



TRUSTEESHIP COUNCIL

Thirty-fourth Session

OFFICIAL RECORDS

Thursday, 22 June 1967,
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NEW YORK

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President: Miss Angie E. BROOKS (Liberia).

Present:

The representatives of the following States: Australia, China, France, Liberia, New Zealand, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

In the absence of the President, Mrs. Anderson (United States of America), Vice-President, took the Chair.

AGENDA ITEMS 4, 5 AND 9

Examination of annual reports of the Administering Authorities on the administration of Trust Territories for the year ended 30 June 1966:

(a) Nauru (continued) (T/1659, T/1662, T/L.1120)

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QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE TRUST TERRITORY AND REPLIES OF THE REPRESENTATIVE AND THE SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ADMINISTERING AUTHORITY AND OF THE ADVISERS TO THE SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE (concluded)

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Reseigh, special representative of the Administering Authority for the Trust Territory of Nauru, and Mr. De Roburt

and Mr. Bop, advisers to the special representative, took places at the Council table.

1. Mr. McHENRY (United States of America) said that his delegation would not ask questions about Nauru's political future, since the special representative and Mr. De Roburt had described the situation in that regard in their statements and had indicated that the representatives of the Nauruans and of the Administering Authority had agreed to resume negotiations shortly. The Nauruan delegation to the conference in Canberra seemed to have been well prepared. In connexion with the negotiations with the three partner Governments, he asked Mr. De Roburt what expert assistance Nauru had received or would like to receive from countries other than Australia.

2. Mr. DE ROBURT (Adviser to the Special Representative) said that Nauru had continued to receive assistance from various Australian experts, in particular a constitutional adviser—Mr. Davidson, a professor at the Australian National University—who had played a leading role in the drafting of the constitutions of Western Samoa and the Cook Islands. The Nauruans were satisfied with the aid given them by Australia and therefore needed none from other countries.

3. Mr. McHENRY (United States of America) recalled that the special representative had estimated that in twenty-six years Nauru would have a trust fund of some \$400 million, plus \$24 million annual interest derived from royalties from the phosphate industry. He asked Mr. De Roburt whether he accepted those figures. He also wished to know whether the Nauruans had envisaged the possibility of drastic changes in the phosphate market, which might reduce the income they could expect to receive.

4. Mr. DE ROBURT (Adviser to the Special Representative) said he could not for the moment confirm the accuracy of the figures given, which seemed very high, or tell the Trusteeship Council exactly what they represented. However, it was difficult to say with certainty that the Nauruans' future needs could be met with the income from the phosphate industry. Substantial expenses would have to be incurred when Nauru attained independence. For example, it was well known that much of the water consumed by the inhabitants of Nauru was brought from Australia and New Zealand; at present, the water was transported cheaply by the ships which came to fetch the phosphate. Similarly, it would cost millions of dollars to lay an under-water cable for the island's communications. In fact, the cost of association with the rest of the world might be beyond Nauru's means.

5. The question of drastic changes in the phosphate market might arise, for instance, when natural phosphate was replaced by synthetic substitutes. However, Nauru had been told that Australian phosphate re-

quirements, which it was to satisfy, would be increasing.

6. Mr. McHENRY (United States of America) thought that those replies showed the need for Nauru to take steps to diversify its economy and procure income from sources other than the phosphate industry.

7. The documents circulated to the members of the Council by the Australian delegation indicated that the population of Nauru might quite soon be 10,000 inhabitants. He wondered whether the Nauru Local Government Council had considered ways of limiting the island's population growth.

8. Mr. DE ROBURT (Adviser to the Special Representative) replied that the Local Government Council, although aware of the importance of the problem, had not yet done anything about it.

9. Mr. McHENRY (United States of America) asked whether Nauruans had ever lived on or farmed the unworked phosphate lands.

10. Mr. DE ROBURT (Adviser to the Special Representative) replied that previously the Nauruan population had lived exclusively off what they could pick or fish and that the trees growing on the phosphate plateau had provided them with material to build their homes. However, since the deposits had begun to be worked and the population had derived benefits from them, the Nauruans no longer lived on the phosphate lands or farmed them.

11. In reply to a further question from Mr. McHENRY (United States of America), Mr. DE ROBURT (Adviser to the Special Representative) said that, so long as they had the means to do so, the Nauruans would continue to live as they were doing at present and would not revert to their old habits.

12. Mr. McHENRY (United States of America) said it was recognized that, at present, the Nauruans wanted to stay on their island, especially in view of the difficulties of settling elsewhere. However, the Nauruans might for some reason change their minds in the future. He asked whether, that being so, it was wise at the present time to embark on the rehabilitation of all the worked-out lands and whether it would not be preferable to do as other countries had done and follow a more conservative mining process.

13. Mr. DE ROBURT (Adviser to the Special Representative) said that the question had been raised on several occasions by the representatives of the partner Governments. The Nauru Local Government Council had considered the matter at length and its reply was to be found in the documents which had been circulated to the members of the Trusteeship Council. There were several ways of carrying out the rehabilitation programme but the point was that whatever was done would be costly. The Nauru Local Government Council would have to take care not to squander the profits it would derive from the phosphate industry—its only source of income—if it did not want to be in difficulty when the time came to rehabilitate the lands.

14. Mr. RESEIGH (Special Representative) said that the Committee Appointed to Investigate the Possibilities of Rehabilitation of Mined Phosphate Lands had indicated in its report that the necessary machinery

should be obtained for levelling the surface of the ground. The cost of that operation would be relatively low (some \$4,000 per acre) in comparison with the cost of covering the land with a layer of soil transported from elsewhere.

15. Mr. SHAW (United Kingdom) asked whether the Nauruans depended entirely on imported water and what the situation had been in that regard before the extraction of phosphates had begun.

16. Mr. DE ROBURT (Adviser to the Special Representative) said that Nauru was truly dependent on imported water, as local supplies were quite insufficient. Each dwelling had a 1,100-gallon tank, but if there was a drought of more than three months it was necessary to draw on the facilities of the British Phosphate Commissioners. The Nauru Local Government Council had considered the problem, and the increase in phosphate royalties would be used to buy prefabricated tanks with a capacity of 3,000 gallons in Australia.

17. With regard to food supplies, Nauru was very largely dependent on imports.

18. Mr. RESEIGH (Special Representative) said that the experts on the rehabilitation of mined phosphate lands had suggested in their report that, when the air strip on Nauru was extended, a rain catchment system should be constructed, together with galleries under the air strip to reduce evaporation. That project would be perfectly practicable.

19. Mr. SHAW (United Kingdom) said, with regard to the question of the settlement of the Nauruan people elsewhere, that his delegation had understood at the last session of the Council that the Nauruan leaders had not definitely excluded that possibility as a long-term solution. He asked the special representative and his adviser whether the position of the Nauruan leaders had changed.

20. Mr. RESEIGH (Special Representative) said that the Administering Authority remained ready to consider any specific proposal from the Nauru Local Government Council concerning resettlement.

21. Mr. DE ROBURT (Adviser to the Special Representative) said that the position of the Local Government Council had not changed since the last session; as he had stated at the 1285th meeting of the Trusteeship Council, the Nauruan leaders considered that, after the failure of their negotiations with the partner Governments concerning resettlement, their people had no alternative but to remain on the island. That position was clear also from the comments of the Local Government Council on the report of the Committee Appointed to Investigate the Possibilities of Rehabilitation of Mined Phosphate Lands. If the United Kingdom representative meant resettlement of a kind which would involve the loss of the Nauruans' national identity, their reply was a categorical no.

22. Mr. SHAW (United Kingdom) noted that, in its comments on the report of the committee of experts, the Nauru Local Government Council had said that it was prepared to assume responsibility for rehabilitating mined land, once it was receiving all the income from the mines. He asked whether the Council, before declaring its readiness to assume what would probably

be a heavy and permanent burden, had sought the advice of competent independent experts.

23. Mr. DE ROBURT (Adviser to the Special Representative) said that the Nauruans had requested the advice of well-known Australian economic advisers.

24. Mr. SHAW (United Kingdom), referring to the general elections to the Local Government Council scheduled for December, asked Head Chief De Roburt whether he anticipated the emergence of political parties advocating different programmes and whether the agreements concerning the phosphate industry and the political future of Nauru would be an election issue that might affect the voters' choice.

25. Mr. DE ROBURT (Adviser to the Special Representative) replied in the negative. Elections were not preceded by an election campaign in Nauru, as they were in larger and more advanced countries; the voters usually voted for the candidates they felt would best represent their interests, and they relied on their elected leaders to settle major long-term problems.

26. Mr. SHAW (United Kingdom), turning to the question of Nauru's foreign relations after independence, asked what were the views of the Nauruan leaders on that point, particularly with regard to Nauru's becoming a member of international organizations and the defence of the island.

27. Mr. DE ROBURT (Adviser to the Special Representative) drew the Council's attention to the statement which the Australian delegation had circulated as an annex to the special representative's statement and in which the position of the Nauruan leaders on that point was set out. He did not think that the Nauruan Government would particularly close relations with other countries, apart from Australia, New Zealand, Japan, the United States and a few European countries, with which Nauru traded but in which it would not need to be represented. The Nauruan Government would certainly have a mission in Australia, whose phosphate needs it had undertaken to supply until the mines were exhausted, and its liaison office at Melbourne could no doubt also take care of business with New Zealand.

28. With regard to international organizations, the Nauruans did not think that their country should join the United Nations, since that would involve too much expense for so small a country. However, they would like Nauru to belong to the South Pacific Commission, if that seemed likely to be useful to it, and they would certainly want it to join the British Commonwealth.

29. With regard to defence, the Nauruan leaders were ready to listen to any good advice which they might be given, but the problem did not seem to be vital at the moment, and the experience of the Second World War had shown that if a great Power wanted to attack the island no other Power could really stop it.

30. Mr. LIN (China) asked whether the Nauruans had not been guided in their decision on the question of possible resettlement by an emotional attachment to their native land as much as by the wish to preserve their national identity.

31. Mr. DE ROBURT (Adviser to the Special Representative) replied in the affirmative. The idea of resettlement had been mooted only as a solution to the problems arising from the working of the phosphate deposits covering four fifths of the area of the Territory, which meant that the population must expect eventually to have the use of only one fifth.

GENERAL DEBATE

32. Mr. SHAKHOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) stated that his delegation firmly supported the position of the representatives of the Nauru Local Government Council who were calling for the Territory's independence by 31 January 1968 at the latest. As to the future constitutional status, his delegation held that it was for the Nauruans alone to decide on the structure of their institutions. Their elected representatives should establish how all legislative and executive powers were to be allotted, free from any interference or pressure from outside, in ways to be decided by the constitutional convention. Questions concerning foreign relations must be entirely the concern of the Nauruans, as their delegation had stated, and no agreement must be made in that connexion without their knowledge. Their desire for sovereign status must not be subordinated to such conditions as those proposed by the Administering Authority, and the Nauruan people must have complete freedom of decision in all matters.

33. Turning to economic affairs, he observed that the exploitation of the Territory's phosphates had for many years enriched the colonial Powers, which had pillaged Nauru under inequitable agreements. Those Powers were now planning to continue to control the island and thus to go on collecting the profits from an output which, according to the Secretariat working paper on conditions in the Trust Territory of Nauru (T/L.1120), had been worth some \$A18 million in 1965-1966. The British Phosphate Commissioners had collected a colossal amount in that way since 1919, and the Nauruans were rightly claiming compensation for the losses they had suffered and restoration of their sovereign rights over their natural resources, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 2226 (XXI). His delegation unreservedly supported the aims set forth in that resolution, as it applied to the transfer of the phosphate industry to the Nauruan people and the rehabilitation of the land there. The return of their rights to the Nauruans entailed not only the transfer of all property rights but also an obligation for the Administering Authority to restore the layer of cultivable soil at its own expense.

34. In his delegation's view, the Administering Authority must abandon any scheming to induce the Nauruans to settle elsewhere.

35. Mr. McCARTHY (Australia), speaking in exercise of his right of reply, said that Australia was not bringing any pressure to bear on the Nauruan people, with whom it was in complete agreement. His Government had done all it could to ensure that the inhabitants of the Territory fully understood the proposals made to them. The special representative had duly informed the Council (1313th meeting) that full control and management of the phosphate industry would be

transferred to the Nauruans. As to the question of resettlement, the Administering Authority was ensuring that no possibility for the future was overlooked by the Nauruans. Far from engaging in scheming or exerting pressure, it was merely endeavouring to offer the Nauruans a choice. In that connexion, he pointed out that, at the end of his statement, the special representative had said that his Government was planning to offer the Nauruans the opportunity to live freely in Australia, if need be.

36. Mr. SHAKHOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) observed that, as far as the economic exploitation of the Territory was concerned, the representative of Australia spoke only of the future, without refuting what had been truly said about the past. On the question whether or not there was any scheming by the Administering Authority in regard to the resettlement of the Nauruans, a statement that Australia had abandoned that solution in the face of the determination of the people concerned could not cover up its efforts to keep open the possibility of eroding the national identity of the Nauruans, for example by putting forward its new proposal concerning residence rights in Australia.

37. Mr. McCARTHY (Australia) said that the proposal in question was not new. It was an example of the advantages which Australia was prepared to grant to the Nauruans if they so desired.

38. Mr. McDOWELL (New Zealand), commenting on the Soviet Union representative's remarks, said that he was intrigued to hear a reference to the right of colonial peoples to decide their own future from a Power which pursued a policy of integrating and exploiting territories which it had seized.

39. Mr. SHAKHOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that he categorically rejected the New

Zealand representative's extravagant and irrelevant imputation, which was clearly inspired by a third party.

40. Mr. McDOWELL (New Zealand) said that it was an undeniable fact of history that, alone among the great Powers which had acquired territory in the course of the Second World War, the Soviet Union had failed to place a single one of those territories under the aegis of Chapters XI, XII or XIII of the United Nations Charter.

Records of the Council's proceedings (continued)*

41. Mr. McCARTHY (Australia) said that his delegation, which had to make the final statement in the discussion of Nauru, regretted the lack of verbatim records of statements, which made its task particularly difficult.

42. Mr. McHENRY (United States of America) wished formally to notify the Secretariat that, because verbatim records were not available, his delegation would not be able to submit corrections to the provisional summary records within the usual time limit.

43. After a discussion in which Mr. RIFAI (Secretary of the Council), Mr. SHAW (United Kingdom), Mr. SHAKHOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) and Mr. McCARTHY (Australia) took part, the PRESIDENT asked the Secretary of the Trusteeship Council to draw the attention of the Under-Secretary for Conference Services, as a matter of urgency, to the importance of ensuring that the Council did not find itself in such difficulty at any future session.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.

* Resumed from the 1308th meeting.