

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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Chairman: Mrs. Aase LIONAES (Norway).

In the absence of the Chairman, Mr. López (Philippines), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

AGENDA ITEM 12

Report of the Economic and Social Council (chapters VI and VII) (A/3613, A/C.3/L.609) (continued)

GENERAL DEBATE (continued)

1. Mr. MEANY (United States of America) commended the Secretariat for the excellent Report on the World Social Situation (E/CN.5/324/Rev.1), which it had prepared in collaboration with some of the specialized agencies. He found two topics of particular importance: rapid urbanization, which was too often without sufficient accompanying industrialization to provide employment, and the co-ordination of economic and social development.

2. A stable, healthy and growing economy required incentives in the form of higher living standards and social progress became an important means of promoting economic development. There should be no other purpose for economic development and social progress than the enrichment of human beings. Public policy should aim at ensuring fair distribution of the national income among all the component parts of the community and avoid developing the economy at the expense of the well-being of the population. No economy was sound when there was a waste of human resources.

3. Public health programmes, often carried out in part with the aid of the United Nations Children's Fund and the World Health Organization, had produced substantial declines in the death-rate. The United States would continue to assist in the campaign against disease, but the rapidly expanding population pressures must be taken into account, otherwise standards of living might lag, even with a rising volume of industrial production.

4. At the twenty-fourth session of the Economic and Social Council, the United States and some other countries had proposed that the measures of social progress should be broadened in a positive way. They had suggested that, in the forthcoming reports, the subjects studied should include the following: increasing personal income, expanding individual freedom and the right of mobility for people in a geo-

graphic and a social sense, improving health, raising the level of education, increased leisure, and improved conditions of work and standards of employment. Future reports should also include low-cost transport and more and better housing. He had in mind also the growth of voluntary associations, through which citizens could exercise their own initiative in advancing humanitarian objectives, without Government supervision. The role of voluntary organizations should not merely "not be overlooked", as stated in the Council's report (A/3613, para. 434); on the contrary, the positive role of voluntary organizations must be emphasized. The dogma that a people's efforts were doomed to failure if they were not supported by the State was untenable. On the contrary, a society was really democratic only if its citizens themselves, through organizations of their own choice and direction, helped to mould the domestic and foreign policies of their country.

5. In the chapter on human rights, the report indicated a steady extension of women's right to vote and continued progress was to be expected. The seminars organized as part of the advisory services in the field of human rights represented a new, practical effort to further respect for human freedom, which was at the foundation of world peace.

6. The United States was firmly committed to supporting international action under the United Nations to improve social conditions wherever possible. The attitude of the people of the United States towards international problems had changed since the end of the Second World War. It was now the Government's policy to send to the various meetings on social questions outstanding experts, who were provided with the fullest possible assistance from Government technical agencies and voluntary agencies. The United States contributed \$100 million annually to the programmes of international organizations to encourage social progress. All the private associations, particularly the trade unions, followed the work of the United Nations closely. He outlined some of the great achievements in which the trade unions had played their part since the beginning of the century: the introduction of the eight-hour day, the part played by Samuel Gompers in the organization of the International Labour Organisation, help to German workers in overcoming inflation, assistance to the victims of Nazi dictatorship, and the re-establishment of free trade unions after the Second World War. It was the United States trade unions which had brought the question of forced labour before the United Nations. Only recently, they had set up a special fund to help African workers train their own trade-union leaders.

7. Speaking of social progress in the United States, he emphasized the scope of the cultural development and the increasing interest shown by the people of the United States in foreign languages and the culture

of other countries. In the cultural field, as in all others, the freedom of the individual was scrupulously respected.

8. The trade unions had been in the forefront of social progress. They strove to increase the well-being of the people as a whole and, through collective bargaining, to give them an equitable share of the country's wealth, while leaving every individual free to spend his income as he saw fit. Along with other voluntary organizations, they encouraged the more rapid construction of housing at modest rentals with Government assistance. Some trade unions also had their own housing schemes. Social insurance and old age assistance provided by the Government were supplemented by voluntary organizations. Fourteen million, out of the 17 million organized workers, were entitled to social benefits, secured through collective bargaining, over and above those provided by the State. A total of 23 million workers was covered by pension plans set up by employers, who now spent \$5,000 to \$6,000 million a year on different social security schemes. Such benefits were additions to and not substitutes for an acceptable wage level. The interest of trade unions in social progress was shown in various other ways. Seventy-five thousand trade-union members were serving on the boards of voluntary welfare agencies; 40,000 trade-unionists had completed a two-month course organized by the AFL-CIO Community Services Committee, which would enable them to serve as links between the workers and the different social services of the community.

9. The United States still had a number of grave social problems to solve, including those connected with racial discrimination. Discrimination and intolerance existed everywhere in some degree; there must be a determination to recognize them, face them and combat them. The United States trade unions had always fought and would continue to fight against discrimination and the other forms of social and moral corruption. He mentioned some of the successes achieved through the joint efforts of the Government and the voluntary organizations. There had been controversy over school integration in certain southern states. It had been pointed out that thirty-one states had completely integrated their school systems and integration was progressing without difficulty in ten others. Such progress had come about through the influence of millions of United States citizens, acting either individually or through voluntary associations. That was important in itself, but what was more important was the fact that the people and Government of the United States had adopted an open and active national policy against racial discrimination. That was the meaning of the Supreme Court's decision regarding the schools and of the Federal Government's action in Little Rock, Arkansas. That was only one episode in a peaceful revolution which had been going on for several years. There was no question of the outcome; school integration was one phase in the advance towards complete equality of opportunity.

10. Mrs. QUART (Canada) observed that many of the questions studied by the Economic and Social Council did not represent separate items of the General Assembly's agenda, because they did not call for the adoption of specific measures by the Assembly. It was therefore important for the Third Committee to examine the Council's report (A/3613) in detail. She hoped that all delegations would fully avail themselves

of the opportunity to give their views on the many interesting questions which the Council had considered during the period in question.

11. In connexion with chapter VI, she mentioned the various reports considered by the Council, including the report on a co-ordinated policy regarding family levels of living (E/CN.5/321, appendix I) drafted by a group of experts presided over by Mr. Davidson, Canadian Deputy Minister of National Welfare. The Council had devoted most attention to the Report on the World Social Situation (E/CN.5/324/Rev.1), which covered a period of general improvement, marked nevertheless by the aggravation of certain problems, such as the unprecedented growth of populations and the mass exodus of rural populations towards towns which were not prepared to receive them. The Council had unanimously recognized the interdependence of social and economic development and the need to prepare rational policies to deal with the problems raised by rapid urbanization. The Report on the World Social Situation showed that further progress could be made in the social field, but that it was essential for national effort, with international support where appropriate, to be made in an international climate favourable to the solution of social problems. The methods that could be used for such solutions were many and various and it was by profiting from the experience of all concerned that the spheres in which international action would be useful could be ascertained. The Canadian delegation considered that the United Nations had reached the stage at which it could draw up an effective programme for that purpose. The exchanges of views preceding the establishment of such a programme would be particularly important for community development. The Secretariat had prepared an excellent report on the concepts and principles of community development (E/CN.5/325 and Corr.1 and Add.1). Although it was true that the idea did not have exactly the same meaning in all countries, the difference of interpretation related only to shades of meaning and the Canadian delegation hoped that a universally acceptable definition would ultimately be found. Community development, by drawing on the initiative and capacity of peoples for self-help, could contribute greatly to social progress and deserved general support and encouragement. Canada had noted with interest developments in that field, which might be useful both to under-developed countries and to the more advanced States.

12. With regard to chapter VI, section II, of the Council's report (A/3613), she observed that the report of the Population Commission (E/2957/Rev.1)^{1/} had aroused hardly any controversy during the Council's twenty-third session. With regard to section V, on narcotic drugs, she recalled the active part that her country had played in the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, in which it had participated for several years, and stated that Canada would help that body to attain its objectives.

13. Turning to chapter VII of the report, she said that the Canadian authorities were actively engaged in collecting material for submission to the Secretary-General in connexion with the periodic reports and special studies on human rights. The results of the seminar, held at Bangkok in August 1957, on the civic responsibilities and increased participation of Asian

^{1/} Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, Twenty-third Session, Supplement No. 4.

women in public life, were sufficiently interesting to justify consideration of other regional seminars under the programme.

14. The Commission on Human Rights and the Economic and Social Council had considered plans for the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the Canadian delegation hoped to receive detailed information on the subject in due course.

15. Canada had just been elected a member of the Commission on the Status of Women and it would spare no effort to make a useful contribution to its important work.

16. Sir Samuel HOARE (United Kingdom) paid a tribute to the Secretariat for the high quality of the Report on the World Social Situation (E/CN.5/324/Rev.1), which had been prepared under rather difficult conditions. It was important to bear in mind that it had been prepared without adequate statistical data, particularly with regard to questions relating to urbanization, since for many countries the data were not available. The United Kingdom delegation hoped that that situation could be improved with the assistance of the United Nations and that the next report would be prepared on a more solid basis.

17. The report was essentially a document for information. It did not itself provide a basis for United Nations action though it gave evidence of certain trends. Further action in relation to them, for example, as regards urbanization, would depend upon the more specific studies to be carried out by the appropriate United Nations organs under the work programme. The report did however bring out clearly certain important points, such as the interdependence of economic and social development. Although stress was usually laid on the influence exercised by economic development on social development, the inverse process was no less frequent. To illustrate that proposition, he referred to the statement in the chapter on urbanization in Africa South of the Sahara (E/CN.5/324/Rev.1, chap. VIII) that young Africans who had benefited by the prolongation of the period of schooling could not find clerical employment and were now working as skilled workers.

18. As regards the problem of urbanization, the conclusions of the joint United Nations-UNESCO seminar on urbanization in the ECAFE region rightly indicated that urbanization was not in itself an evil thing: it was the drift from bad conditions in the country to worse conditions in the towns that created the problem, which that seminar had concluded could only be cured by a raising of the level of living of the broad masses of the population.

19. In his delegation's view, community development could be used as one means of mitigating the evils of urbanization. In the United Kingdom's dependent territories the purpose of community development was the stimulation of the civic spirit and sense of responsibility, which were fundamental conditions for evolution towards self-government; it was that spirit and not the many resulting social and economic advances that were the immediate aim. The feeling of belonging to a community played an essential part in both rural and urban areas. It was by making new arrivals who settled in the outskirts of towns and lived in especially difficult conditions aware that they

could improve their living conditions by their own efforts and by inculcating in them a sense of personal initiative that the inherent evils of that state of affairs could perhaps best be combated. The techniques adopted might have to be different from those employed in rural areas but the matter was well worth further study by the United Nations.

20. The Chinese representative had said that it would be advisable to include in the Report on the World Social Situation specific recommendations relating to certain countries or groups of countries. In the opinion of the United Kingdom delegation, it was essential for any such recommendations to be absolutely general, and it would be contrary to United Nations practice to follow the Chinese representative's suggestion.

21. With reference to the remarks made by the representative of Saudi Arabia (767th meeting), he said he could not agree that there was anything in the report of the Economic and Social Council (A/3613) that could lead the Third Committee to combine the two draft Covenants on Human Rights and to abandon the distinction between economic, social and cultural rights, on the one hand, and civil and political rights, on the other hand.

22. He regretted that the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, in preparing the text of the draft single convention, had not seen fit to take into account the observations made by a substantial number of Governments on an important question of principle. It was important that the new convention, like the existing ones, should be universally acceptable.

23. Despite the Saudi Arabian representative's expressions of concern at the dangers presented by synthetic drugs, the report of the Permanent Central Opium Board (E/OB/12)² demonstrated that, for the time being at least, illicit traffic in those drugs was almost negligible, whereas there was still considerable illicit traffic in opium and drugs derived from opium.

24. With regard to periodic reports on human rights, he pointed out that the data which Governments had been requested to communicate, together with the special reports on particular rights, and the reports on the questions relating to discrimination currently under study by the Sub-Commission, imposed a considerable burden of work on the competent services. Care should be taken in future not to ask of them more than they were able to provide.

25. Mr. TSAO (China) thought that there had been some misunderstanding. In speaking of the Report on the World Social Situation (E/CN.5/324/Rev.1), he had merely expressed the hope that the Secretary-General might in future consider devoting a special chapter to the problems which still remained rather than to the progress which had been achieved, and including certain specific recommendations on steps which the United Nations and the specialized agencies might take to help solve those problems. His delegation had, it was true, spoken of recommendations relating to certain countries or groups of countries, but that was in connexion with human rights. In his view, the commissions dealing with human rights had passed the stage of general definitions and would have to submit specific recommendations relating to

²/ Permanent Central Opium Board, Report to the Economic and Social Council on the Work of the Board in 1956 (United Nations publication, Sales No.:1956.XI.4).

certain countries or groups of countries, as for example countries in which women still did not enjoy equal rights with men, or in which infringement of trade-union rights often took place.

26. Sir Samuel HOARE (United Kingdom) thanked the Chinese representative. He had in fact misunderstood, but he would have objected equally strongly if he had known that the Chinese representative had been referring to human rights. In his opinion, there could be no question of addressing recommendations to particular countries. The position was perhaps somewhat different in regard to groups of countries: it depended largely on whether or not they constituted a natural grouping.

27. Mr. Francisco LIMA (El Salvador) drew attention to the fifteenth paragraph of the introduction to the report of the Economic and Social Council (A/3613), which stated that in the matter of human rights, the Council was passing through a period of transition. The paragraph emphasized that the Council had finished with the draft Covenants and that the future of those instruments would from then on be entirely in the hands of the Third Committee. He hoped, therefore, that the Committee would be able, when it began to consider the draft Covenants, to keep its grasp on essentials and not get lost in the details. The paragraph in question also stated that the Commission on Human Rights was developing a new programme of concrete action; the time had thus come for the General Assembly to make suggestions and to lay down guiding lines for the Council's action.

28. At its twelfth session, the Commission on Human Rights had appointed^{3/} a committee of four members to prepare a study on the right of everyone to be free from arbitrary arrest, detention or exile. The committee in question had submitted a report (E/CN.4/739) which, although only preliminary, contained nevertheless some very valuable information. The delegation of El Salvador considered that the committee had acted wisely in deciding to study procedural rather than substantive laws. The study ought to serve as a guide for States which wished to review their legislation, thus enabling each country to profit

^{3/} Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, Twenty-second Session, Supplement No. 3, para. 49, resolution II.

from the experience of others and to make a start on bringing the regulations and practices adopted into uniformity. He had also noted, in the section relating to advisory services in the field of human rights, that two of the seminars mentioned had dealt with subjects similar to those considered by the committee. He asked whether the Secretary-General had actually made a plan to that effect, and said that would be highly desirable.

29. He congratulated the Secretariat on its excellent Report on the World Social Situation (E/CN.5/324/Rev.1), although he regretted that the absence of common definitions sometimes made comparisons difficult. He was very glad that the question of urbanization was being considered by the Social Commission and by the Economic and Social Council. Community development was also a question of the greatest importance; it was one of the fields in which the United Nations could render most fruitful assistance, particularly in countries in which the people had not yet learnt to show initiative.

30. Mr. BAROODY (Saudi Arabia) wished to say a few words in reply to the representative of the United Kingdom. He had simply wondered whether it was logical, in view of the interdependence of the rights of the individual, to have two separate Covenants, and he had thought it his duty to pass on his doubts to the Committee.

31. With regard to narcotic drugs, he still did not understand why any country should be prevented from producing opium for medical purposes.

32. Mr. MASSOUD-ANSARI (Iran) regretted that the representative of Saudi Arabia had seen fit, in his intervention at the previous meeting, to return to a matter which had been entrusted to the Economic and Social Council and to the Commission on Narcotic Drugs for examination, and, as it were, to incite the delegation of Afghanistan to submit a draft resolution on a subject which it would be better not to take up.

33. Mr. BAROODY (Saudi Arabia) protested that he had had no intention of inciting the Afghan delegation to submit a draft resolution, but had simply drawn attention to the request made by Afghanistan, which seemed to him to be fully justified.

The meeting rose at 1.5 p.m.