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Chairman: Mr. G. F. DAVIDSON (Canada).

In the absence of the Chairman, Miss Bernardino (Dominican Republic), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

Report of the Economic and Social Council (chapters IV and V) (A/2430, E/2447, A/C.3/L.366, A/C.3/L.367 and Add.1, A/C.3/L.368, A/C.3/L.369, A/C.3/L.371, A/C.3/L.372, A/C.3/L.374, A/C.3/L.375 and Add.1, A/C.3/L.376 and Add.1, A/C.3/L.381) (*continued*)

[Item 12]*

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION (*continued*)

DRAFT RESOLUTION SUBMITTED BY SAUDI ARABIA AND SYRIA (A/C.3/L.375) (*continued*)

1. Mr. MUFTI (Syria) congratulated the Secretariat on the zeal it had shown in informing the Committee of the estimated cost of the draft resolution under discussion (A/C.3/L.375). The Secretariat normally did so only at the request of delegations and the fact that it had in the case under consideration submitted a statement on the financial implications (A/C.3/L.375/Add.1) on its own initiative showed how keen it was to comply strictly with rule 152 of the rules of procedure, which did not lay down that an estimate of expenditures should first be requested by delegations. It should be noted, however, that before the adoption of resolution 635 (VII) by the General Assembly, the Secretariat had, as was indicated in the estimate of financial implications (A/C.3/L.375/Add.1), submitted a statement on the financial implications of the draft resolution on which that decision was based.¹ As resolution 635 (VII) had been adopted by a large majority, the General Assembly had agreed in principle to the holding of a conference, in full knowledge of the financial implications of its decision. That being so, the submission of a further statement seemed unwarranted and was likely to prejudice the draft resolution before the Committee. Some delegations might make use of the new statement, which was substantially the same as that submitted at the previous session, to oppose the adoption of the draft resolution.

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

¹ See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Seventh Session, Annexes*, agenda item 29, document A/C.3/L.273.

2. The delegations which had voted for resolution 635 (VII) were still persuaded of the value of the proposed conference. The fact that it would be necessary to appropriate the sum of \$US6,000—a small sum compared with the sums appropriated annually by the United Nations for information activities—should not be used as an excuse for opposing the draft resolution. It might be pointed out in passing that strictly speaking the statement referred not to the financial implications of the draft resolution but to the cost of the conference; from that point of view, the title of the document (A/C.3/L.375/Add.1) was misleading.

3. In reply to a question raised by the Indian representative (514th meeting), he explained that the sponsors of the draft resolution had had no intention of departing from General Assembly resolution 635 (VII), under which a conference was to be organized if a representative group of information enterprises and professional associations expressed a desire to organize it. That point was clear from the first paragraph of the preamble of the draft resolution, which reproduced the wording of the Assembly resolution. The initiative, which was to be taken by the enterprises and associations themselves and not by the Secretary-General or the United Nations, might be taken by the twenty-eight enterprises that had already expressed a desire to hold a conference, if, in the Secretary-General's opinion, they constituted a representative group.

4. The main difficulty lay in the fact that the term "representative group" could be interpreted in different ways. It might be asked whether a group of less than 500 enterprises—the number of enterprises consulted—was representative; if so, it was no longer necessary to wait for all the enterprises to reply since those that had replied did constitute a representative group. That was a point which delegations would have to decide.

5. The draft resolution was intended merely to reaffirm the Assembly's interest in the code of ethics. It did not seek to lay down a time-limit by which the Secretary-General would have to convene a conference not desired by a representative group of enterprises and associations; it merely stated that it was unnecessary to await affirmative replies from the 500 enterprises consulted before convening the conference, since some of the 500 associations and enterprises concerned might well constitute a representative group. The principle of geographical distribution had of course to be taken into consideration in determining whether a group of enterprises and associations was representative.

6. Like the Egyptian representative, he was opposed in principle to governmental interference in matters which were exclusively the responsibility of the profession. The fact that the General Assembly again expressed its desire that a conference should be held

as soon as possible and gave further encouragement to the enterprises and associations concerned to take action along those lines could not be regarded as interference; it was wholly consistent with the independence of the profession and the principle of freedom of information. Furthermore, the measure was justified and necessary, having regard to certain abuses committed by the Press and to the higher, extra-professional interests that were involved. On that point again he was fully in agreement with the Egyptian representative.

7. He thanked the representatives of Chile, France and the United Kingdom, whose joint amendments (A/C.3/L.380) would help to improve the draft resolution. He was pleased to learn that the sponsors of the amendment were prepared to retain the third paragraph of the preamble because they felt, as the representatives of Saudi Arabia and Syria had done when they had drafted that paragraph, that it would be possible to find a representative group desiring a conference without waiting for replies from all the enterprises and associations consulted. He gladly accepted the second amendment, which was wholly in accordance with the intention of the draft resolution and with the resolution previously adopted by the General Assembly.

8. The CHAIRMAN reminded the Syrian representative that the statement on the financial implications of the draft resolution had been submitted by the Secretary-General under rule 153 of the rules of procedure.

9. Mr. HAUCK (France) thanked the Syrian representative for accepting the second amendment submitted by Chile, France and the United Kingdom. He was pleased that the sponsors of the draft resolution shared the concern of the sponsors of the amendment, who wished primarily to avoid giving the impression that the General Assembly had the slightest wish to bring pressure to bear, however slight. The code of ethics was a matter exclusively within the competence of the information enterprises and professional associations. The United Nations had to assist them, but it was not for governments or governmental organizations to take the place of members of the profession. Everyone was agreed on that point.

10. Chile, France and the United Kingdom were prepared to withdraw their first amendment. It had never been their view that the conference could be held only if the 500 organizations consulted unanimously so desired. They agreed with the sponsors of the draft resolution that the Secretary-General should be allowed some freedom of action. It was for him to decide whether the groups in favour of the suggestion were representative, and, when the stated requirements were satisfied, he would have to collaborate with the enterprises and associations concerned in organizing the conference.

11. He hoped that the agreement between the sponsors of the original draft resolution and those of the amendment would expedite the Committee's work and that the amended draft resolution would be adopted unanimously.

12. Mrs. EMMET (United Kingdom) associated herself with those views.

13. Mr. BAROODY (Saudi Arabia) thanked the sponsors of the amendment for the real improvement they had made in the text of the draft resolution. It seemed to have been feared that an attempt was

being made to interfere in the affairs of the profession. Those misgivings were groundless. The Syrian representative and he himself had at no time intended to do other than make a suggestion to the enterprises and associations concerned. It would be better if all the organizations consulted accepted the proposal; it was necessary to press the matter, to take it up every year, in order to convince an increasing number of members of the profession.

14. He proposed that the following addition should be made to the operative part of the draft resolution:

"3. *Requests* the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its ninth session any progress achieved."

That addition did not affect the substance of the question, was appropriate and seemed unobjectionable.

15. Mr. HAUCK (France) accepted the paragraph proposed by the Saudi Arabian representative.

16. Mr. EDBERG (Sweden) wished to comment on the draft resolution (A/C.3/L.375) as well as on the information contained in the memorandum by the Secretary-General (A/C.3/L.381), in the light of a number of principles which his delegation considered fundamental.

17. It was surprising that the question of the code of ethics should again have been raised in the General Assembly. It was generally recognized that freedom of information demanded a high sense of responsibility among the members of the profession, but it might be asked whether there was any reason for the Assembly to take the matter up again. At the seventh session, the Swedish delegation had pointed out that in some countries Press organizations had agreed on a number of principles that correspondents should respect. In Sweden, for example, where the laws on freedom of information were among the most liberal in the world, the Swedish Press Club, of which he was chairman, had worked out a code of ethics for the Press; an advisory committee appointed by the organization of the Press, expressed its opinion on alleged violations of the code.

18. At the preceding meeting he had noted with satisfaction that the Egyptian representative had reaffirmed the principle that it was for members of the profession themselves to adopt a code of ethics. However, his delegation, for the reason it had stated at the seventh session, was a little sceptical about the possibility of drafting a universally acceptable code in the existing situation. The interpretation of professional ethics differed from place to place and from time to time. What was regarded as truth in one place might be considered a lie in the next town. It was difficult to conceive of an international tribunal responsible for ensuring observance of a universal code of ethics. An international code would appear to be possible only if it was confined to certain general principles widely accepted as moral rules.

19. It was stated in the draft resolution before the Committee that a large number of information enterprises and professional associations had replied to the Secretary-General. According to the Secretary-General's memorandum (A/C.3/L.381), some 10 per cent of the organizations consulted had replied and only 5 per cent had expressed themselves in favour. The number was hardly large enough to be considered as constituting a representative group. Moreover, the

organizations concerned had obviously interpreted resolution 635 (VII) as meaning that it was for them to express their desires; they did not expect any initiative on the part of the Secretary-General. It was also known that several Press organizations were doubtful of the value of a conference at the moment. The *Fédération internationale des éditeurs de journaux* in particular had stated that in the existing international situation a world Press conference would be unlikely to agree upon a code of ethics and that consequently a conference for that purpose would be a waste of time and money. That view was shared by the Association of the Scandinavian Press Organizations.

20. It was the understanding of the Swedish delegation that in adopting resolution 635 (VII) the General Assembly had intended to recognize the principle that the matter was no longer the concern of the United Nations and that the members of the profession had to be allowed freely to decide whether further action should be taken and when it should be taken. Sweden was therefore unable to support the draft resolution. Journalists would respect only a code drawn up without government interference by representatives of the profession. The members of the Third Committee were representatives of their governments and could not in that capacity bring any pressure to bear on members of the profession with a view to inducing them to draft a code of ethics. Yet the action proposed in the draft resolution would no doubt be regarded as a kind of pressure.

21. Dr. MAYO (United States of America) thanked the Secretary-General for the memorandum (A/C.3/L.381) he had submitted as a result of the United States delegation's request at the preceding meeting. It would be most helpful to his delegation in the further discussion of the draft resolution (A/C.3/L.375) before the Committee. He regretted that the Secretariat had been unable to provide a complete list of the enterprises and professional associations consulted, but realized that it had not had enough time to do so.

22. If the Secretary-General had consulted more than 500 information enterprises and professional associations, only fifty-four of which had replied, the words "a large number" in the second paragraph of the preamble of the draft resolution would seem to be something of an exaggeration. If they were not deleted from the draft resolution, he suggested that they should be voted on separately.

23. The Secretary-General's memorandum seemed to indicate that no representative group of enterprises and associations consulted had expressed a desire to organize a conference. It should be noted that only four of the twenty-eight enterprises and associations in favour of a conference were in Latin America and two in the Middle East. No favourable reply had been received from the Near East, Africa and the Far East and all the other replies had been received from the United States of America, the British Commonwealth and Western Europe.

24. He agreed with the Egyptian representative that the drafting of a code of ethics was a matter for the enterprises and associations concerned and not for governments. Members of the Press should be left free to draft their own code of ethics, like members of the medical profession. Generally speaking, such codes varied from country to country and reflected the different conditions prevailing in the different areas

of the world. If, however, a representative group of enterprises and associations wished to call a conference for the drafting of such a code, it should act on its own initiative and not receive any instructions from governments.

25. In view of the fact that the relevant amendment had been accepted by the sponsors, the United States delegation would vote for the draft resolution before the Committee.

26. Mr. MENESES PALLARES (Ecuador) said that a journalist's work did not exempt him from the moral obligations incumbent on every individual. On the contrary, in view of the important part journalists played in the formation of public opinion, they had special obligations, and, if they did not respect them, the term "freedom of the Press" became synonymous with licence and abuse. Unfortunately every country had its handful of journalists who disregarded those fundamental rules and thereby damaged the prestige of the profession. On the other hand, journalists should not be deprived of the protection afforded by the constitution and laws of their country. Those considerations were consistent with the perfectly clear provisions of articles 19 and 29 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

27. The Saudi Arabian representative had cited (506th meeting) an actual case as an illustration of the way in which freedom of expression could lead to a travesty of the truth. The Latin-American countries had frequently been the victims of distorted reports or erroneous interpretations of the facts; moreover, the foreign reader could learn little of those countries through the Press, which generally mentioned them either to draw attention to their picturesque aspects or to describe scandals taking place there.

28. He agreed with the Egyptian representative that the code of ethics should be an expression of the ideas of all journalists, who should not be subjected to any external pressure; it was their moral conscience that was at issue. Any such pressure could only rob the proposed code of all moral force or effectiveness.

29. Having heard the explanations given by the representative of the Secretary-General (514th meeting) he wondered whether the small percentage of favourable replies might not be due to a misunderstanding; many of the enterprises or associations consulted might perhaps have thought, on receiving the communication, that their professional honour was being impugned. That might explain the small number of replies from Latin-American enterprises and associations. It would therefore be useful to know what the first communication to enterprises and associations had said; that might remove any misunderstandings and perhaps dispel the Swedish representative's misgivings.

30. Mr. AZMI (Egypt) said that the observations he had made at the preceding meeting did not, properly speaking, apply to the draft resolution under discussion; they had been dictated solely by the desire to dispel some delegations' doubts. That was why he had stressed the absolute necessity of leaving it to members of the profession themselves to study, adopt or reject the draft code of ethics.

31. He was glad to see that the sponsors of the draft resolution and of the amendment were in agreement. He suggested that the text the Saudi Arabian representative had proposed orally for addition to the draft resolution should not be made a separate para-

graph, but should be added to paragraph 2. That was merely a matter of drafting and presentation.

32. The Swedish representative had questioned the advisability of United Nations action in connexion with the code of ethics. It should be pointed out, however, that freedom of information had been recognized as the keystone of all the fundamental freedoms mentioned in the Charter of the United Nations; and an important factor in the problem of guaranteeing freedom of information and of the Press was the conscience and professional ethics of members of the profession. It was therefore entirely logical for the United Nations to concern itself with the question. The work done by the Sub-Commission on Freedom of Information and of the Press was merely preparatory, so to speak; the Sub-Commission had stressed that the profession itself had to be given the task of drafting the code, and that there should be no intervention by governments or by the United Nations.

33. The expression "representative group" should not be construed to mean all or the majority of the enterprises and associations consulted. Such a group need not necessarily be composed of a large number of enterprises or associations because an association itself might very well be a representative group; a number of the enterprises or associations mentioned in the Secretary-General's memorandum were in that category. It was not at all surprising, incidentally, that the *Fédération internationale des éditeurs de journaux*, the international federation of newspaper owners, had expressed its opposition to the drafting of a code; such a code would stress the absolute independence of journalists even in respect of newspaper owners, who sometimes wished to impose particular ideas on journalists.

34. An affirmative reply by an enterprise or association to the Secretary-General's communication did not necessarily constitute an expression of its wish that a conference should be convened. What was necessary was that one of the associations cited as a representative group should address to the Secretary-General a letter explicitly stating its desire to call the conference; there should be no difficulty in inducing one of them to take such action. In that connexion he wished to explain, in reply to the United States representative's observation that no answer had been received from the Near East, that at the time the Secretary-General's communication had been received by the Egyptian journalists' union. Egyptian journalists had been making preparations for a congress of journalists of the Arab countries, which was being convened to form a federation of Press unions of the Arab countries. The Egyptian journalists' union had considered that it would be best to leave it to the new federation to express to the Secretary-General the general desire for such a conference. He had every reason to believe that the federation, which would be a really representative group, would make representations in that sense to the Secretary-General.

35. He would vote for the draft resolution (A/C.3/L.375), as modified by the amendment (A/C.3/L.380).

36. Mr. DUNLOP (New Zealand) said that his delegation understood the desire of some countries for the establishment of professional standards for the international Press. The information media as a whole, however, and particularly the major agencies, already had quite high standards—and in some countries, in-

cluding New Zealand, very high standards. But freedom entailed variety, with some good and some bad results. In the final analysis the newspapers themselves, in any country, had to decide what was or was not to be printed, and the same was true to a large extent of the other media. Newspapers could choose wire services and people could choose newspapers. That was not intended to be an answer to any particular complaint. It would be remembered that at the seventh session of the General Assembly New Zealand had supported the resolution on the development of domestic media of information.

37. The New Zealand delegation would not object to the media of information in New Zealand participating in a code of ethics, but felt no urgent need for it. It had been prepared initially to support the draft resolution subject to incorporation of the joint amendment, but after having listened carefully to the debate it wondered whether the United Nations had not gone as far as it could for the time being. The Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly had made it clear that the initiative should rest with the profession, and the initiative did indeed rest with the profession. But the Secretary-General's memorandum (A/C.3/L.381) showed that few of the enterprises and associations consulted had been eager to co-operate. The wisdom of writing to them again so soon was doubtful. It might be damaging to the prestige of the United Nations to ask the Secretary-General to continue sending letters to which there would be no reply. For a large organization, particularly an international one, a year was not long.

38. In any event, it had been pointed out by a number of speakers, including the Egyptian representative, that there were other ways of persuading enterprises and professional associations to participate in a code. Perhaps useful suggestions would emerge from the Council's work on the report by Mr. López.

39. He did not propose to advise the Secretary-General on the interpretation of the term "representative group". At the seventh session his delegation had said only that the group should be considerable. Perhaps the Secretary-General would be able to submit an analysis of that problem at the next session.

40. It was unwise and undignified for the General Assembly to move so fast, as the draft code of ethics already had all the momentum that could be given it by sending out letters. He emphasized that there seemed to be general agreement to circulate a draft code, but to leave the initiative with the media of information; he asked for the views of other delegations on the question whether it not only was unnecessary but might be damaging to the prestige of the United Nations to send out a fresh batch of letters.

41. The New Zealand delegation would be unable to vote for the draft resolution before considering that point very carefully. In any event, it would be unable to support such a resolution every year.

42. Mr. REYES (Philippines) said that, in spite of the agreement that had been reached between the sponsors of the draft resolution and those of the amendment, the consolidated text would not finally dispose of the problem; the draft code still remained to be perfected, consultation with the organizations concerned had to be continued and a conference was still to be held.

43. The adoption of a code of ethics by professional groups had been described as an exercise of self-dis-

cipline. Some would place the emphasis on "discipline"; his delegation would put the accent on "self". Observance of a code of ethics was a matter of conscience. Honour could not be imposed. The adoption of a code of ethics should therefore properly be an undertaking of, by and for the professional groups themselves. The United Nations could furnish technical aid, as it had done in drafting an international code of ethics, which the professional groups could use as a model. In addition, it could provide encouragement to such groups and proffer assistance in organizing and servicing an international conference. Beyond that the United Nations could not go without defeating the very purpose it sought to accomplish. The initiative for convening a conference had to come from the professional groups, and the responsibility for conducting it rested with them.

44. There was merit in the proposal submitted by Saudi Arabia and Syria that the Secretary-General should follow up the work of polling the professional organizations, taking into account the counsel given in the course of the debate; but he was pleased to note that the sponsors of the draft resolution had accepted the joint amendments, which defined the limits of the action the Secretary-General could take. If the General Assembly or the Secretary-General gave the impression that the code was being imposed on the professional organizations, the code would be doomed to rejection; and the surest way of making the professional groups hold themselves aloof would be to make it appear that the convocation of the conference would be mandatory.

45. Professional groups of the Philippines would not be disposed to participate in any international conference on those terms, or to view with favour the results of such a conference. They would not take kindly to any suggestion of a code of ethics handed down, as it were, from on high. They admitted the need for self-discipline; but they would be inclined to stress "self" as much as "discipline". That would not be due to feelings of false pride or an exaggerated sense of independence; it would arise from the Philippine concept of freedom of information, which was governed by article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, whereby freedom of opinion and information was to be immune from interference.

46. Accordingly, the Committee would do well to adhere faithfully to the resolutions previously adopted by the Sub-Commission on Freedom of Information and of the Press, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly, all of which proceeded from the standpoint that future work on the draft code and on the entire question of professional standards and self-discipline should be left to the professional organizations, without governmental interference at the national or international level.

47. Mr. KOS (Yugoslavia) said he was not a journalist but merely his Government's representative. Consequently, he could propose or support a proposal according to the instructions he received, which might be different from the views taken by the Yugoslav Press. In the case in point there might be some differences of opinion between the Yugoslav delegation and the Yugoslav journalists' associations; the delegation had not been able to consult the latter on the subject of the draft resolution. In any event, delegations had the right to ask the Secretary-General to address communications to enterprises and associations and to organize or co-operate in organizing an international

conference; it was a matter for the enterprises and associations to reply to those communications, accept the invitations to the conference or organize such conferences themselves. A General Assembly decision or recommendation could not be considered as pressure on the enterprises and associations.

48. The problem of freedom of information before the United Nations involved not only the ill-fated draft convention on freedom of information but also a number of concrete decisions and the basic question of the development of information media in the underdeveloped countries. He hoped that those questions would be discussed at the next session of the General Assembly; in comparison to them, the recommendations on the draft code were rather a modest step forward. The draft code was a collection of rules of honour and good behaviour customary in a civilized society. There were no restrictions on the personal freedom of thought and expression, and there should therefore be no restrictions on freedom of the Press. The code was merely a reminder of the need for professional pride, honour and objectivity on the part of individuals. It was therefore somewhat abstract, and had few points of contact with the actual situation, which was complex. Nevertheless, a code was essential, in view of the importance of the journalist's role, which was to promote better understanding among the peoples of the world. Unfortunately, that role was not always observed and international tension was frequently aggravated by distorted reports.

49. As an example of distortion of facts relating to his country, he said that *Life* magazine, in its issue of 26 October 1953, had published a photograph taken at Belgrade showing students in a mock funeral procession, about to bury their "trust" in the Western Powers. The publication, having the choice between the words "faith" and "trust" as an equivalent for the Serbo-Croat word, had chosen "trust" which was composed of the initial letters of the word "Trieste United States Troops" and was used as an abbreviation for them. The readers might therefore think that the students were symbolically burying the United States Army. That had obviously been a deliberate distortion, which showed the need for a code of ethics.

50. The draft resolution before the Committee (A/C.3/L.375) indicated clearly that it was for the members of the profession themselves to draw up the final text of the code. Logically, therefore, they themselves should decide whether they wished to hold a conference for that purpose. The Secretary-General's assistance would, of course, contribute to the success of the conference, but he doubted if it was advisable that the Secretary-General should organize the conference, which would be composed of representatives of enterprises and associations whose ties with their governments were tenuous or non-existent and many of which had not relations with the United Nations. In his delegation's view, the best course for the Secretary-General to follow would be to put in touch with one another the most representative organizations and enterprises which were in favour of a conference, without forcing his decision on them.

51. He welcomed the statement of the Syrian representative, as a result of which the voting would be simplified.

52. Mrs. AFNAN (Iraq) regretted that there was a growing tendency to confuse freedom of the Press with freedom of information. Freedom of information

was an outgrowth of basic human rights—the right to seek and communicate knowledge and the right of free speech. What was known as the Press, on the other hand, was neither a right nor an abstract idea: it was a medium of disseminating information which presumably constituted knowledge. As everyone knew, historically the Press had played a very important part in the attainment of freedom, a part which had earned it the outstanding respect it still enjoyed. But what was known as the Press in modern times was far removed from the printed texts by means of which knowledge had been torn from the grasp of the privileged to become a weapon for the destruction of privilege, injustice and despotism. The Press had become an industry connected with many other industries. It was subject to interests representing millions of dollars. It was dependent on others for sources and the supply of raw materials and was bound up with the economic and technical progress of a given country. In effect, it produced a commodity which it sold, but in addition to news it also sold opinions and comments. From the premise that the dissemination of news, comments and opinions satisfied a basic need, it was inferred that a medium of information had to be permitted to operate freely. But the inference was based on the assumption that the “freely” operating medium existed in fact. As technical improvements made it possible to address a larger public, however, those who had a commodity for sale made increasing use of means of “informing” the public in order to sell their product. It was but a step from that to the use by a political or economic group or by a State of those means of “informing” the public for the purpose of selling their ideology. That was happening at the moment, and propaganda no longer knew any frontiers.

53. Having thus become an industry, the Press no longer deserved such respect as was paid to knowledge and to freedom of speech; it had no more right to unlimited freedom than any other industry. To continue blindly to respect a free Press which in fact no longer existed, was to endanger that very freedom of thought and expression which it was desired to defend. It would, in effect, amount to recognizing the right of the Press of rival interests or of States which had a monopoly of the Press, to exploit the mind of man for its own purposes. The remedy lay neither in increased information nor in its broader dissemination, since those were no guarantees of truth.

54. The entire world had become a captive audience, forced willy-nilly to listen to the noisy advertisements of those who made money through the sale of a commodity, whether it was propaganda or goods. It was not surprising that there should have been objections and revolts. Revolts were dangerous, as they had adverse effects on freedom of speech and freedom of information. Many governments which did not dispose of equally effective means of disseminating what they considered to be the truth had no choice but to limit access to information. It was easy to understand that a convention on the control of information should be as difficult to conclude as a convention on the reduction of armaments, since information had become part of the arsenal of war. The question was further complicated by the fact that the scope of information should not be limited because information was at the time a tool for peace.

55. The joint draft resolution (A/C.3/L.375) was not unduly ambitious. Codes of ethics existed not only in

the liberal professions but also in many trades, and many Press associations already had them. It was paradoxical to say that encouraging the drafting of a code of ethics might constitute an attack on the freedom of the Press. She failed to see the logic of, on the one hand, encouraging Member States to conclude disarmament agreements and submit to the rule of a Charter they had adopted, and on the other, refusing to ask information enterprises to come together and to draft a code of ethics, although the absence of such a code endangered peace and friendly relations among nations. The Iraqi delegation had always defended the idea of collective responsibility and it was certainly not prepared to concede that the newspaperman was above the requirements created by the interdependence of human beings in a society and that he alone be exempted from the resulting limitations. She was opposed to government interference with the Press, since she did not think that even her own Government was never wrong and should be given the right to limit freedom of speech. For that reason she was convinced that the United Nations itself should see to it that the code was drawn up. The decision should not be left to the information enterprises themselves, since they were industrial enterprises. A glance at the replies showed that the most powerful of them not only refused to take the initiative, but denied the right of the United Nations to do so. She did not question the personal integrity of journalists themselves who had a high sense of duty, but who were at the mercy of economic and political interests which controlled information enterprises. That was why a code of ethics, even if it imposed limitations on information enterprises, would free the journalist himself.

56. She would therefore vote in favour of the joint draft resolution, regretting that the authors had not gone still further to stress the responsibility of the United Nations in that field by proposing that it should convoke a conference.

57. Mr. P. CHENG (China) suggested, in view of the oral amendment proposed by the Saudi Arabian representative for the addition of an operative paragraph 3, that paragraphs 2 and 3 should be merged, to read as follows:

“Requests the Secretary-General (a) to bring the text of the present resolution to the notice of the information enterprises and national and international associations to which he communicated the draft code; (b) to report to the ninth session of the General Assembly on any progress achieved.”

58. Mr. JOUBLANC RIVAS (Mexico) said that his delegation supported the joint draft resolution and the amendments, which improved it. Mexico was one of the countries that had suffered most from the lack of professional ethics on the part of news personnel. Indeed, during the hard years of its struggle for internal reorganization, the Press, the cinema and radio—then in their early stages had carried on a campaign arousing world opinion against it. Fortunately, Mexico was continuing the programme drawn up at that time and had consolidated its social and economic conquests: the petroleum and railroad industries had been nationalized, and the land reform was continuing owing to the changes made in the legal concept of property. That was no longer debatable. The campaign had ceased but there were still remnants of hostile propaganda.

59. That was why the Mexican delegation could only support the idea of encouraging the preparation of a

code of ethics for information personnel and firmly believed that the code should originate with the persons concerned, determined to exercise self-discipline. In Mexico, where the Government exercised no control over information, the code would be the best solution. As the President of Mexico had stated, abuse of freedom caused less harm than dictatorship. The Mexican delegation was pleased to note that the information enterprises were to be left entirely free to adopt the code.

60. He drew attention to a drafting point. In the second paragraph of the preamble the authors of the draft resolution described the number of replies received as *gran* in the Spanish text, and "large" in the English text. According to the information supplied by the Secretariat, 54 out of 500 enterprises and associations had replied. In the circumstances the adjective struck him as extravagant; perhaps some word corresponding to the French *important* would be better.

61. Mr. SAKSIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said his delegation felt that the information personnel itself should decide on the calling of the conference and the preparation of a draft code. The Soviet delegation, believing that those questions were outside the United Nations competence, would therefore vote against the joint draft resolution and the amendments thereto. The United Nations had much more urgent

problems to solve in the field of information, which were of far greater concern to millions of people. Its course had been charted in General Assembly resolution 110 (II) adopted in 1947, and entitled "Measures to be taken against propaganda and the inciters of a new war". Any other proposals which diverted the attention of the United Nations from the maintenance of peace, its principal purpose under the Charter, would harm, rather than serve, the cause of the United Nations.

62. After all the resounding phrases that the Committee had heard on the subject of ethics and morality, the USSR delegation wished to draw attention to something which had happened the day before. One delegation had proposed an amendment to a draft resolution, for the insertion of a new paragraph by which the General Assembly would reaffirm its decision recommending that the United Nations bodies studying the problems of freedom of information should consider measures for avoiding the harm done to international understanding by the dissemination of false and distorted information. After two weeks of debate, that proposal, which was the most suitable provision the Committee could have adopted, had not even been discussed.

63. Mr. ESTRADA DE LA HOZ (Guatemala), supported by Mr. BAROODY (Saudi Arabia), moved the adjournment of the meeting.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.