



TRUSTEESHIP COUNCIL

Twenty-seventh Session

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President: U TIN MAUNG (Burma).

Present:

The representatives of the following States: Australia, Belgium, Bolivia, Burma, China, France, India, Italy, New Zealand, Paraguay, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Arab Republic, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

The representatives of the following specialized agencies: International Labour Organisation; Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; World Health Organization.

Examination of conditions in the Trust Territory of Nauru: annual report of the Administering Authority for the year ended 30 June 1960 (T/1562, T/1571, T/1578; T/L.1012) (continued)

[Agenda item 4 (e)]

At the invitation of the President, Mr. McCarthy, special representative of the Administering Authority for the Trust Territory of Nauru, took a place at the Council table.

GENERAL DEBATE

1. Sir Hugh FOOT (United Kingdom) observed that the unique problems of Nauru must be solved by original thought and not by any preconceived panacea.
2. The special representative was to be congratulated on the way in which he had consulted the people of the Territory on the Administering Authority's new proposals. Such a full and careful consultation was in accordance with the traditions of the Australian and United Kingdom overseas services, which had always been concerned with the welfare of the indigenous peoples and had always consulted them, realizing that their interests and wishes must be paramount.
3. The Administering Authority's proposals, moreover, were eminently practical. The conditions envisaged for the resettlement of the Nauruans naturally applied to Australia, but the United Kingdom Government was ready to offer similar terms to any Nauruans who wished to settle in the United Kingdom. It was obviously essential, when dealing with a practical problem, not to be diverted into a barren theo-

retical discussion—hence the importance of those practical proposals.

4. For his part, he thought that the Nauruans should be actively encouraged to consider carefully the possibility of settling in a larger community, in Australia or elsewhere. It was natural that they should be attached to their island and should wish to maintain their traditions and their identity as a community, but isolation was often restrictive and harmful. In particular, in a small community so far removed from world events, the young people had very few opportunities for social and educational advancement. The Nauruans would have nothing to fear from settling in Australia: they would be able to preserve their traditions and their identity while participating fully in Australian life.

5. If there were any possibility of making the island capable of meeting the needs of future generations of Nauruans, that solution should certainly be given fresh consideration. But the worst possible course would be to leave the people in their island with diminishing exports and a deteriorating economy; as Mr. Gadabu had said, the situation would be unbearable. Further efforts must be made to find the solution which accorded most closely with the interests of the Nauruans, paying due regard to their wishes but not excluding any of the possibilities for resettlement which had been put forward.

6. Mr. DIEZ DE MEDINA (Bolivia) said that the proposals which the Australian Government had put to the people of Nauru were the best of all the solutions that had been suggested. Thirty years, however, was too long a period for resettlement, even if the phosphate deposits were likely to be exhausted by the end of that period. An effort must therefore be made to reduce the period of resettlement. In addition, the Administering Authority should explain in its next report how its proposals would be put into practice. What, in particular, would become of Nauruans who decided to remain in the Territory?

7. It was encouraging to note how far the Nauru Local Government Council had developed. His delegation was sure that the Administering Authority would continue its efforts to entrust still greater responsibilities to the Council and to give it an increasing share in the administration of Nauruan public affairs. To do so, it would have to allow the members of the Council to occupy some of the senior posts which were at present the prerogative of Europeans. The Local Government Council had acquired sufficient maturity and experience to undertake important administrative responsibilities of that kind.

8. Since the Territory's economy was entirely dependent on the phosphates industry, the Trusteeship Council should be given fuller information on the profits and the future of the British Phosphate Commissioners than that contained in annex XIII to the

annual report of the Administering Authority.^{1/} It ought to know, in particular, the ratio between the Commissioners' profits and the royalties paid to the Nauruan people. In addition, the indigenous people should be given more positions of responsibility in the undertaking. Increased efforts should be made to increase local food production, particularly by developing agriculture in the few areas which could be cultivated and by promoting the fishing industry.

9. The Administering Authority had done much in the field of education. In the primary schools, however, Europeans, Nauruans and children from the Gilbert and Ellice Islands were separated. It would be better to apply the method at present followed for Chinese children to all pupils, i.e., they should be classified according to their knowledge of English and not according to their ethnic origin. The present state of affairs was undoubtedly prejudicial to the psychological and moral development of the children, and it might partly explain why Nauruan students found it difficult to adapt themselves to life in Australian universities. His delegation unreservedly supported the observations of UNESCO (T/1571), particularly regarding the need to train professionally qualified Nauruan teachers and to pay greater attention to the study of English from the lower forms onwards. Finally, his delegation considered that the Administering Authority's scholarship programme was still inadequate to meet the needs of the island. A new effort should be made to increase the number of scholarships given to Nauruans.

10. Mr. OBEREMKO (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) considered that the Trusteeship Council should take all the necessary steps to implement the Declaration on the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples (General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV)). It was apparent from the annual report that the Administering Authority's policies were in direct conflict with the Declaration and with the vital interests of the Nauruan people. In other words, the Administering Authority was not adhering to the Trusteeship Agreement. Evidence of that was to be found in the plan to resettle the Nauruans outside their native island. The indigenous people rejected that plan, which was contrary to their wishes and to their national interests and constituted a flagrant violation of the Trusteeship Agreement and the United Nations Charter.

11. The object of the resettlement plan was to send young people, as also people who were able to work and possessed some resources, to Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. The Administering Authority rejected as impracticable the proposal put forward by the Local Government Council and reiterated by its representative, Mr. Gadabu, that the Nauruans should be resettled in another island off the Australian coast. The origin of the resettlement plan went back to 1919, when the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand had signed the agreement on the exploitation of the phosphate deposits on Nauru. Since then, the Administering Authority's policy had been directed solely towards exploiting and exporting the island's phosphate on the best possible terms.

More than 26 million tons of phosphate had been exported since 1907. The right to work the deposits and export the phosphate had been entrusted by the Administering Authority to the British Phosphate Commissioners, which now, to all intents and purposes, ran the Territory and whose activities would, in the last analysis, determine the fate of the people of Nauru. The resettlement plan submitted by the Administering Authority was absolutely unacceptable. It had, moreover, already been rejected by the indigenous people.

12. The Trusteeship Council should invite the Administering Authority radically to revise its policy towards Nauru. First of all, the indigenous people should be given full sovereignty over the island's natural resources. The Nauruans should regain their right of ownership over land containing phosphate. All the equipment used to work the deposits should be handed over to them and they alone should be responsible for working and selling the phosphate. The British Phosphate Commissioners should therefore be liquidated as far as the Trust Territory was concerned and all their property and assets should be handed over to the people.

13. The Trusteeship Council should heed the wishes of the Nauruan people, who intended to preserve their identity and integrity as a nation. The Nauruans were fully entitled to set up their own legislative and executive bodies to deal with political organization, economic development, finance, exploitation of the phosphates, public health and education, the legal system etc.

14. The Soviet delegation proposed that a plebiscite should be held in the Territory in 1961, under United Nations supervision, in order to ascertain the wishes of the people regarding their future. The Trusteeship Council would send a special Visiting Mission to supervise the plebiscite. He invited the members of the Council to consider that proposal carefully and to adopt it, since it was entirely consistent with the interests of the Nauruans.

15. Mr. EDMONDS (New Zealand) said that, at the time of the conclusion of the Trusteeship Agreement, the physical characteristics of Nauru had been the same; the fact that its phosphate deposits would one day run out had been recognized and the arrangements for mining those phosphates had also been known to the General Assembly. Although it was realized that such a small island could support only a limited population and that its capacity for political and economic development was restricted, the Assembly had accepted the offer of Australia, the United Kingdom and New Zealand to place the former Mandated Territory under trusteeship.

16. Both the Trusteeship Agreement and the Declaration on the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples had to be implemented in the light of the realities of a given situation. The Trusteeship Council had, in its fourteen years of supervision, recognized Nauru's unique circumstances, but endeavoured to ensure that, when the time came, the Nauruans would be able to enjoy a future in accordance with their freely expressed wishes. That objective was fully shared by the three countries comprising the Administering Authority. However, it was not realistic to link that problem with the rate of phosphate mining; even if the rate of extraction were

^{1/} Commonwealth of Australia, Report to the General Assembly of the United Nations on the Administration of the Territory of Nauru from 1st July, 1959, to 30th June, 1960 (Canberra, A. J. Arthur, Commonwealth Government Printer), Transmitted to members of the Trusteeship Council by a note of the Secretary-General (T/1562).

extremely low, the problem would still remain and would be even more serious, since the population would not then have such a high level of living as that noted by the different United Nations visiting missions. Furthermore, even if there were no phosphates and more fertile land, the question of what to do with the surplus—and rapidly increasing—population on the small island would sooner or later have to be answered.

17. At its twenty-sixth session, the Council had welcomed the efforts made by the Australian Government to find a solution to the problem (A/4404, chapter VII, para. 6). It had noted that discussions were proceeding among the three Administering Authorities and urged that they should include concrete proposals for resettlement in one or more of the three metropolitan countries, to be submitted for the consideration of the Nauruans. That had been done. The proposals which formed the basis for discussion with the Nauruans related mainly to the resettlement of the Nauruans in Australia, because that was the country which they generally regarded as the metropolitan area. They were not considered as necessarily the only way of dealing with the problem, and the three countries were prepared at any time to consider any proposals the Nauruans themselves might put forward. New Zealand for its part was anxious to ensure that any Nauruans who chose to go there settled into their new life as quickly as possible.

18. Those proposals were fully in accordance with the Trusteeship Agreement and with the spirit of the General Assembly Declaration on the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples, which was based essentially on the principle of self-determination, the implementation of which had to be adapted to the Territory's unique circumstances. The Assembly in its resolution 1541 (XV) had recognized that a Non-Self-Governing Territory could reach a full measure of self-government by free association or integration with an independent State. In the case of the Cameroons under United Kingdom administration, a Trust Territory would be achieving independence by joining two sovereign States. The proposals before the Nauruans envisaged "independence by integration", although the integration would be achieved in a different way.

19. The prime consideration of the Administering Authority was the wishes of the Nauruans. The Nauruan Local Government Council, while acknowledging the generosity of the current proposals, considered that the people were not yet ready to accept them, as they still hoped that a place might be found in which they could continue to live as a Nauruan community. Consultations and exchange of views with the Nauruans would continue until there emerged some consensus of opinion, either concerning a solution or regarding the way in which a solution might be reached.

20. The problem should, however, certainly be solved as soon as possible, and it was to be hoped that the forthcoming Visiting Mission would be able to examine the situation in detail with the Nauruans themselves and with the Administering Authority, but it would be premature now to discuss the methods by which the Nauruans would decide their destiny. That destiny could undoubtedly be fulfilled only in a large and much richer community. The Nauruans already enjoyed many benefits: tax exemption, social ser-

vices, free medical care and education; they also knew that the expenses of any resettlement would be met by the Administering Authority. On their own, they would probably not have been able to achieve their present level of living or envisage a financially untroubled future, although the difficulty of the human problem now confronting them should not be underestimated.

21. The Council would certainly wish to commend the efforts to extend the powers and functions of the Nauru Local Government Council and the various measures taken to modernize the legislation on co-operatives, to increase royalties on phosphates and surface payments and to settle land claims. He also stressed the progress made in education, which was of great import to the future of the people, and thanked UNESCO for its observations (T/1571).

22. Miss TENZER (Belgium) commended the continuing and successful efforts of the Administering Authority in medical and social matters. The people's level of living was rising steadily, so that the need to preserve the existing way of life was one of the basic problems to be taken into account in providing for the future of the Nauruan people.

23. In the field of education, the statements of the special representative and the observations of UNESCO were proof of the Australian Government's desire to provide all young Nauruans with complete instruction. The Belgian delegation had been glad to note that, at the beginning of the 1961 school year, 1,034 children had attended island schools.

24. In the political field, the Nauru Local Government Council had become a political body which truly represented the people. It had enabled consultations to be held between the Administering Authority and the Nauruans. Furthermore, the Administrator had granted the Council very extensive taxation powers. The authority and functions of the Council would undoubtedly gradually increase, in particular as regards the participation of the indigenous population in the management of the phosphate industry.

25. The problem of the Nauruans' political future was rightly the main concern both of the indigenous population and of the members of the Council. The special representative and Mr. Gadabu had confirmed that the people agreed that the island would not be able to continue to support the inhabitants in the manner to which they were accustomed. That conclusion was borne out by the reports of the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (CSTRO), which showed that the re-establishment of the topsoil after the extraction of the phosphates in Nauru was, from the scientific point of view, difficult to accomplish. Apart from the phosphate deposits, therefore, the island had no other natural resources which could assure the well-being of the people, unless they reverted to a primary subsistence economy, based principally on fishing. Other solutions for the future should therefore be considered taking into account the wishes of the people.

26. In connexion with the difficult problem of the resettlement of the indigenous population, it was important not to offer unrealistic prospects which might end in tragic disillusionment for the Nauruan people. At first sight, it appeared that it would not be in the interests of the Nauruans to settle them in another island which did not have adequate development pos-

sibilities. On the other hand, the Australian Government's generous offer of resettlement, with all the privileges of citizenship, in one of the three signatory countries to the Trusteeship Agreement should be carefully considered by all Nauruans who were concerned not only with their immediate future, but also with that of their children. In that connexion, she agreed entirely with the views which the United Kingdom representative had just expressed. However, the Nauruans obviously did not want to be hurried in such an important decision, changing their entire way of life. The Governments of Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom should continue consultations with the people through the Local Government Council.

27. Her delegation welcomed the continued contacts which the special representative had established with the indigenous population. The information which he had given to the Council proved that the population as a whole had been informed of the projects and views of the Administering Authority and that there had been a true consultation of the people in the Territory. That initiative would certainly be followed by further contacts.

28. At the present stage of the inquiries and surveys, the plan of the Administering Authority offered a very sound basis for a realistic solution which would be in the long-range interests of the indigenous inhabitants. It was probable that the discussions to be held between the Nauruan representatives and the Governments concerned would lead to an agreement on the preservation of a Nauruan community in their new country. Furthermore, it would be advisable to devise a special plan for the Nauruans who did not want to leave their island.

29. Mr. KIANG (China) said that, with regard to the resettlement of the Nauruans in Australia, the Chinese delegation could readily understand the Local Government Council's hesitation and the desire of the Nauruan people to retain their own national identity and cultural and traditional values. The people, who had not participated in past investigations, ought to be satisfied that there were no other islands where they could resettle. The Trusteeship Council should see to it that any plan for resettlement was freely agreed to by the indigenous population.

30. The Chinese delegation proposed two measures: that the Nauruans admitted to permanent residence in Australia should be permitted to retain their original nationality and that a number of them should be allowed to visit their future homeland.

31. As regards the independence of the Territory, it might be said that, since the population would in any case have to be resettled elsewhere, perhaps even in one of the metropolitan territories, the objective of independence would have been achieved because the Nauruans would form part of an independent people. But what would happen to those who remained on the island? Would it not be possible for the Territory to become a self-governing entity associated with a larger independent community? In that case, resettlement would take the normal course of emigration on a preferential treatment basis.

32. His delegation noted that a number of measures were contemplated for broadening the powers of the Local Government Council, on which most of the functions currently exercised by the Administering Authority should be devolved with deliberate speed

and which, moreover, would be well advised to utilize fully its existing powers, particularly in the matter of taxation.

33. In the economic field, the royalties paid into the Long-Term Investment Fund should be increased, and backfilling the worked-out land with topsoil should be tried out on a small scale.

34. Where social matters were concerned, his delegation hoped that the British Phosphate Commissioners would be able to eliminate the disparity in the standard working week between European and other workers. With regard to education, the Administering Authority should bear in mind the very comprehensive observations of UNESCO (T/1571). In view of the failure in their studies of certain Nauruan students holding cadetships, greater stress should be laid on the guidance of students.

35. Mr. McCARTHY (Special Representative), replying to a question raised at the previous meeting by the representative of India, gave information on the fourteen students who had gained Australian Leaving Certificates since 1954. Those students had pursued university studies in a wide range of subjects.

36. The teacher-pupil ratio was more favourable in Nauru than in almost any part of Australia.

37. The Local Government Council had just accepted the proposals for the financing of social services by the Nauru Royalty Trust Fund and by a grant from the Administration. That step would mean the establishment of an organized scale of social service benefits and also an extension of the powers of the Local Government Council in social matters.

38. Mr. VELLODI (India) said he did not think the Trusteeship Council had to take, at the present stage, a final decision regarding the resettlement of the Nauruans. There seemed to him to be little doubt, however, that the resources of the land could not satisfy the needs of the whole population indefinitely. Two questions therefore arose: the future home of the population and the steps to be taken to guarantee the future of those Nauruans who would remain in the island.

39. He asked whether it was not possible to find another island where the Nauruans would be willing to settle. The Administering Authority did not think so and contemplated only resettlement in Australian territory. His delegation was convinced that that attitude was motivated only by a genuine desire to find a satisfactory solution; indeed, it had supported a Council recommendation which envisaged that possibility precisely because that recommendation had seemed to correspond to the wishes of a large part of the population. But it now appeared that the response from the people of Nauru to the proposal had been somewhat mixed; they did not seem to be convinced that it would be absolutely futile to search for an island where they could preserve their national identity. In that connexion, his delegation regretted that the Administering Authority had not taken along on its exploratory voyages representative groups of the Nauruan people, and it hoped that the Administering Authority would consider, in association with the Nauruans, the possibility of resettlement in certain islands off the Australian coast, particularly as the suggestion had come from the Nauruans themselves. India's view was that all those investigations should be based on the essential principle of respect for the

wishes of the population, in accordance with the Charter, General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) and the annex to resolution 1541 (XV).

40. With regard to the future of those Nauruans who would remain in the island, it had to be remembered that, when the phosphate extraction was stopped, there would be no more royalties and no more jobs, and that the Nauruans would no longer be able to import their food requirements as they did at present. A beginning should therefore be made immediately to diversify the economy of the Territory. It was encouraging to note that a start was being made to develop a fishing industry, but there should perhaps be an attempt to make the worked-out phosphate lands cultivable. It had been said that such a solution was not possible, but India's opinion was that the matter should not be regarded as a closed book. In the present state of scientific knowledge, the problem of restoring a fertile topsoil was not insoluble. The Administering Authority should obtain technical advice from competent authorities and make a report on the matter at the Council's next session. It could also bear in mind a suggestion which had already been made concerning the establishment of a pilot project to assess the feasibility of that solution. His delegation also hoped that the British Phosphate Commissioners would refrain from mining the only cultivable area of the Territory situated around Buada Lagoon.

41. With regard to the general political advancement in the Territory, he regretted that the powers of the Nauru Local Government Council had not yet been extended, but he was happy to learn that the Administering Authority was thinking seriously of doing so, and also of appointing as a magistrate a person not employed by the Administration.

42. In the economic field, his delegation deplored the inadequate information supplied on the work of the British Phosphate Commissioners. In the absence of detailed data, it was impossible to be certain that the people of Nauru were receiving their legitimate share of the profits, despite the recent increases in the royalties. It would therefore be desirable for the Administering Authority to include in its future reports detailed information on the financial side of the operations of the British Phosphate Commissioners, and to consider including in its delegation a representative of the British Phosphate Commissioners, who would be able to reply to questions put by members of the Council. His delegation noted with regret that no Nauruan held a senior technical position with the Commissioners, and it trusted that the Administering Authority would facilitate the gradual taking over of that industry by the Nauruans.

43. In the social field, the Administering Authority was to be congratulated on the progress achieved with regard to public health, social security and welfare services. However, the Nauruans were still subject to different working hours from those which applied to Europeans; hence, the Administering Authority should exercise greater control over the activities of the British Phosphate Commissioners, since it still had complete responsibility in the matter.

44. Education was being developed in the right direction, but there had not been adequate progress in higher education. He objected once again to the unjust system of uniracial schools, which was being perpetuated by the financial assistance given by the Administration to enable European children to go to Australia for schooling.

The meeting rose at 4.50 p.m.