

AD HOC COMMITTEE ON PROPOSED ECONOMIC COMMISSION
FOR LATIN AMERICA

Statement by Dr. Alberto Lleras Gamargo, Director-General of the
Pan American Union

The presence of the Director-General of the Pan American Union at the meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee on the proposed Economic Commission for Latin America has no other aim than that he should attend the discussions of the Committee with the object of reporting upon them to the Inter-American Economic and Social Council, the views of which were expressed in the resolution which the Director-General transmitted to the Chairman of the Committee, Ambassador Stolk. It is not the Director-General's responsibility to negotiate or discuss the terms of eventual collaboration between the two organizations and neither his presence nor the statements he may make within the Committee are binding on the Inter-American Economic and Social Council in its views concerning possible forms of collaboration. Only this Council and the Governing Board of the Pan American Union are competent to determine the degree and form of co-operation of the Pan American Union with other technical bodies and other organizations.

From the discussions which preceded the resolution of the Inter-American Economic and Social Council it is clear that this body, keenly desirous of maintaining close bonds of co-operation between its work and that of the United Nations Economic and Social Council, as its own statutes prescribe, supports the immediate creation of the Economic Commission for Latin America but makes its support subject to one condition; that there shall be co-ordination between the work of the two organizations and the respective agencies. This does not mean, of course, that the United Nations Economic and Social Council may not act as it thinks best, nor that the Inter-American Council claims to interfere with the scope of its activities. No. But, as in the Economic and Social Council it was considered that the Ad Hoc Committee should take into account the viewpoints of some other bodies and organizations, among them the Pan American Union, the representatives of the American Governments who meet in the Inter-American Council, before giving their opinion,

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thought it fitting to consult their Governments - which are, moreover, the same American Governments as represented in the United Nations - to find out their opinion. It is to be assumed that the opinion expressed within the Inter-American Council, after the Governments have been consulted, will be that which prevails in the Economic and Social Council among those same Governments whose votes must be considered decisive in creating the Commission and formulating the regulations which will control its functioning. When the Inter-American Council makes its vote in favour of creation of the Commission subject to the condition that good co-ordination should exist between it and the Inter-American Council itself, it simply means that if such co-ordination were not established, its opinion would be against the immediate creation of the Commission. Or, in other words, that the American Governments consulted by the Inter-American Council would probably vote in the Economic and Social Council, in February, in different ways, according to whether the Commission was to comply with the conditions which they suggested when consulted, or whether it would depart from them. Obviously therefore, in this special case, over and above the natural reasons which make it advisable that there should always be co-ordination between the two organizations, there is another and weightier reason: if, as it appears, the creation of the Commission depends on the interest taken in it in the United Nations Economic and Social Council by the American countries, the opinion expressed by their representatives in the Inter-American Council, after consulting their respective Governments, is of decisive importance with regard to the functions and resolutions of this Ad Hoc Committee.

The Inter-American Economic and Social Council, created prior to the United Nations Economic and Social Council, at the Mexico Conference, but precisely with the aim of collaborating more closely with that body, already provided for in the Dumbarton Oaks proposals, is not, as has been said during the present debates, a provisional organ. It is a permanent organ and if it depends on what is decided at the Bogota Conference, the reason is that every organ of the Inter-American System depends on the Inter-American Conferences, which are the constitutional bodies of our System. Its functions are well known. Its very statute, framed by the Governing Board, may be the object of future modifications tending to extend its functions, but not to limit them. The American Governments agreed, during recent consultations, that the Bogota Conference should not devote itself to framing the statute, but that the final elaboration of its statute and those of the other Councils to be created at the Bogota Conference should be left to the Governing Board. There is, therefore, not much doubt as to what is the present and future status of the Inter-American

Council or as to its survival with the functions that it already fulfils. Moreover, the American Governments sought recently to extend these functions by entrusting to it the task of preparing the bases of Inter-American economic co-operation at the Rio de Janeiro Conference.

Having clarified these points, I should like to add that as I understand it, the concern of the American Governments, as expressed in the resolution of the Inter-American Council concerning the establishment of the Commission for Latin America, is to avoid any sterile repetition by this new body of the work which the Inter-American Council already does and with which it is entrusted. It appears that the majority of the American Governments do not consider it impossible to avoid duplication of work, though some, the minority, are of the opposite opinion. Moreover, most of the American Governments seem to agree that the Commission for Latin America would have a special function of its own which the Inter-American Council could not fulfil, as for instance, to establish clearly, after thorough investigation, what could be done to re-establish or establish the relations of economic co-operation between Latin America and the rest of the world, which have been almost all destroyed or seriously impaired by the war. As regards the relations of economic co-operation between the American countries, it seems to be understood that no one would wish to entrust the task of examining and fostering these to a new body, as that is, precisely, the normal function of the Inter-American Economic and Social Council.

In my opinion, the American Governments are well aware that the present problem does not consist in setting up a new body to do the work which an existing one was not doing to perfection. By adopting such a solution we should be making ourselves a prey to one of the most serious errors and dangers of international organizations: that of trying to solve every difficulty by setting up a new body. No American Government is contemplating depriving the Inter-American Economic and Social Council of a single one of its functions, nor is it contemplating abolishing so essential an organ of the Inter-American System. Of this I am quite certain, inasmuch as barely a month ago, when these Governments were consulted on the establishment of the new Councils of the Pan American Union and on the maintenance of the existing ones, they declared their desire to maintain it. It is entirely erroneous, therefore, to suppose that the American Governments, or in particular the Latin American, are thinking that the Economic Commission for Latin America might take the place of the Inter-American Economic and Social Council. And we must also conclude that none of them imagined that, if these two bodies were to exist, they should both deal with precisely the same matters.

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Naturally the terms of reference of the two bodies, as conceived in the statutes of the Inter-American Council and the provisional draft of those of the Commission for Latin America, are very wide, and have a certain vagueness which inevitably leads them to overlap. On the other hand, in the preliminary report on this Commission, areas of differentiation are established which do not appear later with sufficient emphasis in the conclusions of the report. For instance: the provisional nature of the Commission for Latin America, with its immediate, urgent and limited task; the emphasis on its activity in the field of Latin America's economic relations with the rest of the world; or the examination of specific subjects, such as immigration, which could be better studied and perhaps even solved with the co-operation of the countries from which immigrants would come. But even so I think that some efficient means should be arranged to prevent any possible duplication of work now and in the future. I think too that if such means are not established, duplication will be inevitable, and the American Governments will end by losing interest in the work and investigations of one or other of the two bodies, or both, if they discover that both are working on the same lines and asking their co-operation for the same purposes.

As will be seen from the proposal by the Inter-American Council, the suggestion which expresses the feelings of the American Governments is to preserve the Inter-American System and allow it to continue its regional work, retaining its independence and sphere of authority. All these governments are loyal and enthusiastic members of the United Nations, but they reached the conclusion, not recently but already at Chapultepec, that these two bodies are not incompatible and that there is no unnecessary duplication between them. On the surface one might think that, concerning the creation of the Commission for Latin America, the American Governments would say that one cannot have too much of a good thing and that therefore a new body on the same lines as the existing one could not do any harm. Not so. They know very well that the American peoples and Congresses are constantly anxious to prevent any excessive increase in the cost of international organizations, with resulting obligations which might in the end become too heavy, especially for the large majority of the Latin-American Governments which have not unlimited resources at their disposal for their international work. The first signs of this anxiety are already visible in the constant concern to avoid duplication of effort. Later it may take other forms, like the reaction against the excessive bureaucracy which contributed so seriously

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to undermining the prestige of the League of Nations. And finally when prestige is undermined, reaction operates against the organizations themselves. Therefore, although the governments themselves do not daily demonstrate their concern in this respect, it is wise for international organizations to keep a very strict watch on their own activities in order to ensure that they are economic, effective and handsomely repay the financial efforts which they impose upon governments. In this sphere therefore, too much of a good thing is indeed harmful, and seriously so.

I think I interpret correctly the view of the Inter-American Economic and Social Council and accordingly that of the Governments which expressed themselves through it in the resolution in question, when I say that the Commission for Latin America ought from the outset to guard against any later deviation which would cause it to duplicate the functions of other international bodies. Its establishment ought to be conditioned by such a safeguard. I do not think this will be difficult if machinery for the consideration and solution of all problems of duplication which may arise, is set up at the beginning and if its use is compulsory. I do not propose to suggest any concrete formula, for to do so would be to enter the province of the Economic and Social Council's relations with the Pan American Union and is outside the purely informative capacity of my presence with the Commission today.
