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Chairman: Brigadier-General Carlos P. ROMULO (Philippines).

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[Item 42]*

First reading (continued)

1. The CHAIRMAN said that the Secretariat was currently preparing the document which the Australian representative had requested at the previous meeting. It would contain a preliminary estimate of the aggregate contributions which Member States would be required to make in 1953.

SECTION 13. DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INFORMATION; SECTION 20 (CHAPTER II). GENEVA INFORMATION CENTRE; SECTION 21. INFORMATION CENTRES; SECTION 26 (CHAPTER I, ITEM (VII)). PUBLICATIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INFORMATION

2. Mr. PRICE (Assistant Secretary-General in charge of the Department of Administrative and Financial Services) drew attention to the statement (A/C.5/500) in which the Secretary-General had defined his position with respect to the reductions recommended by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions in the appropriations requested for sections 13, 20 (chapter II), 21 and 26 (chapter I, item (vii)). The Secretary-General had requested restoration of the total figure of \$137,300.

3. With regard to section 13, the Advisory Committee had recommended reductions affecting a number of items listed in paragraph 198 of its first report to the General Assembly (A/2157). As for consultants, the

requested provision was \$4,800, the purpose of which was to cover the remuneration of radio-telecommunication experts and would, in fact, ensure the services of one expert to attend conferences for the allocation of frequencies. The General Assembly had repeatedly insisted that the Organization should obtain its own frequencies.

4. With regard to temporary assistance, the Secretary-General requested an appropriation amounting to \$41,000, or \$10,099 less than the actual expenditure in 1951 and \$15,885 less than in 1950. The enforcement of a strict policy of economy had thus brought about a reduction of 20 per cent in the appropriation requested. The estimate for overtime and night differential, amounting to \$6,000, was less than the actual expenditure in 1951 and the amount appropriated for 1952, despite the fact that some of the services of the Department of Public Information were by their very nature compelled to work twenty-four hours a day. With respect to travel on official business, the Secretary-General had also based himself on actual expenditure for years when official travel had been restricted to a minimum.

5. As for photographic supplies and services, the Secretary-General felt that, following the drastic reductions effected since 1948, an absolute minimum had been reached beyond which the functioning of the section in question would be hampered. The estimate of \$38,000 for that item included \$13,000 for filmstrips the sale of which would result in estimated revenue of \$10,000. It was hardly possible to reduce the cost of production and distribution and still expect, as the Advisory Committee seemed to expect, that revenue could be maintained at the same level. In accordance with the recommendation of Sub-Committee 8 of the Fifth Committee (A/C.5/L.172), \$10,000 was requested to cover exhibition materials. The remaining

* Indicates the item number on the agenda of the General Assembly.

\$15,000 was scarcely adequate to cover the expense of supplying photographs requested by the Press and publications in various countries.

6. The provision requested for motion picture supplies and services was \$168,600, as against a corresponding appropriation in 1948 of \$449,725. The provision for that item had thus already been substantially reduced. The Department was no longer in a position to produce documentary films and it planned to limit its production to six Screen Magazines, each of ten minutes' duration, which were expected to yield a revenue of \$45,000. That estimate of income would also have to be revised if the provision for film production was reduced.

7. Moreover, the Advisory Committee recommended that the Secretary-General should be given full latitude to spread the recommended reductions over other items. The Secretary-General was not a magician and he did not see his way to implement the recommendations of the Advisory Committee unless the General Assembly authorized the curtailment or abolition of services for which there was the greatest need.

8. The Advisory Committee, in the many studies it had made of the Department of Public Information, had never called attention to the savings which had already been made. The application of the new staff salary scheme adopted by the General Assembly had entailed, for the Department in question, additional expenditure amounting to \$254,700 for the 1951-1953 period. Changes in differential for the information centres caused by the higher cost of living had increased the expenditure of the Department by \$25,300 over the same period. In 1953, increases for cost of living at Headquarters and for local staff salaries at certain information centres would entail an additional outlay of \$153,000. The sum total of those unavoidable increases was thus \$433,000 over a three-year period. For the same 1951-1953 period, however, total appropriations for information activities had increased by no more than \$130,442, which meant that the Department of Public Information had been able to absorb additional unavoidable costs which would have amounted to over \$302,000 in 1953.

9. Moreover, the general rise in prices all over the world had entailed a substantial increase, but one which it was difficult to estimate exactly, in respect of travel, printing, supplies etc. There was hardly a department or service in the whole of the various international organizations whose budget had been more severely limited and reduced from year to year. It became more and more difficult to stabilize the existing services and to ensure that they were able to meet ever-increasing demands when heavy cuts continued to be made in the budget of the Department of Public Information.

10. The Department had been criticized by the Advisory Committee because its revenue from the sale of publications had been below the estimated figure. A fairly large loss in revenue had been caused by the fact that there had been a considerable delay before the book-shop formerly at Lake Success could be set up at Headquarters. The Advisory Committee had suggested that the information services of some specialized agencies situated in Geneva should be more closely combined with the work of the Geneva Information Centre. The Secretary-General was perfectly willing

to study that question, although the preliminary survey which had been made showed that a large degree of centralization had already been achieved, perhaps to the fullest extent compatible with the independent character of the respective agencies.

11. With regard to section 21 (Information Centres), the Secretary-General had stated that he could not agree to the reduction recommended by the Advisory Committee in paragraph 312 of its report. The grading of established and temporary assistance posts in the information centres was in fact based on the administrative pattern established for the centres by the General Assembly itself. It was preferable, from the administrative point of view, to apply differentials to meet different local conditions rather than to apply different ratings for posts carrying the same responsibility. The present system had been upheld when the salary scheme had been reviewed. Moreover, in no case did the information centres maintain enough permanent staff to carry out all the duties which the centres were supposed to perform. It had proved to be the most economical solution to recruit temporary assistance, particularly for the translation and adaptation of information material. Consequently, a reduction in temporary assistance funds would lead to a limitation of the output of information material in non-official languages.

12. Regarding installation and termination payments, he did not see how costs could be reduced unless entitlements were changed. The Advisory Committee had also recommended the elimination of the meetings at Headquarters of heads of information centres. No such meeting had, however, ever been held, although heads of centres were required at times to come to Headquarters. The solution advocated by the Advisory Committee had, in fact, already been applied; meetings were always held at a point as near as possible to the maximum number of centres, and advantage had been taken of home leave and other necessary official travel of staff members of the Department of Public Information. With regard to the operation and maintenance of transport facilities, the Secretary-General would implement the policy laid down by the General Assembly. In future, the United Nations motor vehicle pool would consist of station wagons.

13. Finally, he was authorized by the Secretary-General to say that if any Member States felt that the services of an information centre situated or operating in its territory was not necessary or desirable, in its own as well as in the United Nations' interests, he would be glad to be notified so that he could take steps to transfer such a centre to another part of the world where it had so far not been possible, because of budgetary restrictions, to provide the information services the governments and information media there had repeatedly requested.

14. Mr. FENAUX (Belgium) had been struck by the fact that all speakers had stressed the need for economy and the necessity of stabilizing the budget. That reaction was no surprise to the Belgian delegation as it had anticipated such a development for some time. With initial enthusiasm for the United Nations subsidizing somewhat, the various national parliaments were much more inclined to limit the funds which they voted and to supervise the use to which they were put. It would

be well to bear that attitude in mind, especially when it was adopted by delegations of countries paying a large contribution, for, the day such countries withdrew their support from the Organization, the entire structure would collapse.

15. The Belgian delegation had not been very favourably impressed by the way in which the Secretary-General had felt it necessary in his preliminary statement (A/C.5/500) to approach the question of United Nations public information activities. A body composed of representatives of governments did not like to be addressed in categorical language; the Secretary-General had said, in short, that the budget estimates for the Department of Public Information were "taboo". The Belgian representative recognized the importance which the Secretariat and many delegations attached to the role of the Department of Public Information, and paid a tribute to the work done by the Department. He was fully prepared to provide it with necessary working funds but could not accept a division of the Committee into opponents and proponents of an adequate public information service. Actually, the problem was to determine what should be the share of public information in a limited over-all budget which was also supposed to cover all the requirements of the United Nations in very different fields. The problem was one of proportion and he was sure that the members of the Committee would reach agreement. The representatives of Iraq and Norway had been perfectly correct in pointing out what a mistake it was to seek a parallel with the League of Nations; the failure of the League was not in any way due to the lack of an adequate public information service. A product must not be confused with its advertising. The product, in the case in point, was the action of governments, the efforts made to promote peace and conciliation, the planning for security, the struggle against poverty, the attempts made to ensure international co-operation and solidarity. If such efforts proved unproductive, it would be a waste of time and money to try to spread the idea of peace through publications, films and the radio. On the other hand, if the United Nations really succeeded in its efforts for peace, security and international co-operation, effective publicity would cost very little.

16. The Secretary-General asked the Committee to refrain from any further examination of the actual structure of the Department of Public Information; but Sub-Committee 8 of the Fifth Committee had made a very interesting report (A/C.5/L.172) that had come out only at the end of the General Assembly's sixth session and which, for lack of time, had not been subjected to the thorough study it deserved. The Advisory Committee had studied the report and had drawn up its conclusion. It was now the Committee's turn to study them.

17. The Secretariat could justly claim that the continual reduction in the public information budget disorganized the Department and imposed constant reshuffling which interfered with its work and reduced its efficiency. But, according to the Advisory Committee, the solution to that was to stabilize once for all the volume of expenditure for information purposes, just as the Secretary-General himself was proposing a stabilization of the over-all budget. Perhaps the proportion of funds to be appropriated for public information

could be determined, either as a percentage of the whole, or a maximum figure, or even as a combination of both. The time-limits for applying such a decision represented an additional variable factor: if the Committee decided that a particular ceiling would have to be reached within three years, for example, the Administration could organize its services with a view to an optimum output and place its work accordingly. A decision of that kind would certainly not endanger world peace. To be sure, the establishment of a percentage or of a maximum figure was an arbitrary decision; but that was true of any budgetary decision, as the total budget must not be forgotten during the examination of each of its items. That was the way things were done at a national level.

18. The structure of the Secretariat was still not final; it was still of a temporary nature and plans for its reorganization were being studied. The time had therefore come to determine what aims were contemplated and to choose new methods. The Belgian delegation wanted a stable and efficient public information service with funds in proportion to the total budget and expenditure limited to a definite figure. It felt that the Advisory Committee could be asked to draw up definite proposals for the application of any decisions of principle which the Committee might take at its current session.

19. As regards the 1953 budget of the Department of Public Information, a beginning should be made towards the stabilization envisaged by effecting a number of economies. The Advisory Committee's recommendations dealt with a very small percentage of the funds requested for the Department of Public Information. He found it difficult to understand the reaction aroused by those recommendations. Certainly the engagement of an outside expert in the field of radio-telecommunications whose only duty would be to attend conferences could be dispensed with; a regular staff member of the Department could certainly do that work. The amount for travel expenses in section 13 could also be reduced by greater reliance on the information centres. The Belgian delegation felt that savings could be made without detriment to work programmes or the efficiency of the Department. In addition, it seemed that savings might be made in connexion with information centres.

20. The manner in which the Belgian delegation would vote depended on the way in which the Secretariat received the suggestions resulting from the discussion. Its attitude would also depend on the Secretary-General's reaction to the Advisory Committee's opinion that it was for the Secretary-General himself to set up a system of priorities.

21. Finally, he congratulated the Advisory Committee on its constructive criticism of the Department of Public Information and called special attention to the importance of paragraphs 170 to 180 of its report (A/2157).

22. Mr. KRAJEWSKI (Poland) observed that the total cost of the public information programme for 1953 would reach the figure of \$5,500,000, or the enormous proportion of 11.5 per cent of the total budget of the United Nations.

23. Since 1948, the ever-increasing budget of the Department of Public Information had been the object

of lengthy discussions in the Fifth Committee. The delegations of the Netherlands and the United Kingdom had in the past proposed a limitation of the Department's expenditure to 10 and 5 per cent of the budget respectively. In 1952, the Australian delegation had proposed that the Advisory Committee should arrange with the Secretary-General for a reduction of \$200,000 to \$300,000 in the budget estimates of the Department. The Belgian delegation had stated on more than one occasion that the work of the Department often duplicated that of the information services of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, that the Department was being moved by commercial considerations and that radio, press and film publicity constantly reminding the world of the existence of the United Nations was useless and expensive. The position of those delegations had been often supported by the delegations of Canada, New Zealand and Norway. At every session, the USSR delegation had submitted proposals to reduce the budget estimates, in particular those of the Department of Public Information. In order to evade the reductions proposed, the Secretary-General had always said that substantial reductions could only be made gradually if breaches of contract were to be avoided; but such gradual reductions had not been put into effect and costs had continued to rise. In 1950, the General Assembly had invited the Secretary-General to reduce substantially expenditures connected with the work of the United Nations in the field of public information (A/1734, para. 94); in 1951, however, the Department had pointed out that despite its efforts it had been unable to achieve any large economies. The Syrian delegation had then proposed the appointment of a sub-committee to make recommendations on the way in which economies in the Department of Public Information might be effected (A/C.5/L.117/Rev.1). On the basis of the report of Sub-Committee 8, the General Assembly had adopted resolution 595(VI) in which it decided that the observations of the Advisory Committee and of the Secretary-General on the Sub-Committee's report would be considered at the seventh session of the General Assembly.

24. The Secretariat had failed to abide by that recommendation and the Advisory Committee pointed out that it was not able to take a position on the matter and emphasized "that much depends on the approach that is made to the problem by the Secretariat of the United Nations" (A/2157, para. 172). The Advisory Committee observed that it was for the Department of Public Information itself to take the initiative in recommending an appropriate order of priority among information activities. The Sub-Committee, too, had stated "that it should not be unduly difficult for the Department to furnish an appraisal of the main categories of services in terms of needs and effectiveness in the light of which the Advisory Committee and, in turn, the Fifth Committee would be better able to arrive at sound budgetary decisions" (A/C.5/L.172, para. 13).

25. To settle once and for all the problem of the public information budget it was necessary "to determine . . . the relationship from a budgetary point of view of expenditure for information services to total expenditure of the United Nations" (A/2157, para. 172). The Polish delegation felt that to reach that objective the

Committee should recommend that the Advisory Committee should make concrete proposals on the ceilings to be established on that budget and the order of priority of activities as well as specific proposals for effecting economies on the basis of Secretariat suggestions.

26. With particular reference to the 1953 budget estimates, the Polish delegation drew attention to the huge proportion of the provision for Press and publications in the public information budget, which represented 23 per cent of the total (A/2157, table in paragraph 184). In that connexion, the Polish delegation felt that the issue of publications of interest to no one should be stopped; it requested the Secretariat to supply the Committee with a list of the publications that were put out, indicating the number of copies issued, number of copies sold, cost of publication and income from sales. In that field, considerable savings were certainly possible.

27. Further, the Advisory Committee pointed out in paragraph 194 of its report that despite the express recommendations of Sub-Committee 8 the proportion of expenditure reserved for films and television remained relatively high (13 per cent of the public information budget).

28. For all those reasons the Polish delegation proposed a reduction of \$250,000 in the appropriation recommended by the Advisory Committee for information services, the reduction to be distributed among the various items at the discretion of the Secretary-General. The Polish delegation was firmly convinced that the reduction was not excessive and hoped that in future the Advisory Committee would be able to recommend even larger savings.

29. Mr. BRENNAN (Australia) said that the number of useful activities that could be undertaken in the field of public information could virtually be limited only by budgetary considerations. Opinions differed sharply on the proportion of the Organization's expenditures that should be devoted to public information work. His delegation maintained that for years the proportion had been too high and that it was still too high.

30. That did not mean that the Australian delegation regarded expenses on public information as a superfluous luxury or that the Department was inefficient; but simply that the Department had undertaken too much. By recommending only a small reduction in relation to the total budget, the Advisory Committee had indirectly endorsed the efficiency of the Department.

31. The Advisory Committee recommended a total reduction of only \$142,400 out of a total expenditure of \$5,500,000; he could not therefore agree with the Secretary-General that "practically none of the reductions proposed can be implemented without seriously endangering the effectiveness of the present services" (A/C.5/500). Furthermore, the Secretary-General could not have weighed his words carefully when he had written: "I sincerely hope that those who constantly recommend cuts in our information services to an extent approaching their gradual liquidation, will realize in time how mistaken they are". It could hardly be asserted seriously that a reduction of \$142,400 out of a budget of \$5,500,000, which corresponded to the total budget of the Food and Agriculture Organization,

would seriously jeopardize the existence of the information services.

32. He also could not accept the theory that the principles drawn up by the Sub-Committee made it incumbent on the Committee to accept the Secretary-General's estimates. No member of the Sub-Committee would contest that those principles were applicable whatever the level of expenditures for information services might be.

33. He recalled his proposal at the preceding meeting that the assessment for 1953 should be taken into account; in that connexion, he submitted a note by the Australian delegation (A/C.5/L.180). The calculations showed that the total amount of contributions for 1953 would be at least \$2,000,000 higher than the contributions for 1952 and might be higher. The increase for the regular activities of the Organization was even greater since the total amount of the contributions for 1952 included \$776,000, attributable to the fact that the sixth session had extended into 1952, and \$1,000,000 for the Headquarters building. The figure of the supplementary estimates for 1952 was irreducible because it represented money already spent.

34. In view of the fact that the increase of the total amount of contributions would not be less than \$2,000,000 and would probably be greater, the Committee should keep open the possibility of reducing the estimates for information services to an extent even greater than the Advisory Committee had suggested. He therefore proposed that the reduction should amount to \$250,000 for sections 13, 20 (chapter II), 21 and 26 (chapter I, item (vii)), but that the Secretary-General should be given every latitude to make any necessary transfers in order to avoid excessive disorganization of the programmes.

35. Mr. TOUS (Ecuador) unreservedly supported the Belgian representative's remarks. The establishment of an information budget was a question of degree, and not of principle. It was essential to carry out the maximum economies without hindering the efficient operation of the Organization and the achievement of the high purposes of the Charter. The debate, which should therefore relate exclusively to the recommendations of the Advisory Committee, was now concerned with the question of determining the percentage of the total budget of the United Nations which should be devoted to information expenses.

36. Certain delegations had spoken in favour of reducing the estimates for information, for two different reasons. Certain great Powers, such as the United Kingdom and the United States, already had excellent international and national information services and had no real need for the services of the Organization. Other great Powers opposed the development of the Organization's activities in the field of information because they did not wish their nationals to know the truth concerning certain questions, such as the Korean situation. Many countries, however, had no international information service and some of them even had no national information agencies. Those countries relied on the United Nations to provide their populations with all the necessary documentation; furthermore, that information had to be impartial. At a time when the international situation was serious, the

peoples of the world were anxious and wished to be kept informed of all the Organization's efforts to preserve peace. It was therefore essential that the United Nations should have sufficient funds to provide them with the necessary amount of the information they required.

37. The Australian representative was mistaken in saying that the Secretary-General had not weighed his words. The Australian representative alleged that the reduction recommended by the Advisory Committee was not so great as to jeopardize the actual existence of the information services, but all the countries which had no information services or had inadequate services understood and shared the anxiety expressed by the Secretary-General. It was important for the Organization to be in a position to continue its educational tasks and to make known its activities and the results it had achieved; expenses on information were therefore perfectly justified. The Ecuadorean delegation was convinced that the Committee could trust the Secretary-General and the staff of the Department of Public Information, who would not fail to combine the maximum economy with giving the world the complete and impartial information which it required.

38. Mr. HSIA (China) wished to make two suggestions concerning the budget estimates for information services.

39. In the first place, Sub-Committee 8 had been entrusted with the twofold task of revising the guiding principles drawn up in 1946 by the Technical Advisory Committee on Information (resolution 13 (I), annex I), and of preparing certain other guiding principles concerning priorities of the Organization's information activities and their financial implications. Owing to lack of time, Sub-Committee 8 had been unable to carry out completely the second part of its terms of reference. The Fifth Committee could therefore reappoint Sub-Committee 8 and invite it to complete its work by studying, for example, the question of the percentage of the total budget of the Organization which should be devoted to information activities.

40. If the Chinese delegation's first suggestion was accepted, it was obvious that Sub-Committee 8 could not draft a report before the end of the current session. He therefore made a second suggestion, to adopt a compromise solution for the 1953 budget which would satisfy both the Secretary-General and the Advisory Committee. That solution would consist in making smaller reductions than those recommended by the Committee and thus partially restoring the credits requested by the Secretary-General. The provision for section 13 might be reduced by \$20,000 instead of \$60,000; the reduction for section 21 might be \$12,300 instead of \$32,300 and that for section 26 (chapter I, item (vii)) could be \$30,000 instead of \$45,000. The reductions suggested by the Chinese delegation would therefore amount to \$62,300, whereas the Advisory Committee had recommended a reduction of \$137,300.

41. It was obvious that the second suggestion was connected with the first, since it provided no permanent solution of the problem; it was important, however, to reach a final settlement of the question of the budget for information services, which had been discussed for so long.

42. Mr. ISNOR (Canada) had been struck by the insistence with which all delegations had called for economy. Like the United States representative, he was not a financial expert and was not in a position to decide whether or not the figure of 11.5 per cent, which represented the ratio between the budget for information services and the total budget of the Organization, was excessive. Similarly, he was not qualified to determine whether or not the additional reduction of \$250,000 proposed by the Australian delegation was justified. He would therefore abide by the recommendations of the Advisory Committee. The Fifth Committee would undoubtedly deem it advisable to study carefully the proposal made by the Chinese representative.

43. As a business man, he was fully aware of the importance of publicity and considered that the Organization should devote part of its resources to making its activities known. The sale of United Nations publications and stamps constituted a source of income, and at the same time helped to disseminate information on the Organization's work.

44. He was surprised to see that Mr. Price, in the statement he had made on behalf of the Secretary-General, did not seem to be as willing as might have been expected to meet the Advisory Committee halfway in connexion with the estimates for information services. The proposed reduction seemed to be so small that it should not be difficult to reach agreement on that matter.

45. Mr. M. I. BOTHA (Union of South Africa) stated that, in spite of the Secretary-General's urgent

appeal to delegations to vote for his estimates for information services, the South African delegation considered that the reductions recommended by the Advisory Committee would not seriously jeopardize the implementation of the Organization's information programmes. It was important that the budgetary estimates should not continue to increase every year in an absolutely unjustified manner, and that could be prevented while giving the Organization the necessary latitude in respect of its information activities.

46. The Secretary-General had stated that, if a government considered that the existence of an information centre in its territory had become superfluous, he was prepared to close that centre and to devote the funds thus freed to opening a centre in a country where the need had become felt. The South African delegation had taken note of that assurance, and wondered whether further economy could not be achieved by the more judicious use of certain information centres.

47. Mr. TOUS (Ecuador), supported by Mr. RODRIGUEZ FABREGAT (Uruguay), referred to document A/C.5/L.180, which the Australian representative had submitted to the Committee, and proposed the establishment of a working group to determine the exact expenditure that would be involved by the adoption of Spanish as a working language of the Economic and Social Council.

48. The CHAIRMAN stated that the Advisory Committee was studying the question.

The meeting rose at 1.5 p.m.