

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

SUB-COMMISSION ON FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AND OF THE PRESS

FIRST SESSION

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE FIFTEENTH MEETING

Held at Lake Success, New York, on 28 May 1947, at 11:00 a.m.

Present:

Chairman:	Mr. G. J. van Heuven Goedhart	(Netherlands)
Vice-Chairman:	Mr. Lev Sychrava	(Czechoslovakia)
Rapporteur:	Mr. Geo. V. Ferguson	(Canada)
	Mr. P. H. Chang	(China)
	Mr. A. Géraud	(France)
	Mr. C. A. R. Christensen	(Norway)
	Mr. S. Lopez	(Philippine Republic)
	Mr. A. R. K. Mackenzie	(United Kingdom)
	Mr. Z. Chafee	(United States)
	Mr. R. Fontaina	(Uruguay)
	Mr. J. M. Lomakin	(Union of Soviet Socialist Republics)

Representatives of Specialized Agencies:

Mr. W. Farr	(UNESCO)
Mr. A. Mercey	(WHO)

Representative of Non-Governmental Organizations:

Miss Toni Sender	(AFL)
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Secretariat:

Prof. J. P. Humphrey	(Secretary of the Commission)
Mr. C. A. Hogan	

1. Proposed "Item I" of the Conference Agenda

The CHAIRMAN called the attention of Members to the Provisional Draft Agenda prepared by the Secretariat and referred to the proposal of the Member from the Philippine Republic regarding the objectives of the press, radio and

films. Accepting this proposal as a guide to the discussion on the general

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principle of freedom of information, he said he wondered whether it should be included in the Agenda.

Mr. MACKENZIE (United Kingdom) said the Agenda would be incomplete were an item on the basic concept of freedom of information not included, in accordance with the terms of reference. Mr. Mackenzie suggested taking Section I of Mr. Cruikshank's Draft (document E/CN.4/Sub.1/12) as Item I of the Draft Agenda with whatever amendments were necessary.

The CHAIRMAN read the revised text of Mr. Cruikshank's Section I as follows:

"General Discussion on the Principles of Freedom of Information taking into consideration the views on the subject expressed by the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the Commission on Human Rights and the Sub-Commission on Freedom of Information and of the Press, and other organizations working in this field."

Mr. FONTAINA (Uruguay) suggested that UNESCO should be specially mentioned in this Item.

Mr. SYCHRAVA (Czechoslovakia) said that special reference should be made to the Resolutions of the International Congress of Journalists on this subject.

Mr. MACKENZIE (United Kingdom) said he thought that it might be advisable to name only agencies of the United Nations. If the name of one other organization were mentioned, a long list would result.

Mr. SYCHRAVA (Czechoslovakia) said that since the journalists were particularly interested in this subject it would be very useful to mention the International Organization of Journalists.

Mr. LOMAKIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) suggested that the World Federation of Trade Unions represented millions of workers, should be specially mentioned.

Miss SENDER (AFL) called the attention of Members to the absence of the representative of the WFTU at the table, and stated that a great number of

/members

members should not mean greater privileges.

Mr. MACKENZIE (United Kingdom) recalled the early resolution of the Sub-Commission stipulating that these organizations would be invited, on their request, to participate in preparations and to attend the Conference. Nevertheless, he thought it would be desirable to mention UNESCO and the IOJ. The term "other organizations" would cover WFTU and other organizations.

Mr. FARR (UNESCO) quoting Article 1 of the Constitution of UNESCO, and also referred to the Philippine resolution adopted by the General Assembly, which specifically mentioned UNESCO. He said he failed to see the reasons for putting UNESCO in the same category as non-governmental organizations.

Mr. LOPEZ (Philippines) formally moved to include UNESCO in Mr. Mackenzie's proposal.

Mr. FONTAINA (Uruguay) seconded the motion.

Mr. LOMAKIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) introduced another motion for making no mention of any organization and deleting the words "working in this field".

Mr. CHAFEE (United States) maintained that the general phraseology should give equal opportunity to all of these organizations to show their readiness to help.

Mr. SYCHRAVA (Czechoslovakia) suggested substituting the words "other organizations invited to the Conference" for "other organizations working in this field".

Mr. MACKENZIE (United Kingdom) said that he would be ready to accept such wording as "other organizations taking part in the Conference" provided that this suggestion met Mr. Lomakin's objection.

Mr. LOPEZ (Philippines) said he feared that Mr. Mackenzie's suggestion might lead to inconsistency in the phraseology of this item.

Mr. LOMAKIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) withdrew his original motion and suggested deleting the words "other organizations" adding "UNESCO and WFTU".

/Mr. MACKENZIE

Mr. MACKENZIE (United Kingdom) said he preferred the original amendment of Mr. Lomakin.

The CHAIRMAN put Mr. Lomakin's last amendment to a vote. Only one vote was cast in its favour and the amendment was declared lost.

The Chairman then called a vote on the amendment of Mr. Lopez mentioning UNESCO only. The amendment was lost by 4 votes to 8.

DECISION: By a majority vote of 8 the original proposal was adopted regarding:

"General discussion on the principle of freedom of information taking into consideration of the views on the subject expressed by the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the Commission on Human Rights and the Sub-Commission on Freedom of Information and of the Press, and other organizations working in this field."

2. A Definition of Information

The CHAIRMAN, referred to the scope of the term "information" as raised by the representative of UNESCO, and submitted a definition for discussion, which read:

"Gathering and transmitting news and views about actual events and situations, and disseminating them to the public in printed form, by broadcasts or by newsreels."

The Chairman explained that his definition included also books and literature dealing with current events, and that his suggestion was not intended to be an item of the Conference Agenda but a recommendation to the Economic and Social Council.

Mr. MACKENZIE (United Kingdom) said he thought the word "events" should cover speeches, which also constituted events.

Mr. FERGUSON (Canada) said that the Chairman's definition might be included in the Report of the Sub-Commission, and eventually placed on the Agenda.

Mr. CHAFEE (United States) suggested substituting "current" for "actual".

/Mr. GERAUD

Mr. GERAUD (France) suggested using "contemporary" instead of "current", since the latter excluded future situations.

Mr. SYCHRAVA (Czechoslovakia) was in favour of retaining "actual".

The CHAIRMAN accepted Mr. Géraud's suggestion.

Mr. FARR (UNESCO) remarked that the Chairman's definition widened the scope of the Conference, which the Sub-Commission had decided to limit.

Mr. LOMAKIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) commented on the relationship between history and events, and proposed deferring this matter to later discussion.

Mr. MACKENZIE (United Kingdom) supported Mr. Lomakin's suggestion.

Mr. FERGUSON (Canada) proposed that a Sub-Committee of three be appointed to formulate a draft on this item.

DECISION: The Members from the United States, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and France, together with the representative of UNESCO were named to the Sub-Committee.

3. Committee Structure of the Conference

The CHAIRMAN explained that the Secretariat had suggested five committees to be called principal committees: (1) a main committee of the whole; (2) a press committee; (3) a radio committee; (4) a motion picture committee; and (5) a legal committee. He asked Mr. Chafee to present his plan for a committee structure on a functional basis.

Mr. CHAFEE (United States) submitted the following text:

"(a) A main committee, which would consider principles of freedom of information and general problems common to the tasks of the other committees;

"(b) A committee on the gathering of news and information. This would consider matters under Item 2 of the provisional draft agenda.

"(c) A committee on the international transmission of news and information. This would consider matters under Item 3 of the provisional draft agenda.

"(d) A committee on implementation of right of all peoples to receive

/accurate and

accurate and comprehensive information. This would consider matters under Items 4 and 6 of the provisional draft agenda.

"(e) A committee on law and continuing machinery. This would consider matters under Items 5 and 7 of the provisional draft agenda, as well as legal problems which may be presented by other committees in the course of their deliberations."

Mr. Chafee pointed out that his proposal was formulated on the basis of the functions of the committees, while that of the Secretariat was classified according to industries in the field of information. For the sake of convenience, one could be called the functional type of committee and the other the industrial type. Each had its advantages and disadvantages. The functional committee structure corresponded more closely to the items on the provisional draft agenda, and one of the main purposes of the suggestion was to avoid overburdening some committees.

Mr. FARR (UNESCO) stated that UNESCO would have avoided many a difficulty with work had it a functional set-up. Speaking from experience, he would, therefore, support Mr. Chafee's proposal.

Mr. LOPEZ (Philippines) said he thought that the functional division of committees was convenient and logical. However, it would not be easy for delegations to select and assign their delegates according to these functional committees.

Mr. CHAFEE (United States) agreed that the industrial arrangement of committees had an advantage in this respect, and that the members of any committee in the same industry would have a common interest. Any scheme, however, would involve difficulties.

Mr. MERCEY (WHO) remarked that the structure of committees would probably affect the composition of the delegations.

Prof. HUMPHREY (Secretariat) reminded the Sub-Commission of the fact that the proposal of the Secretariat was drawn up before the Sub-Commission convened and that it had not been intended to lay down any definite form for the Conference.

/Mr. CHAFEE

Mr. CHAFEE (United States) remarked that the United States Department of State preferred the functional structure to industrial structure.

The CHAIRMAN speaking as a Member was in favour of Mr. Chafee's proposal.

Mr. MACKENZIE (United Kingdom) asked whether Mr. Chafee suggested a steering committee in addition to the five committees.

Mr. CHAFEE (United States) answered in the affirmative. He thought perhaps Members might like to consult their governments on this question and that it would be better to postpone a vote on it.

The meeting adjourned at 1:00 p.m.
