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BUDGET ESTIMATES FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 1957

Revised Estimates for Section 16

Construction of a Television-Film Studio

(Report of the Secretary-General)

1. In the original plans for the construction of the Permanent Headquarters, space was reserved in a large area beneath the Assembly Hall for a Production Centre to be used for the origination of television, radio and film productions. It was contemplated that three full-sized studios would be included, with auxiliary control rooms, dressing-rooms and property storage areas. Although television was then in its infancy, the growth of this medium of communication was foreseen, and therefore provision was also made for a video recording and processing centre in the same area. The remaining element of the plan covered a small auditorium for public screenings and lectures of the type now being given in Conference Room 4 and other locations under makeshift arrangements.
2. When it became necessary to make radical reductions in facilities for the new buildings, in order to remain within budgetary limitations, all plans for this Production Centre area were cancelled, and it was left completely open and unfinished. It now exists as a large and relatively unusable space in a key location, with bare walls and floors, inadequate electrical and sprinkler facilities, and without soundproofing or air-conditioning. This has meant that all operations originally planned for the Centre have had to be forced into

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makeshift and temporary locations with inadequate facilities, in spite of growing demands and increased interest in United Nations productions on the part of governmental and commercial distributors, particularly in the television field.

3. Until 1956, the efforts to meet production needs through ad hoc arrangements were sufficient to enable the Organization to fulfil its immediate commitments without undue loss of revenue or inflated production costs. The lack of suitable studio and related facilities created many difficulties and resulted in certain extra costs, but it was not until recent months that the situation reached a critical stage. In June 1956, the engineers in charge of television, film and radio operations made a special examination of the results being achieved and the costs involved. They pointed out that in the light of known and increasing requirements the use of such locations as the South Lounge and the Trusteeship Council Chamber for production purposes was no longer a suitable answer to the problem. Not only were lighting arrangements and other technical facilities unsatisfactory, but many man-hours had to be expended in conducting experiments to secure the best possible approximation of a studio and in moving heavy equipment in and out of the temporary areas. Scheduled meetings and other events requiring the use of such space have also made it increasingly difficult to improvise productions in these areas. The result was that production costs were much in excess of those that might be considered as normal for this type of operation, in addition to which revenue was being lost because of the inability to meet the demands of users. As an example of the latter point, a large governmental broadcasting corporation, which had planned to purchase a series of twelve programmes in 1956, reduced the number to six because of the inadequate facilities available.

4. Apart from the Production Centre space referred to in paragraphs 1 and 2 above, further study reveals that there is no existing space at Headquarters which can be adapted at minimum cost to meet the basic requirements of the operation. Accordingly, an engineering survey of this space has been undertaken in order to determine the minimum work necessary for creating a simplified studio that can provide for the most urgent filming and live television needs without necessarily representing implementation of the original, comparatively elaborate and costly plans.

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5. This survey was undertaken with two points in mind: (a) to provide for the construction of one studio for essential filming for television and motion pictures and for live interviews for radio and television, with an adjacent room for video recording activities, and (b) to ensure that the construction work for minimum studio purposes should be of such a nature that further improvements could be effected at a future date, without appreciable loss of any initial investment. A minimum estimate of \$150,000 was arrived at for the necessary work. As compared with the original plans this represented the elimination of the small auditorium, two studios and the dressing-rooms and property storage rooms.
6. In order to reduce still further the cost to Member States in 1957, the Secretary-General has decided not to request funds at this time for the video recording and processing centre, on the understanding that proposals in this regard might be put forward in a subsequent year as circumstances warrant. Proposed expenditures in 1957 would therefore cover the construction of one television studio, at a cost estimated at \$50,000. This reduced estimate also reflects considerable revision in specifications, so that they now call for only rough finishing of walls and ceilings, basic acoustical treatment, minimum sprinkler installations, modified air-conditioning and duct work, and the simplest style of studio lighting.
7. Since television activities are now in a state of rapid growth and change, it is not possible to foresee the precise impact that improved studio facilities will have on revenues. It is certain that operating costs will be lessened as a result of improved arrangements, and governments and commercial users have indicated that they will be ready to expand United Nations coverage as soon as facilities permit. In the judgement of the engineers and technicians concerned, the expenditure of \$50,000 in 1957 would be recovered in the form of lessened costs and higher revenues within a period of five years.
8. With the above considerations in mind, the Secretary-General proposes that an additional amount of \$50,000 for "alterations to premises" be appropriated to the 1957 budget under Section 16, Chapter II (Common Services). He is of the opinion that in the normal course of events it will be necessary for the United Nations to incur costs for the purposes outlined in the present report, and that delay in constructing the minimum facilities now envisaged could well involve higher expenditures in the future as well as a loss of income in the intervening period.
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