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## Ninth Session

## AD-HOC COMMITTEE ON PETITIONS

## SUMMARY RECORD OF THE THIRTEENTH MEETING

Held at Flushing Meadow, New York,  
on Thursday, 12 July 1951, at 10.30 a.m.

## CONTENTS:

Examination of Petitions, Cameroons under British Administration  
(T/L.175, T/L.175/Add.1):Petition from the Ex-Servicemen's Union, Victoria (T/PET.4/68; T/928);  
Petition from the Bakweri Land Committee (T/PET.4/69, T/PET.4/69/Add.1,  
T/933);Petition from Mr. Joseph Ngu (T/PET.4/70) and petition from the  
French Cameroons Welfare Union (T/PET.4/71, T/PET.4/71/Add.1)Chairman: Prince WAN WAITHAYAKON

Thailand

Members: Mr. QUESADA ZAPIOLA

Argentina

Mr. WENDELEN

Belgium

Mr. SCOTT

New Zealand

Mr. SOLDATOV

Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

Mr. STRONG

United States of America

Also present:

Mr. SABEEN-CLARE

Representative of the  
United Kingdom of Great Britain  
and Northern Ireland,  
Administering Authority of the  
Trust Territory of the Cameroons  
under British Administration.

Mr. GIBBONS

Special Representative of the  
Administering Authority of the  
Trust Territory of the Cameroons  
under British Administration

Secretariat:

Mr. RAPOPORT

Secretary of the Committee

EXAMINATION OF PETITIONS: CAMEROONS UNDER BRITISH ADMINISTRATION (T/L.175,  
T/L.175/Add.1)

The CHAIRMAN reminded the Committee that of the three petitions from the Cameroons under British Administration, only the petition from the Ex-Servicemen's Union, Victoria (T/PET.4/68) had arrived within the time-limit. The two other petitions, dealt with in documents T/PET.4/69 and T/PET.4/69/Add.1, and T/PET.4/70, T/PET.4/71 and T/PET.4/71/Add.1 respectively, had reached the Committee shortly before or it might be even after the opening of the current sessions. He asked the Special Representative of the Administering Authority whether he was ready for the examination of those petitions.

Mr. GIBBONS (Special Representative) said that owing to the recent date of the petitions from the French Cameroons Welfare Union, the Government of Nigeria had been unable to study them in detail. However, he was at the Committee's disposal and hoped that he would be able to supply any general information which might be required.

It was decided that the Committee should examine all the petitions from the Cameroons under British Administration.

Petition from the Ex-Servicemen's Union, Victoria (T/PET.4/68, T/928)

Mr. STRONG (United States of America) noted that, according to the particulars given in page 4 of document T/PET.4/68, only two members of the  
/Council

Council of the Nigerian Welfare Association were members of the Ex-Servicemen's Union. That did not tally with the Administering Authority's report, according to which there was a majority of ex-servicemen on the Council. He would be glad to have some explanation of that point and asked whether the Council had a fixed number of members, or whether it was a body which met only occasionally and took advantage of the possible participation of representatives of the Ex-Servicemen's Union.

Mr. GIBBONS (Special Representative) explained that the membership of the Council of the Nigerian Welfare Association was not fixed. The Council met from time to time and ex-servicemen could take part in its meetings, whether they were members of the Ex-Servicemen's Union or not. All ex-servicemen were not members of that Association and the number of representatives of the Ex-Servicemen's Union who took part in the work of the Council of the Nigerian Ex-Servicemen's Welfare Association varied considerably.

Mr. STRONG (United States of America) asked to what extent the Nigerian Ex-Servicemen's Welfare Association was maintained by the Government and whether it received a subsidy.

Mr. GIBBONS (Special Representative) said that the Association had been set up under a Government order. It had then received a subsidy from the Government which had not been renewed. It was a private agency in whose management the Government played no part, and at the present time the Nigerian Ex-Servicemen's Welfare Association raised its own funds by organizing collections, sports and so on.

Mr. STRONG (United States of America) said that in Paragraph 8 of the petition, it was stated that the Regional Ex-Servicemen's Welfare Association Council could not meet without special permission from the President of the Federated Council or the District Officer. He asked the Special Representative why that was so.

/Mr. GIBBONS

Mr. GIBBONS (Special Representative) explained that the Council used the premises of the Appeals Court for its meetings and obviously could meet only when those premises were free. That was why it had to apply first to the District Officer for permission.

Mr. STRONG (United States of America) said that paragraph 10 of the petition reported that in virtue of Circular Number 10243/82, the Native Administrations must not grant loans to the inhabitants. He asked the Special Representative to explain the reasons for that provision.

Mr. GIBBONS (Special Representative) explained that that step had been taken because henceforward the Eastern Regional Development Board would be responsible for granting loans for the working out of suitable projects.

Mr. STRONG (United States of America) said that reference was made in paragraph 11 of the petition to a request for a loan made to the Eastern Regional Development Board in April 1950 about which nothing had been done. Paragraph 11 also mentioned the case of three ex-servicemen to whom loans had first been promised and then refused.

He asked the Special Representative for details on those particular cases.

Mr. GIBBONS (Special Representative) said in regard to the first request which was for a loan of £4,000, that the application was still being studied and the applicants had been asked to supply more information.

The three ex-servicemen had been given satisfaction and had each been granted a loan of £40.

Mr. QUESADA ZAPIOLA (Argentina) noted that on page 7 of document T/PET.4/68, it was alleged that the Cameroons Development Corporation had embarked upon the mass dismissal of ex-servicemen in its employ. He asked the Special Representative to explain the reasons for any such dismissals.

Mr. GIBBONS (Special Representative) said that the allegations were baseless. The ex-servicemen might have been dismissed for incompetence; in  
/any event,

any event, he was in a position to state that the Cameroons Development Corporation did not pursue any policy of discrimination against ex-servicemen.

Mr. SCOTT (New Zealand) asked whether there were any ex-servicemen's organizations in the Victoria Division other than the Ex-Servicemen's Union, and what the relative strength of such bodies was; he also asked whether the organizations received regular subscriptions.

Mr. GIBBONS (Special Representative) said that there was one official organization, the Nigerian Ex-Servicemen's Welfare Association. In addition to that organization there was a private body, the Ex-Servicemen's Union. As far as their numbers were concerned, he thought that the Nigerian Ex-Servicemen's Welfare Association had slightly under 100 members in the Victoria Division. He was not in a position to provide figures for the Ex-Servicemen's Union. There were no regular subscriptions.

Mr. SCOTT (New Zealand) asked whether the ex-servicemen's associations might be granted credits.

Mr. GIBBONS (Special Representative) said that there was nothing to prevent credits being granted, provided that the associations concerned submitted proper applications and constructive proposals.

Mr. WEIDELN (Belgium) thought it would be difficult to give any opinion on the complaints of the Ex-Servicemen's Union. The Committee would be well advised to refer to its resolution of 1950 and express the hope that the Administering Authority's efforts to give satisfaction to ex-servicemen, in all cases where their grievances were justified, should be continued and intensified.

Mr. STRONG (United States of America) agreed with the Belgian representative, but thought it might also be advisable to note in the preamble to the resolution the comments of the Administering Authority on each of the specific points raised by the authors of the petitions.

/Mr. SCOTT



Mr. SCOTT (New Zealand) associated himself with the views of the Belgian and United States representatives.

Mr. SOLDATOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that it was clear from the exchange of views that had just taken place that the Administering Authority had not given satisfaction to the requests already made by the ex-servicemen in 1950. Any resolution which the Committee adopted should therefore note that fact. It should also recommend that the Administering Authority should give the petitioners satisfaction.

Mr. WENDELIN (Belgium) said that his delegation could not associate itself with any statement of that kind. The problem of ex-servicemen had arisen in nearly all countries. The policy generally adopted had been to give satisfaction to the ex-servicemen as far as possible, and it was a well-known fact that Great Britain had adopted a very liberal policy in that direction in all the territories under British Administration. The same was certainly true of the Cameroons. It would, moreover, be a very ambitious project to try to answer all the claims submitted, and he did not think that the Committee ought to make any recommendation to that effect.

The CHAIRMAN said that the Secretariat would prepare a draft resolution taking into account the observations made during the discussion.

Petition from the Bakweri Land Committee (T/PET.4/69, T/PET.4/69/Add.1; T/933)

Mr. STRONG (United States of America) remarked that the problem raised in the petition was not new and that it would be wise to be guided by the resolutions which had already been adopted on the subject and, in particular, by Trusteeship Council resolution 174 (VI) and the draft recommendation on the Cameroons under British Administration which had been adopted by the Council's Drafting Committee. According to the paragraph in that draft entitled "Land; Bakweri Problem; Cameroons Development Corporation" the Council approved the steps taken by the Administering Authority in regard to the Bakweri problem, but noted with concern its inability thus far to persuade the Bakweri to abandon their claim

/to outright

to outright ownership of the lands leased by the Cameroons Development Corporation and to accept the scheme to resettle them on land excised from the Corporation's plantation areas; the Council nevertheless expressed the hope that the Bakweri would accept the resettlement scheme and would realize that the Cameroons Development Corporation was working in their interests.

Mr. WENDELEN (Belgium) agreed with the United States representative that the Council should be guided by those resolutions.

He regretted that the Administering Authority was having difficulty in obtaining the co-operation of the Bakweri.

Mr. SCOTT (New Zealand) agreed with the United States and Belgian representatives.

Mr. SOLDATOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) defended the point of view set forth by the Bakweri in their petition (T/PET.4/69/Add.1) concerning the return to the indigenous inhabitants of lands which had been taken from them. The Council should grant the petitioners their request. A draft resolution should be prepared in which the Trusteeship Council should invite <sup>the</sup> Administering Authority to restore to the Bakweri the lands which had, in one way or another, been taken from them. The resolution should refer not only to the lands at present held by the Cameroons Development Corporation but to those occupied by the religious missions and trading firms, referred to in paragraph 5 of the petition, and also to all the lands taken from the indigenous inhabitants by the German colonists which the British Administration had failed to restore to them after the end of the First World War.

Mr. WENDELEN (Belgium) said that there were two aspects to the problem: the resettlement of the Bakweri and the common interests of the indigenous inhabitants, both of which were dealt with in resolution 174 (VI) and in the Drafting Committee's draft resolution. In its resolution the Trusteeship Council noted with approval that by virtue of the 1946 Ordinance, lands formerly alienated were being developed by the Cameroons Development Corporation for the

/common benefit

common benefit of the indigenous inhabitants; the Drafting Committee's form of words referred, in the part of its recommendations entitled "Operations of the Corporation", to indigenous participation in the Corporation's work and the Administering Authority's decision to consult the indigenous inhabitants on the use of funds. That recommendation should be included in the resolution.

Mr. STRONG (United States of America) thought that it would be prejudicial to the Bakweri's interests to return to them the lands at present held by the Cameroons Development Corporation. The Corporation was doing a great deal for the Trust Territory in general, and the Bakweri tribe in particular, and was a factor working for progress. To restore the lands would be a step backwards and the Committee should adopt a resolution on the lines of the one suggested by the Drafting Committee.

Mr. SOLDATOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) did not agree with the United States representative. Although the Trusteeship Council had been considering that question for some time, no solution had as yet been found. The Bakweri, who had been driven from their land by the Germans at the end of the last century had been forced to seek refuge in the mountains and the neighbouring marshlands where they led a miserable existence. Since then the German Administration had been succeeded by a British Administration but the situation of the Bakweri had not changed. After the Second World War the Bakweri had submitted many petitions both to the Administering Authority and to the Trusteeship Council, but to no effect. Their lands had gone to the Cameroons Development Corporation and the Bakweri tribe was in process of extinction. He asked whether the Administering Authority could supply information on the numbers of that tribe.

He could not agree that alienated lands belonged to the Territory as a whole and were being developed for its benefit by the Cameroons Development Corporation. The Corporation had not been created by the indigenous inhabitants, and certainly not by the Bakweri, nor was it run by them but by the British; the lands were therefore in British and not Bakweri hands.

/His delegation



His delegation could not therefore agree with the Administering Authority's view that the land should not be returned to the indigenous inhabitants. The land should be given back to the Bakweri who should themselves decide on what was to be done with the Cameroons Development Corporation. It was clear from the petitions which had been received that some of the members of that tribe were sufficiently developed culturally and politically to take their own decisions in that matter. Any other solution of the problem would be unjust and a flagrant violation of the Charter. He was therefore opposed to the Drafting Committee's recommendations, the only purpose of which was to exonerate the Administering Authority.

Mr. QUESADA ZAPIOLA (Argentina) noted that, in spite of all the resolutions which had been adopted, the Bakweri question remained unsolved. He wondered why the Bakweri were being so stubborn and were even refusing to discuss the matter.

Mr. GIBBONS (Special Representative) replied that the Bakweri Land Committee had adopted that attitude some years previously. The Administering Authority had given the question much thought since then and, after making the necessary inquiries, had agreed with the Trusteeship Council on what course to follow in the matter. The Bakweri, however, had stood firm in the hope of exhausting the Administering Authority's patience and thus securing advantages which would give them immediate satisfaction but would prove contrary to the population's interests in the long run. The younger and more intelligent members of the Bakweri tribe were, however, showing signs of changing their views under the influence of the political organizations of the Southern Cameroons which approved of the Trusteeship Council's attitude.

Mr. QUESADA ZAPIOLA (Argentina) asked whether the Bakweri still lived on the lands they had occupied before the creation of the Cameroons Development Corporation.

Mr. GIBBONS (Special Representative) said that they did.

/The CHAIRMAN

The CHAIRMAN asked the Secretariat to prepare two draft resolutions, one setting forth the views of the United States, Belgian and New Zealand delegations and the other those of the USSR delegation.

Petition from Mr. Joseph Ngu (T/PET.4/70) and petition from the French Cameroons Welfare Union (T/PET.4/71, T/PET.4/71/Add.1)

Mr. GIBBONS (Special Representative) said he was prepared to make verbal comments on behalf of the Administering Authority that could be reproduced or supplemented later in writing.

The basic grievance expressed in the three petitions was the alleged inequality of rights in the Cameroons under British Administration operating to the disadvantage of immigrants from the Cameroons under French Administration. He had explained that situation at the Council's sixth session in March 1950, when he had amplified the 1949 Visiting Mission's comments. As he had then stated, immigrants from the Cameroons under French Administration enjoyed exactly the same civic rights as the people of the Cameroons under British Administration and some of them were members of local authorities. Nevertheless, like all aliens in every country, they had suffered from certain disabilities and had sometimes been placed at a disadvantage. For instance, in the granting of scholarships, the local authorities had tended to give preference to pupils from the Territory under British Administration. That was a natural reaction that would occur in any country and it would be difficult for the Government to legislate against it.

There had, however, been a new development as a result of the new Nigerian Constitution, which had established the electoral system. According to the new Constitution, before a person could vote in Parliamentary Election, he had to be a British subject or a British protected person, in accordance with a general principle accepted throughout most of the civilized world. Hence, to take part in the elections, any subject of the Cameroons under French Administration must first become a British subject by naturalization, since there was no procedure whereby an alien could become a British protected person except by birth or descent.

/Mr. WENDELLEN

Mr. WENDELEN (Belgium) asked first for an explanation of the term "qualifying" used in document T/PET.4/71, page 11, and whether the qualification to vote was equivalent to citizenship; secondly, whether the petitioners' suggestion, in paragraph 10, that the immigrants from the Cameroons under French Administration should be constituted a primary electoral unit was an acceptable and desirable one, whether the Administering Authority had already studied and rejected that suggestion, and, if so, why.

In reply to the first question, Mr. GIBBONS (Special Representative) reiterated that, in order to vote, a person had to be a British subject or a British protected person. It was true that the guide to election procedure referred to in the petition did not mention that requirement, the reason being that, in the minds of those who had drafted it, it had not been intended for immigrants.

With regard to the Belgian representative's second question, he believed that it would be impractical for the immigrants from the Cameroons under French Administration to be constituted into an electoral unit; they were scattered throughout the country whereas the constituencies were geographical entities.

Mr. WENDELEN (Belgium) wished to know how long it would take to acquire British nationality and whether most of the French Cameroons Welfare Union's members were immigrants of recent date or had lived for some time in the Cameroons under British Administration and had participated in its development.

Mr. GIBBONS (Special Representative) replied that after the requisite five years' residence in the Territory, or in any other British territory, a further two or three years would be needed before the naturalization papers could be issued. He had no accurate information on the second point raised by the Belgian representative.

Mr. QUESADA ZAPIOLA (Argentina) asked the Special Representative whether he thought that immigrants were aware that they could obtain naturalization and were acquainted with the procedure. He also wished to know whether there were any requirements other than the five years' residence, such as educational qualifications.

/Mr. GIBBONS

Mr. GIBBONS (Special Representative) said that the naturalization regulations had been made public and that those among the immigrants who had become to some extent politically conscious would undoubtedly be able to grasp the relevant facts. It was doubtful, however, whether they would know what steps they had to take, but they could always consult the administrative officials of their district. Apart from the qualification of five years' residence, it must be shown that the applicant was a person of good character.

Mr. QUESADA ZAPIOLA (Argentina) asked the Special Representative for an estimate of the number of immigrants from the Cameroons under French Administration who had been in the Cameroons under British Administration for over five years.

Mr. GIBBONS (Special Representative) had no exact information on the point but would place the number at more than one thousand.

Mr. SCOTT (New Zealand) observed that, according to the Administering Authority's letter to the petitioners reproduced in document T/PET.4/71/Add.1, it was enough, in order to have the right to vote, for a person or his father to have been born in the Victoria Division. He would like to know how many immigrants were likely to benefit by that provision.

Mr. GIBBONS (Special Representative) said he did not know the exact number but confirmed that there was such a provision and that the problem in regard to the right to vote arose only in the case of persons born in the Cameroons under French Administration.

Mr. WENDELEN (Belgium) noted that resolution L72, which had been adopted in March 1950, did not cover the question raised in the petition. Moreover, he feared that, with the incomplete information at its disposal, the Council would not find it possible to adopt a satisfactory text at the current session. He considered that the Council should adopt a resolution recommending close co-operation between the Administering Authority and the group of people

/from the



from the Cameroons under French Administration, who seemed to be playing a part of some importance in the Territory's economic development. Furthermore, the Council should express the hope that the Administering Authority would furnish full information on the matter in its next report regarding the number of immigrants from the Cameroons under French Administration, the time of their arrival, the number of applications for naturalization and the number granted, the average length of time required to take out naturalization papers and become a qualified voter. Lastly, the Council should agree to reconsider the petition at its next session when the Administering Authority's report would be available, even if no further petition were received. The resolution must therefore be of an interim character.

Mr. SCOTT (New Zealand) expressed agreement with the main lines of the Belgian representative's proposal. He considered that the Administering Authority should provide the Council with further information, especially on the length of time the immigrants had already resided in the Cameroons under British Administration.

Mr. STRONG (United States of America) approved the proposals outlined by the Belgian representative and thought that the Council should in addition invite the Administering Authority to take the necessary steps to inform the petitioners of the procedure for acquiring British nationality and the right to vote.

It was agreed that the Secretariat should prepare a draft resolution embodying the views expressed by members of the Committee.

The meeting rose at 12 noon.