

ECONOMIC AND EMPLOYMENT COMMISSION

THIRD SESSION

REPORT OF MR. JOHN DEUTSCH, THE COMMISSION'S REPRESENTATIVE
ON THE POPULATION COMMISSION

(Item 4 of the agenda, document E/CN.1/48/Rev.1)

"In the course of its second session, the Economic and Employment Commission elected Mr. John Deutsch, the member for Canada, as its representative on the Population Commission. Owing to the unavoidable absence of Mr. Deutsch at Geneva, Mr. H. Lukin Robinson was designated alternate and attended the meeting as observer for the Economic and Employment Commission.

A full account of the work of the session is contained in its report (document E/571). From the point of view of the Economic and Employment Commission, the subjects dealt with may be divided into two main groups. First, the development of population data and estimates; second, the analysis of population data and their relationship to economic and social factors.

In regard to the development of population data and estimates, the Population Commission:

1. Decided on the publication of a demographic year-book, an outline of contents of which is presented in Annex 1 of the report. The Commission formulated a flexible list of topics which should be covered by the year-book over a period of time. It is hoped that, in due course, the demographic year-book will become the main source and reference book for all who are concerned with international population problems. For the first issue, which it is hoped will be published in 1948, the Commission felt that world-wide coverage should be aimed at, but recognized that there would be limitations to what is practical in the time and with the resources available.

REC-21 Discussed the Economic and Social Council resolution urging Member Governments planning to take population censuses in or around 1950, to use comparable schedules as far as possible and

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requesting the Secretary-General to advise and assist Member Governments to that end. It is clear that the value of these censuses will be greater if their results are internationally comparable, and accordingly, the Commission requested the Secretary-General to make specific recommendations to Member Governments in order to ensure the best possible results. A standard minimum list of subjects proposed for 1950 censuses of population was drawn up and is presented in Annex 2 of the report. A supplementary list of subjects proposed for optional inclusion in 1950 censuses of population is presented in Annex 3 of the report.

3. Directed attention to the desirability of co-ordinating the extensive needs of the Secretariat and specialized agencies of the United Nations for population data and estimates for all countries of the world and for establishing a schedule of priorities in meeting these needs. A suggested scheme of priorities for work on population estimates is presented in Annex 4 of the report.

In regard to the second broad category of subjects dealt with by the Commission; namely, the analysis of population data and the relationship to economic and social factors, the Commission:

1. Examined the items on the Provisional Questionnaire of the Trusteeship Council relating to population, and expressed the hope that an opportunity will be given for revising these questions. It was felt that the questions needed clarification and elaboration and that in both the statement and questions, it would be desirable to take into account the varying situations in individual Trust Territories. At the present time it is understood that individual studies of the population of each Trust Territory are being undertaken by the Secretariat in its Population Division.

2. Considered means by which Member States could be encouraged to study certain inter-relationships of economic, social and population changes, as requested by Economic and Social Council Resolution 41 (IV), dealing with first, the inter-play of factors hindering the attainment of an adequate standard of living and cultural development; and second, the most favourable rate of population change from the economic and social points of view. The Commission recommended in this connection that the Secretary-General present for its consideration:

(a) Proposals for the selection of major demographic situations in typical economic and social settings for which
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study plans should be constructed.

'(b) A proposed plan of study for one or two major types of demographic situations in varied economic and social frameworks. It is suggested that the first type for which plans are made might well be that of a rather large population in an industrially undeveloped region, faced with the prospect of early industrial development and having high mortality and fertility rates, the latter having thus far shown no sign of substantial decline.'

It was suggested that these plans of study for each type be developed as fully as possible on the basis of representative population structures and their modes of change. The plans should:

'(a) Offer a concrete basis for the Commission's subsequent consideration of plans to be commended to Member States.

'(b) Offer practical illustrations of the technical problems to be met in collecting appropriate information and in analyzing the needed data for specific nations or regions and specific demographic, economic and social settings.

'(c) Provide, by carefully chosen examples, a useful preliminary insight into the nature of actual demographic problems to be met under varying typical economic and social situations in raising the standards of living and improving the health and cultural development of the population.'

3. Felt that it was desirable that work be initiated as soon as possible in the field of the development of comparability and quality of basic population statistics. In this connection it recommended to various organs of the United Nations the development of standards in classification and definitions for use in population statistics.

It should also be mentioned that the Commission reconsidered its original terms of reference, and recommended more specific terms for adoption by the Economic and Social Council. However, when this matter was discussed during the sixth session of the Council, the Council decided that the Commission 'should continue its work for the time being according to its original terms of reference and should reconsider proposed modification of its terms of reference in the light of views expressed in the Social Committee of the Council.'

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

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