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MEETING OF EXPERTS ON PASSPORTS AND  
FRONTIER FORMALITIES.

MINUTES OF ELEVENTH PLENARY MEETING  
held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,  
on Monday, 21st April 1947 at 2.30 p.m.

CHAIRMAN - MR. CAREW-ROBINSON (United Kingdom).

1. CONTINUATION OF DISCUSSION ON "OTHER DOCUMENTS"  
(Item I C of Agenda).

The CHAIRMAN said the next matter they had to deal with was the question of health documents, specifically, inoculation and vaccination certificates. He invited the delegate of the United States to submit the resolution contained in E/CONF/PASS/PC/7 at the top of page 3: Inoculation and Vaccination Certificates.

Mr. TAIT (United States of America) said that, in addition to the recommendations contained in the statement alluded to by the CHAIRMAN, the United States Delegation was under instructions to support the following position:

"All participating governments should honour the international certificates of inoculation and vaccination of the International Sanitary Convention of 1926 (as amended in 1944) and the International Sanitary Convention for Aerial Navigation of 1933 (as amended in 1944) with such changes as are effected from time to time by the World Health Organisation".

He added that after enquiries by the appropriate authorities in the United States, the view was held that there were no obstacles to including in the present

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booklet a statement on additional inoculations; medical opinion today, however, was that one medical examination had no more than a limited validity at a later date.

Mr. BORREY (France) said the French Delegation agreed with the United States proposal but must emphasise the necessity of simplifying vaccination and inoculation certificates, which they felt were at the moment too complicated.

He pointed out that the booklet compiled by UNRRA at the Montreal Conference did not include any example of inoculation certificates against plague. As the French Delegation had urged in its memorandum to the present meeting, an international health conference should be entrusted with the task of determining what epidemiological standards ought to be applied under due control and with suitable provision for change. The Delegation also felt that personal statements with respect to health should be simplified and as far as possible dispensed with. The Delegation wished to propose that all members should accept the international certificates of inoculation and vaccination established by the International Health Convention of 1933, as amended in 1944, with regard to air navigation, and by the International Health Convention of 1926, as amended in 1944, as regards maritime navigation, as constituting for all travellers evidence of vaccination or inoculation wherever such justification was required, subject to such changes as the World Health Organisation might periodically make in their wording.

He pointed out that the words "all travellers" were stressed to make it clear that the proposal was intended to apply to air and sea travellers, as well as to those using road or rail.

The CHAIRMAN wondered if the meeting was perhaps going outside of its proper function in dealing with questions arising under international conventions. He felt that they were not concerned at all with the policy of international health, which had been entrusted to another body, but it would be perfectly proper for them to ask that body to bear in mind, when framing sanitary proposals, the form of the documents required, from the point of view of the passenger and of the frontier authorities who had to deal with him. That, he thought, was one of the points their French colleague had very properly insisted upon. The CHAIRMAN suggested that they put forward a resolution in that sense, rather than suggest that members honour the international certificate, which States, parties to the convention, would naturally have to do in any case. He felt they should limit their recommendation to the formalities aspect, apart from the substance.

Mr. TAIT (United States of America) said he felt this Government wished to have recorded its intention to be governed by the various conventions which had been adopted, and to recognise the various vaccination certificates. He was under instructions to support the one which had to do with aerial navigation.

The CHAIRMAN invited the representative of the World Health Organization to say a word on the question of certificates of inoculation and vaccination. The discussion had shown, he felt that they wanted to establish that members would honour the certificates of the World Health Organization, and would ask that in considering proposals for international conventions, there should be borne in mind the desirability of simplifying any certificates for which the convention might call. The meeting suggested also, he thought, that all certificates in current use should be those approved by the World Health Organization, and that governments should avoid demanding fancy certificates of their own devising.

Dr. FABRE (representative of the World Health Organization) assured the meeting that WHO would be glad to furnish any information required in regard to the simplification of the health aspect of frontier formalities. While it was possible to envisage simplification or abolition of certain of these formalities, there were others that must be retained, particularly in a period of epidemics, in the interests of international public health. Regulations of this kind had been furnished by the International and Sanitary Convention of 1926, and the International Sanitary Convention for Aerial Navigation of 1933, both modified by the International Sanitary Convention of 1944. Those conventions were now to be revised. He suggested that to obviate the possibility of any agreement reached by the present meeting becoming obsolete after a certain time, it would be desirable not to specify in the text of such agreement the conventions of 1944, but merely to allude to "health conventions in force at the time".

With regard to the certificates of vaccination and inoculation, he felt it desirable that they be retained for the time being in their present form, for they had been the object of very careful study.

He pointed out that the document E/CONF/PASS/PC/4 mentioned only some health formalities, chiefly those required under normal conditions. Those applicable to epidemic periods had not been referred to, no doubt because their necessity was not questioned.

The CHAIRMAN asked the representative of the United States of America if he was willing to modify his statement in the sense suggested by the representative of WHO.

Mr. TAIT (United States of America) felt that he was hardly competent to do so, although he was prepared to help in any possible way.

The CHAIRMAN asked whether it would meet the general sense of the discussion and perhaps also the point raised by the WHO representative, if they tried to put their proposals relating to international certificates and conventions in more general terms, and simply referred to conventions that were for the time being in force. He thought it would be within their competence to recommend to WHO that in considering conventions of the revision of conventions they should specifically bear in mind the difficulties of the traveller, without neglecting in any way the security protection which the interests of public health might require, and that they should also make it their concern to ask the governments not to introduce supplementary health certificates on their own account.

He felt that they agreed more or less with the text as it was in the paper, with the two supplementary points, simplification of forms and avoidance of supplementary forms.

## 2. FRONTIER FORMALITIES (Item II of Agenda)

The meeting proceeded to consideration of frontier formalities and the CHAIRMAN pointed out that two resolutions on frontier control had been received from delegations: one in the United States paper (E/CONF/PASS/PC/7) headed "Police Control" (item IIA), and one in the United Kingdom paper (E/CONF/PASS/PC/9), in paragraph 18. He invited the representative of the United States of America to deal with the relevant paragraph in his paper, which read:

"Passport control on entering and leaving a country should be carried out as expeditiously as possible and the possibility of eliminating police and registration formalities subsequent to the entrance by the visitor should be explored."

Mr. TAIT (United States of America) said the position of the United States Government was that they would like to simplify and facilitate as much as possible entry into and departure from a foreign country, and at the same time reduce to a minimum the formalities which a foreigner, during the time he was in the United States, had to go through. For example, a number of countries required a foreigner to go to the police and register every change of address. They were anxious to simplify that as much as possible.

The CHAIRMAN pointed out that the United States resolution dealt both with frontier formalities and subsequent internal control, and suggested that they take the proposal in two separate parts.

Mr. VAN DER POEL (Netherlands) drew the attention of the meeting to a document entitled "Very Suspicious Characters", by Sir William P. Hildred, Director General of the International Air Transport Association. Mr. Hildred, he said, had invited them to take measures to simplify formalities, but had also touched on other things. There was for instance a story of Mr. Jones, whose baggage, they were told in the brochure, would be "pawed by heavy-handed customs agents". He wished to assure them that customs agents were quite the same kind of men as they were themselves. Mr. Van der Poel quoted also from the brochure: "The fight everywhere is not against reasonable men. Nor is it against reasonable health precautions. It is against the bureaucrat, who gets his living from perpetuating folly and who cannot see any other way of doing things than the method in which his limited mind has been trained . . . It is the little officeholders at the lower levels, who have built their empires of paper clips and rubber stamps, who must be routed out of their entrenched positions . . . After all, most of the red tape is completely outmoded, completely unnecessary, bad in intent and fumbling in execution."

Mr. Van der Poel felt that if controls of the type to which the writer referred were in fact unnecessary they would not have lasted so long. He maintained that it was the duty of the officers carrying out the regulations to

maintain law and order: it was one of the most difficult tasks in the world to execute these laws, because they had to give and take. If he himself or other delegates were travelling with their wives, they would at times have difficulty in preventing the ladies from smuggling. Smuggling was a great pleasure in itself, and it was because of that fact that customs officers were necessary. There were also many other things that customs officers had to look for, and he felt that organisations would have the most success and best results if they thought of such officials in their role of maintaining law and order.

The CHAIRMAN said the document of which the representative of the Netherlands had been speaking had not been circulated as a Conference document. Secondly, he would have noticed that it was a reprint of an article originally contributed to a newspaper, and probably what appeared in a newspaper would be a little less accurately or carefully or seriously worded than an official document which the author would be prepared to support in every detail. Thirdly, he thought they could only make progress in the field under discussion if they tried to bear in mind and assume that all controls were in fact laid down not for the benefit of the formalities or of the functionaries whose duty it was to carry them out, but in order to support the policy and carry out the instructions of the government which was responsible for appointing the officials in question. He thought they might proceed with the discussion on frontier formalities, and they would make progress only on the basis he had indicated.



The CHAIRMAN said the proposition before the Conference was that passport control on entering and leaving a country should be carried out as expeditiously as possible. He thought they all agreed with that. But he would like if possible to make it a little more precise, and perhaps delegates could speak of the ways in which their governments had in fact been trying recently to simplify formalities and expedite any necessary examination.

Mr. SALISBURY (United States of America) pointed out that, so far as the United States was concerned, inspection on the Canadian border had been simplified through inspectors riding on the train. The Canadian immigration authorities followed the same practice. The United States officials examined people going north and Canadian officials those going south; thus hold-ups at the border were obviated, unless of course there was some reason for holding up an individual, and the system also did away with inconvenience to passengers, particularly when they were travelling at night. There was a similar arrangement in force on the Mexican border.

Mr. CONTEMPRE (Belgium) declared that in his country they had already taken measures to expedite and simplify frontier controls. As had been pointed out in their memorandum, the control at the frontier was carried out on trains. They had an agreement with their neighbours which resulted in police and customs formalities being effected practically simultaneously on the actual journey; the customs examination followed immediately upon the other, so that there was practically no interruption. In document E/CONF/PASS/PC/9, paragraph 18, there was a suggestion that states should consider what arrangements they might make by bilateral agreement to exercise all frontier controls between themselves and bordering states at one combined frontier post.

Negotiations were at present in progress with their French neighbours for the setting up of a combined frontier post in the same locality. He emphasised that this point would be the same for the journey in each direction, so that only one stop would be necessary at the border.

Mr. BERNARD (France) felt it would be difficult for them to arrive at a uniform formula to cover all cases and be suitable for all nations. France was in a rather special position, as they had not only their maritime and air frontiers, but six neighbouring states, with each of which they were obliged to come to arrangements which were not always applicable to other states. Since the conference of 1926, however, there had been instituted at certain points a system of common control and also of combined customs and police formalities; and as a result of arrangements with certain countries they were able to control passengers in the train itself on several of their lines.

As the representative of BELGIUM had said, the control formalities in the train did not entail the passengers having to get out on one side of the border and ten minutes later having to repeat the process on the other side. This was the case not only with respect to Belgium, but also in regard to Great Britain, the crossing by boat being merely in effect a prolongation of the train journey. Such a system, however, could not necessarily be applied along exactly the same lines to other countries. The danger was a possible loss of security unless it was possible to stop the train at any given point in exceptional cases. Otherwise, a country might no longer retain control over a passenger after he had crossed the frontier. Another system, also already mentioned

by the representative of BELGIUM, was joint control at the same frontier post. This was in force on trains travelling between Paris and Geneva, and on this route there were French and Swiss controls, respectively, for travellers going in one or the other direction. This arrangement had been made by bilateral agreement.

Subject to the reservation in regard to possible loss of security in the event of a traveller having already crossed the frontier, the French Government favoured as much simplification of the arrangement as possible.

Mr. POSPISIL (Czechoslovakia) explained that the Czechoslovakian system of frontier control was organised in such a way as to cause passengers as little trouble as possible. The minimum of time was taken in passport control and arrangements were in force for the control of passengers aboard trains.

Mr. VAN DER POEL (Netherlands) said formalities in his country were also carried out aboard trains, and there was a system of common control. Before the war there was a treaty with the Germans for common control on trains, but he need not tell them that the experience had not been a very happy one, and it was no longer in force. There were, however, other difficulties in regard to such formalities: among the problems was the fact that penalties sometimes could not be enforced if there was not an agreement between the countries. He did agree that it was necessary to have bilateral agreements.

Mr. RUCK (United Kingdom) said that what had been said by the countries with land frontiers had been listened to with interest by the representatives present. The United Kingdom had no land frontiers, and had endeavoured progressively since

the end of hostilities to do all in their power to relax and speed up frontier formalities. Recently there had been considerable relaxation of regulations in regard to currency control.

His Government had also resumed the practice of sending immigration officers across the Channel to carry out the examination on the return journey. This practice had also been extended to the Atlantic crossing.

The CHAIRMAN said that the meeting had been considering, in relation to the proposition of the United States delegation, what was called police control, that is to say the control of the individual passenger as distinct from the control of any prohibited or restricted articles that he might be carrying. It was difficult to separate the control of these different aspects, and he thought it was the aim in view that the control of both of them should be carried out simultaneously or in immediate succession, and that the officials which dealt with the one should work in close association with those whose duty it was to control the other. He asked whether it would be right to discuss these different forms of control together. He did not want to make an artificial distinction, but it seemed to him that there was a difference which should perhaps be taken into account.

M. CONTEMPRE (Belgium) thought that the proposition made by the United Kingdom delegation in paragraph 18 of E/CONF/PASS/PC/9 gave satisfaction on this point. He would, however, suggest the completion of the sentence by the words "or during the journey itself."

Mr. PERIER (France) supported the remarks of the representative for Belgium. He thought the United Kingdom

proposal was a good over-all proposal, and that a drafting formula could be found by which it could be combined with Item C.II paragraph 1 of E/CONF/PASS/PC 4, and the first sentence of the United States proposal. In Item C.II paragraph 1, he suggested the insertion of the word "preliminary" in the French text, after the word "sanitaire", as all that could be undertaken in the trains was a preliminary health inspection.

Mr. WARNER (ICAO) in reply to an invitation from the CHAIRMAN to speak on this subject, said that the question of the control of travellers and of their possessions presented special problems to aviation. It was always difficult and sometimes impracticable to execute control during flight. The means of carrying inspectors did not exist. Control had therefore to be executed on landing, and caused loss of time to passengers. Some improvement might however be introduced by (1) providing ample personnel, in order that groups of persons might be examined at the same time; (2) where forms had to be filled up in connection with this ground control following a flight, whether they had to be filled up by passengers or by officials, they should be supplied to the airlines in advance, to enable them to be filled up during the flight. They would then be ready for immediate presentation to the frontier officials on landing.

The CHAIRMAN thought there would be no difficulty in supplying such forms, providing the starting-point of the flight was not too far distant from the point of arrival. There would be no problem in supplying a sufficient number of officials to examine a plane-load of passengers; the difficulty arose more acutely when a ship-load had to be dealt with.

He considered that it would be in accordance with the views of the meeting if the Drafting Committee were asked to combine the various suggestions contained in the papers that had been submitted in a general recommendation that the frontier control should be carried out as expeditiously as possible, where necessary by bilateral agreement between neighbouring countries, for the examination of passengers during the course of the journey, or failing that, at the same or at adjoining frontier posts. He thought a phrase should be added "without detriment to the essential purposes which these controls are designed to serve". He did not think it possible to put forward a general recommendation that efficiency of control should give way at every point to rapidity and to the convenience of the passenger. A certain amount of delay was inevitable.

Mr. PERIER (France) supported the proposal made by the Chairman, which was carried.

Decision: That the Drafting Committee be instructed in the sense of the Chairman's summing up of this point.

3. POLICE CONTROL (E/CONF/PASS/PC 7 Item II.A. second half)

The CHAIRMAN drew the attention of the meeting to the fact that the second half of the United States proposal had not been discussed. It related to the possibility of eliminating police and registration formalities subsequent to the entrance of the visitor, with special reference to the requirement that the authorities should be kept informed of changes of address.

He was not sure whether it was within the competence of the meeting, which had to deal with frontier formalities only, to concern itself with the internal regulations of a country

affecting the foreigner after he had arrived within its borders.

Mr. PERIER (France) agreed with the observations of the Chairman on this point.

In reply to a question from the CHAIRMAN, Mr. Tait (United States of America) said he did not desire to press the point. The recommendation had been made by the United States in the hope that consideration would be given at least to the exploration of the possibility of eliminating any of these formalities.

Mr. BOER (Netherlands) said that frontier control was usually a somewhat superficial check. The real control was made in the interior of the country. He agreed with the representative for France that this was a matter of internal policy.

The CHAIRMAN asked whether it would meet the views of the representatives present if mention were made in the report that the possibility of some recommendation on this point had been brought up, but that the feeling of the meeting had been that it was not strictly within its terms of reference. This would draw attention to the matter, without an attempt being made to reach a conclusion in the present meeting.

Mr. PRZEWANSKI (Poland) supported the opinion of the representative for France.

Mr. PERIER (France) had no objection to the form of drafting suggested by the Chairman.

Mr. PRZEWANSKI (Poland) in reply to a question by the CHAIRMAN as to whether he was in support of the Chairman's proposal, said it was an internal question, and as such should not be gone into too deeply by the meeting.

Mr. SODERBLOM (Sweden) expressed sympathy with the American proposal. A traveller entering Sweden was not obliged to announce his arrival to the police. This was done by the hotel. The traveller could stay in the country as long as his visa was valid. He thought the point might be met by emphasising the principle that formalities should be reduced to a minimum.

Decision: That the question as summed up by the Chairman be referred to the Drafting Committee.

4. POLICE CONTROL (E/CONF/PASS/PC/4 page 7. Item II.A.(2) second sentence).

Mr. KIRKWOOD (Canada) drew attention to the second sentence of Item II.A (2) of document E/CONF/PASS/PC/4, which had been overlooked in the debate. It provided that the holder of a passport should never be deprived of it, even temporarily. It was the practice in certain countries for immigration control officials to take the passports at the port of entry and retain them, re-delivering them to the holder only at the port of exit on departure. In one such country, as the result of representations on behalf of certain governments, this practice was discontinued in the case of transit visas. Most Canadians as well as nationals of many other countries, do not go to these countries to take up permanent residence, and are usually only in transit, so this concession made very little change in the situation. The speaker said he was not sure of the purpose of this practice. He would have liked to hear views expressed by the representatives of such countries, but he observed that most of them were not present at the session. Travellers had difficulty in retrieving their passports from the immigration departments for purposes such



as identification at the bank, collecting further visas for their subsequent travels, making excursions into other parts of the same country or into neighbouring countries, etc., etc. There was no objection to the temporary retention of the passport by an official on a train during a journey, or a purser on board ship, also during the journey. He proposed a recommendation on this point as follows:-

"Passports of travellers visiting or passing through a foreign country should not be taken from them, retained or impounded, even temporarily, by the authorities of the foreign country as a matter of immigration or police control, or for any other reason."

Mr. PERIER (France) declared himself in support of the representative of Canada. The practice in France was not to impound the passport; but there were two cases where it was sometimes necessary - one, where the passport was not in order - two, if it was a counterfeit.

Mr. KIRKWOOD (Canada) said he could not express a definite opinion on this point, because he was not clear as to the right of possession of a passport. Did it belong to the holder, or did it belong to the issuing Government? If it belonged to the issuing Government, then it appeared to him that no outside authority had the right to possess themselves of it. If it was the property of the holder, then no foreign authority had the right to take it away without the consent of his national authorities. Where the passport was not in order, should it not be dealt with through the holder's diplomatic or consular authorities,

who might relieve him of the passport at the request of the foreign Government?

Mr. PRZEWANSKI (Poland) asked whether the representative of Canada objected to the practice which was followed in his country by which an official took the passports, made short notes, and then returned them to the passengers.

Mr. KIRKWOOD (Canada) said that as long as the passenger was on the spot and within reach of his passport, he had not actually been deprived of it in the sense to which he had referred.

The CHAIRMAN asked whether any delegate present could explain the reasons why the practice described by the Canadian delegate was considered necessary.

There being no reply to his question, he went on to ask whether it would meet the wishes of the meeting if a phrase were inserted to the effect that a passport should not be taken away from the holder save in the interests of justice or public order.

Mr. PERIER (France) and Mr. KIRKWOOD (Canada) agreed to the proposal of the Chairman.

Decision:- That the Drafting Committee insert a phrase in the report to the effect proposed by the Chairman.

5. CURRENCY CONTROL AND FACILITIES FOR EXCHANGING MONEY.

The CHAIRMAN drew attention to the last paragraph of page 5 of E/CONF/PASS/PC 2. He asked whether this was a direction from the Economic and Social Council.

Mr. LUKAC (Secretariat) said that two problems were involved. The first, which was the problem mentioned in E/CONF/PASS/PC 4, concerned mainly the question of currency

control at the frontier and facilities for exchanging money. It was evident that this problem came within the competence of the meeting, which had to deal with frontier formalities.

The last paragraph of page 5 of E/CONF/PASS/PC 2, dealt with a different question which had been summarised in E/CONF/PASS/PC 5. This was a separate question: whether it would be possible to facilitate travelling by permitting travellers to obtain an increased sum in foreign currency. This was a question for governments to decide, and was quite separate from the one of currency control at the frontier.

On the invitation of the CHAIRMAN, Mr. STOPPANI (ICC) gave his views on this point. He drew attention to a passage of a letter addressed by the President of the ICC to the Secretary-General of the United Nations (E/CONF/PASS/PC/ 2, Add. 1, page 5, paragraph 4). He appealed to the meeting not to neglect this question to which the ICC as well as the representatives of the other international organisations attached the greatest importance.

His organisation hoped that means would be found to transmit to the World Conference the memorandum as it had been presented, drawing the attention of the Conference to the solution of this crucial problem, without which all the simplifications recommended by the meeting would be worthless.

Mr. THORLEY (United Kingdom) stated that it was the view of his Government that the rules governing the allocation of foreign exchange were definitely outside the terms of reference of the meeting. On the other hand, his delegation had no objection to discussing this problem if the meeting thought fit to do so. The United Kingdom Government would

find it difficult to agree to the proposal by the ICC representative that the meeting should transmit to the World Conference a recommendation relating to the allocation of foreign exchange, which, in the view of his delegation, was an entirely domestic matter.

Mr. van der POEL (Netherlands) did not see any objection to the matter being discussed, although he was doubtful whether the result would be fruitful. The circumstances in his country were such that there would be no possibility of getting a recommendation on the point. It had been suggested that currency control should be rendered more speedy and elastic. He did not think it possible to do so and he would like to know what the experts thought about the possibility of more speed and more elasticity.

With regard to the granting of a greater amount of currency to business men, he was ready to agree to this, although his observation had been that most business men when they took a trip seemed to be able to procure all manner of things which were scarce in their own country, which would seem to prove that the allocation of a larger amount of currency was not really necessary.

The CHAIRMAN said the meeting had to decide whether or not the discussion of the problem was within its competence. It was clear that the meeting was intended to discuss the means used for regulating the arrangements for the control of currency in the possession of travellers when they crossed the frontier, and was entitled to make recommendations which would make it easier for him to pass through the controls without any weakening of these controls. It was equally clear, in his opinion, that the meeting was not entitled to discuss

the general economic policy of governments which had made such a control of currency necessary. The delegate of the United Kingdom had suggested that the questions set out in E/CONF/PASS/PC/5, which related to such matters as the amount of currency to be allowed to an individual traveller and the question of increasing that amount for a special type of traveller, i.e. the business man, were parts of a general policy which the meeting was not competent to discuss. His own view which he expressed with diffidence, as he did not want to seem, as Chairman, to support one view against another, was that it was outside the competence of the meeting.

Mr. BRITSCHGI (ITA) emphasised what had been said by the representative of ICC. The control of currency was the greatest obstacle in the way of travellers, an even greater obstacle than visas. It was possible that this question did not fall within the competence of the meeting, but he hoped that at the end of the report it might be possible to say that the meeting was conscious of the fact that all its work would be wasted if no modification were made in the granting of currency.

The control had nothing to do with the granting of a greater amount of currency. The United Kingdom and Belgium had found means to maintain control through the basic travel plan and through the different rules which had been adopted in Belgium concerning the problem.

The CHAIRMAN said that if the general opinion of the representatives was that the question of the amount of currency allocated was within the policy of the governments, they might proceed at the next meeting to consider the formalities with regard to control.

The meeting rose at 5.30.