optional Category)

A. - C. Geography, history and people

Greenland covers an area of about 2,182,000 square kilometers. About 313,000 square kilometers are free of ice. The country is mountainous with very few flat areas. The scattered settlements, about 200, are situated at the coasts. The climate is arctic.

On 31 December 1946, the total Native population was 21,379. There were 450 Europeans. There are about 100 settlements with more than 100 persons. The entire population is mixed European-Eskimo, except in the Thule District in the north and in two settlements in East Greenland. No exact data is available as to the racial composition in the various settlement districts. All people belong to the Danish Established Church. Eskimo is the native language, but Danish is taught in all Greenland schools.

D. Government

The information transmitted contains a detailed description of the government, the provincial administration, including the municipal, district and provincial councils, and the judiciary.

Native Greenlanders have Danish citizenship, may hold office within the Kingdom, and are exempted from taxation and military service as long as they reside in Greenland. By two Royal Decrees of 24 January 1948, women were granted the franchise and are eligible for election to all the councils. The population is not represented in the Danish legislative assembly, the "Rigsdag." The matter is under investigation. It is the intention of the Danish Government to inquire during 1948-49 into the question of establishing Greenland as a part of Denmark on an equal footing with the rest of the Kingdom.

For purposes of administration, Greenland is divided into South, North and East Greenland. Supreme administrative authority in North and South Greenland is vested in the Provincial Governors who, in turn, are

supervised by the Prime Minister. The Provincial Governors are Danish civil servants (law graduates). No Native has yet held the office of Provincial Governor for the reason that no Greenlander has ever taken the Danish law examination. Under existing law, Greenlanders are to have priority in appointments to all offices, provided they possess the same qualifications as are required of Danish officials.

Local government is exercised through municipal, district, and provincial councils. The two provincial councils, also supervised by the Prime Minister, constitute the actual link between the population and the Government. Members are elected for six years by Municipal and District Councillors residing within the province. The Provincial Governor is ex officio the chairman of the council.

Popular franchise is only exercised in regard to the municipal councils. The settlement of Thule, in North Greenland, is under the jurisdiction of the Provincial Governor. It has a Hunters' Council consisting of the settlement manager, the clergyman, the physician, and three elected Greenlanders.

In East Greenland the Danish Government is represented by an Inspector. Special administrative regulations were introduced in September 1947. The population is represented by two councils.

No distinction exists between the judicial and the executive authority. This matter, and the question of modernization of the entire judicial system, will be examined during 1948-49.

II. Social Conditions

A. Social problems of race and cultural relations

Denmark's policy in Greenland pursues the sole object of protecting and developing the Greenland population so that in time it may attain an economic and social-ethical standard which will enable it to live in free communication with the rest of the world. Unregulated communication with the outside and the free entry of seamen and travellers would, however, expose the population to physical and moral dangers. For this reason,

Greenland is, for the time being, considered a closed area, which means that only ships sent out by the Danish Government, ships holding special permits issued by the Danish Government, or ships authorized to do so by treaty, will be allowed to navigate in Greenland waters. Persons not belonging to the Greenland community will be allowed to enter the country only subject to the permission of the Danish Government.

B. Labour and employment conditions

Most of the population are independent hunters and fishermen. The Government is the sole employer. No unemployment problem exists. All employment is reserved for the people, but Danish labour is imported when necessary. Workers employed by the Government on a permanent basis include artisans, office clerks, trading clerks, teachers, midwives, and radio operators; there are part-time labourers.

In addition to their small basic salary, workers receive fuel and cost of living allowances. These increased 15% between 1 April 1947 and 1 March 1948. Wage scales are set in relation to several factors, such as the low price of goods imported from Denmark, tax exemption, free medical attendance, hospital services, and free education. Working hours are shorter in winter than in summer.

No labour organisation exists. Complaints may be made to the municipal councils. There is no machinery for the settlement of disputes. Greenland civil servants organised during the war. The Danish Government recognized them but holds the view that permanent civil servants should not strike.

C. Public health and sanitation

The extermination of tuberculosis is the principal health problem. Next comes the problem of venereal diseases, particularly gonorrhœa. Measures to eliminate these diseases are being taken through treatment and preventive education.

Public health expenditures for 1945-46 were Kr. 697,612.22.⁽¹⁾ In 1947-48, Kr. 818,879.48 will be used for new buildings. Estimated

(1) Note by the Secretariat: Kr. 4.79 = \$1.00 U.S. = 5s. Sterling.

expenditures for 1948-49 for public health service are Kr. 1,093,458. During the period 1900-1945 the per capita expenditure increased from Kr. 2.00 to Kr. 33.00 a year. All forms of treatment, such as hospitalization, operations, medicine, and obstetrics are free to the Native population.

There are 14 medical stations providing 1 medical officer and 1 trained nurse per 1,500 persons. Public health statistics for 1947 list 16 medical officers, 23 nurses, and 122 midwives (99 trained in Greenland). There are a total of 387 hospital beds (18 per 1,000 population). 91% of the hospital beds were used during 1946. There are 116 medicine depots containing packed medicines and drugs. 10 medical officers in 1946 travelled 4,107 kilometers each over a period of 78 days. There are 4 dentists in East and West Greenland. There is regular dental treatment for school children in West Greenland.

As of December 1946, vital statistics for East and West Greenland (including Thule) are:

	<u>West Greenland</u>	<u>East Greenland</u>
a) Number of deaths	390	26
Rate per 1,000 population	20	19
b) Number of births	861	59
Rate per 1,000 population	44	43

The excess of births over deaths in both regions was 24 per 1,000 population.

D. Housing conditions

Interest-free loans from public funds are granted to the general population for the construction of homes. Private artisans are being trained to build houses of timber, with modern insulation by standard plans. Town planning for the larger settlements is in preparation.

E. Welfare and relief

Social insurance is not regarded as necessary. Permanent Government workers receive sick benefits and a pension if incapacitated. Day labourers are granted temporary relief; monthly relief is given their

dependents if accidents result in death. Greenlanders who have become incapacitated are supported from district funds; persons incapable of earning a living are given aid in kind. Old age pensions, paid in cash or in kind, are granted every Greenlander over 55 years incapable of supporting himself and his family. The amount of aid in all cases is fixed at the discretion of the granting authority. Total expenditures in 1946-47 for poor relief and all pensions in North and South Greenland were Kr. 116,784.93.

F. - G. Crime statistics and description of penal administration

Information was transmitted but is not summarized.

H. Information on development programmes

See section IV, I.

III. Educational Conditions

There is compulsory education for all between the ages of 7 and 14. Education may be provided by other than Government schools with approval of school inspectors. Education problems originate from the increase of children of school age, the demand for extended education of Greenland women, and extended education in the Danish language.

For 1948-49, the estimated expenditure for churches and schools is Kr. 1,359,657.

There are three secondary schools for boys and one for girls. A two-year course is given at the High School. Graduates are eligible for civil service posts. Teachers are trained at the High School and later at a Seminary. All these schools provide free board and training. Graduates of the Seminary may be admitted to study in Denmark for two or three years.

There are 3,872 children in schools. About 90 students attend the secondary schools, and about 40 are in the High School and Seminary. At the end of 1946, the teaching staff included 229 local teachers, 20 clergymen, and 11 Danish or Danish-trained teachers. Of the Greenland teachers, 97 were trained in the Seminary and some had additional training

in Denmark; 88 teachers had less training. In 44 settlements, teachers are picked from among the local hunters or fishermen who have only ordinary school training. There are 3 inspectors. The school year is fixed at 200 days but the smaller settlements do not attain this schedule. Evening classes for young people are held in several places.

For the interchange of Greenland and Danish literary productions, a fund of Kr. 750,000 was set up. Two printing offices publish matter for the use of the Administration in the schools and churches; and print the educational and recreational literature.

IV. Economic Conditions

A. - C. Natural resources and production

Cryolite is found in Ivigut, South Greenland, and coal deposits on the island of Disko in North Greenland. In West Greenland, geological explorations are being made. Vegetation is sparse and no forests exist. Fishing is the chief source of trade. Sea mammals include whales and seals; fish include codfish, halibut, shark, salmon and shrimps. Land mammals include polar bears, reindeer and foxes.

The climate is too cold for agriculture. Vegetable gardens are raised, and include potatoes, carrots, kale, lettuce and radishes.

Sheep breeding is engaged in in the southern part of the country. There is also some fur industry. Cryolite is mined by a private concession. The Government holds one-half of the share capital in preference shares. This revenue is used for the benefit of the people. Coal is mined in northern Greenland.

All trading and industrial activities in Greenland are being carried on by the Danish Government which, according to existing law, is required to apply all profits accruing from such activities to the benefit of the Greenlanders. For the past century the Kingdom of Denmark has derived no economic advantage from Greenland.

D. Standard of living

It has been the aim of the Danish Government not to let the Greenland standard of living be dependent on the changing world price levels, but to bring about a steady, gradual improvement in the standard of living. This has been achieved through Government monopoly of trading.

Goods imported are fixed at cost price plus a percentage, which is fixed on "social-political lines" so that essential goods are at a low level and non-essentials at a high level. Government price-fixing for local products is intended to develop specific trades. The post-war demand for imported goods has led the Government to increase prices, but they are yet below the wholesale prices in Denmark. Consumption of local products has declined with the increase in cash income and the demand for imported goods.

E. Communications and transport

Supply ships from Denmark are the principal means of transportation. There is one harbour located at Ivigut. No regular shipping lines exist. Each settlement has a vessel for trading purposes. There are no roads between settlements. There are some telephones in larger settlements, and radio stations in four. A number of small transmission stations have radiogram service; some postal communication by air is maintained. There are meteorological stations in East and West Greenland.

F. Public finance

Estimated expenditure and revenue for 1948-49 is Kr. 13,212,213. The estimated deficit of Kr. 5,054,213 will be covered from special funds.

There is no actual taxation although certain luxury articles have a form of excise tax. A special revenue of 20% of the price of goods sold to Greenlanders is placed in public funds. To this fund the Danish Government makes a 2% annual contribution of all salaries paid to civil servants employed in Greenland.

G. Banking and credit

The Government extends interest-free loans for the purchase of low-cost motor boats, tools, house construction and sheep-breeding.

H. International trade

The estimated trade expenditure for 1948-49 is Kr. 4,873,076. The estimated trade revenue is Kr. 2,218,000.

I. Development programmes

During 1945-46, negotiations between representatives of the Provincial Councils and the Danish Legislature led to agreement on a number of improvements in social, health, and economic conditions, to be implemented over a period of five years.

In 1948, a committee prepared a plan to make the teaching of the Danish language more effective in accordance with the desire expressed by the Greenland people. There will be new schools with modern equipment and a large number of Danish teachers. It is not intended to make instruction in the Danish language compulsory. The arrangement permits parents voluntarily to send their children to schools emphasizing the Danish language in the curriculum. It is planned to have parents' committees for these schools. Costs will aggregate about Kr. 3 million over a three to four year period.

Public funds are to be used to erect modern carpentry shops in connection with the technical schools.

In 1948-49, a shipping line will be established to operate on a regular schedule between all settlements during the summer season.

The possibility of changes in the present economic and legal systems is being contemplated with a view to replacing the monopoly system by freer economic conditions. Plans are in a preparatory stage.

The possible use of waterfalls for power production is to be investigated. A shrimp cannery in South Greenland is being considered; a cannery for sheep products is under construction.