



Thirteenth session
FOURTH COMMITTEE
Agenda item 13

THE FUTURE OF THE TRUST TERRITORIES OF THE CAMEROONS
UNDER FRENCH ADMINISTRATION AND THE CAMEROONS UNDER
UNITED KINGDOM ADMINISTRATION

Statement made by Dr. E.M.L. Endeley, Leader of the Opposition
in the Southern Cameroons House of Assembly at the 850th
meeting of the Fourth Committee, on 25 February 1959

Note by the Secretariat: The following statement is communicated
to members of the Fourth Committee in accordance with a decision
taken by the Committee at its 849th meeting.

I am grateful for this opportunity to elucidate some of the points on which representatives have put questions. I believe that my statement was lucid enough to explain my point of view, and I do not want to take this as an opportunity to make a second speech.

With reference to the questions asked by the representative of New Zealand on the qualifications necessary for either Nigerians or French Cameroonians to be registered for the plebiscite, I have this to say:

The conditions should be similar to those recommended for the Togoland plebiscite. I believe that the United Nations has already had experience in conducting one plebiscite under conditions similar to those likely to be found in the Southern Cameroons. Any person who proves residence for two or more years in the Cameroons and appears to have a stake in the Territory should be allowed to vote. For men, I consider that the payment of tax would be a very useful method of determining those who have been long resident in the Territory. I must confess, however, that it would be very difficult to use this qualification in determining whether or not women had been long resident in the Territory. In any case, the

qualifications should be identical for French Cameroonians and Nigerians. I think that on this basis it would be possible for the United Nations to meet the wishes of the two conflicting parties.

The question of birth will be extremely difficult to ascertain, since there is no regular registration of births in the Territory. An investigation by the Administering Authority on the spot, in consultation with the political parties in the Territory, may be useful in determining the essential qualifications for the plebiscite.

On the question of the best time to hold a plebiscite, I agree with my colleague, Mr. Foncha, that this should follow immediately on the compilation of the register, which should be supervised by the United Nations and take place perhaps in the dry season. We found the same difficulty in compiling the register for the last elections, because about the middle of the year the rains are so heavy that everything in the Territory is brought to a standstill; it is only in the dry season that it is possible for registration officers to travel to the hinterland in the Territory.

With reference to the question of ethnic zones which I raised in reference to the qualifications and conditions necessary for conducting both the registration and the plebiscite, I would say this: My intention was to suggest a means by which the results could be easily analysed, division by division, apart from the total voting, in order to see what percentage of voters in each administrative division voted one way or the other. Paragraphs 30 to 33 of the Visiting Mission's report on the Southern Cameroons under British administration point out that the divisions roughly correspond to ethnic groups, and I think that an analysis of the ethnic grouping would give a better view of the feelings and wishes of the people.

In answer to the request of the representative of Venezuela concerning the implications of paragraph 201 of the Mission's report, I should like to reassure him and other Members of the United Nations that, so far as I know, the Cameroons people hold the United Nations in the highest esteem. There was no intention whatsoever to cast any slur. I was generally assumed that, if the General Assembly decided on a plebiscite, it would be automatic that the United Nations would also supervise this plebiscite.

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My answer to the question posed by the representative of Iraq is that paragraph 8 of my statement was specifically directed to the UFC, whose activities towards influencing opinion in the British sector started around 1956 and 1957. I regret it if I gave the wrong impression - namely, that I was covering other parties in the French-administered zone.

By substantial majority, I meant that, in order to prove conclusively that the people sincerely desired a change from their existing status, only a two-thirds majority would be decisive; on the other hand, if the margin for a change was far below that, it would perhaps be necessary to conduct a second plebiscite, as would be the case if there were a deadlock. All these factors must be taken into consideration.

I do not agree that the people will decide rightly if three choices are put before them. In my opinion, a negative vote for continued association would be indicative of a desire to secede, and a negative vote for unification would be indicative of a desire for continued association. To put in an intermediate question would certainly confuse the voters.

I think that most of the other questions have been answered by my colleague, Mr. Foncha, and I do not intend to take up the Committee's time unduly.
