

ECONOMIC
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ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

TRADE UNION RIGHTS (FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION)

(Memorandum by the Division of Human Rights)

1. The World Federation of Trade Unions requested the Secretary-General of the United Nations, by letter dated 14 January 1947, to place on the agenda of the Economic and Social Council the item: Guarantees for the Exercise and Development of Trade Union Rights. The World Federation of Trade Unions subsequently submitted to the Economic and Social Council, at its Fourth Session, a draft resolution on guarantees for the exercise and development of trade union rights (document E/C.2/28).
2. The American Federation of Labor, on 12 March 1947 submitted to the Secretary-General a memorandum on guarantees for the exercise and development of trade union rights, prepared by its Executive Council. This memorandum stated that the American Federation of Labor, in its draft of a proposed International Bill of Rights (circulated to the members of the Council on 20 August 1946 as document E/CT.2/2) had covered among other questions the basic points raised by the World Federation of Trade Unions; and suggested that the proposals submitted to the Economic and Social Council by the World Federation of Trade Unions be amended in certain respects (document E/C.2/32).
3. The Economic and Social Council, on 24 March 1947, adopted the following resolution (document E/372):

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"HAVING TAKEN NOTE of the item regarding Trade Union rights placed on its agenda at the request of the World Federation of Trade Unions, and the memoranda submitted by the World Federation of Trade Unions and the American Federation of Labor,

"RESOLVES to transmit these documents to the International Labour Organization with a request that it may be placed upon its agenda and considered at the forthcoming Session of the International Labour Organization, and that a report be sent to the Economic and Social Council for its consideration at the next meeting of the Council.

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"FURTHER RESOLVES TO TRANSMIT the documents to the Commission on Human Rights in order that it may consider those aspects of the subject which might appropriately form part of the Bill or Declaration on Human Rights."

4. The documents were distributed to the Drafting Committee of the Commission on Human Rights on 11 June 1947 (document E/CN.4/AC.1/9).

5. In accordance with the terms of the Resolution of the Council, the Secretary-General communicated with the International Labour Organization. On 21 July 1947 he circulated to the Members of the Council a letter from the Director-General of the International Labour Organization, transmitting the Report requested by the Council (document E/485).

6. According to this Report, the question of Trade Union rights (Freedom of Association) was considered by a Committee on Freedom of Association and Industrial Relations, appointed by the International Labour Conference at its Fourth Meeting on 23 June 1947. The Committee, composed of 88 members (44 government members, 22 employers' members and 22 workers' members) held fifteen meetings. Mr. Stanczyk, top-ranking Director of the Social Affairs Department, represented the United Nations at the meetings of the Committee.

7. The Committee formulated:

- (a) a proposed resolution concerning freedom of association and protection of the right to organize and to bargain collectively;
- (b) a list of points which might form a basis of discussion by the conference (considering that certain questions were already suitable to form the subject of one or several international conferences in 1948);
- (c) a proposed resolution concerning the agenda of the next session of the conference; and
- (d) a proposed resolution concerning international machinery for safeguarding freedom of association.

The recommendations of the Committee were adopted by the International Labour Conference at its Twentieth Meeting, on 11 July 1947. They may be found in the Provisional Record of the Thirtieth Session of the International Labour Conference, No. 30, Vol. 30, pages X to XIII.

8. At the time this paper is issued, the Economic and Social Council has not considered the Report of the International Labour Conference on this subject, but the matter is on its agenda.
