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Chairman: Mr. Charles T. O. KING (Liberia).

Tribute to the memory of Mr. Leslie J. Carver

1. The CHAIRMAN, members of the Committee and the Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, paid tributes to the memory of Mr. Leslie J. Carver, Deputy Director of the Agency, who had given many years of devoted service to the refugees and had participated, as Acting Director of the Agency, in the Committee's work at previous sessions.

**AGENDA ITEM 27**

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (continued):

- (a) Report of the Director of the Agency (A/4213);
- (b) Proposals for the continuation of United Nations assistance to Palestine refugees: document submitted by the Secretary-General (A/4121)

2. Mr. JHA (India) pointed out that the problem of Palestine refugees had its origin in the upheavals resulting from the decision of the United Nations to partition Palestine and create the State of Israel. The upheavals would not have taken place if the United Nations had at that time adopted his delegation's proposal for the establishment of a federated Arab State with autonomous Arab and Jewish regions in Palestine.<sup>1/</sup> The Arabs and Jews of Palestine would have been able to play a worthy role in the national life of their own country and contribute to the stability and prosperity of the Middle East. As it was, a million Arabs, representing the majority of Palestine's population at the time had been forced to leave their homes and seek shelter in neighbouring countries, where they had remained, their one desire being to return to their native land. The United Nations had at once recognized its responsibility for the refugees; in various resolutions the General Assembly had urged that they

should be given the choice of repatriation or compensation for their property and had made provision for relief measures. Every year, the Assembly had studied the annual report of the Director of UNRWA and had adopted appropriate resolutions, recognizing the continued need for relief without prejudice to the provisions of paragraph 11 of resolution 194 (III). Despite the contention of the representative of Israel (150th meeting) that that paragraph did not confer on the refugees the unconditional right of return, his delegation maintained that no qualifications had been placed on the exercise of that choice, except that it should be freely made and that those wishing to return to their homes should be willing to live at peace with their neighbours.

3. In his delegation's opinion the case of the Palestine refugees was not only a human problem but was also a matter of great political importance affecting the entire complex of political relations in the Middle East. It could not, therefore, be treated purely in terms of economic rehabilitation. Nevertheless, the Committee was not at present concerned with its political aspects but had to decide what action should be taken after 30 June 1960, when UNRWA's present mandate expired. His delegation believed that the Agency should continue to function, since the United Nations had assumed responsibility for the Palestine refugees and could not cease to consider their welfare when the conditions laid down in paragraph 11 of resolution 194 (III) had not been fulfilled. There could be no departure from the basic stand of the United Nations regarding the future of the refugees as contained in that resolution and reaffirmed over the years. It was clear from the latest report of the Director of the Agency (A/4213) that there had been no improvement in the plight of the refugees. Moreover, the continuation of the Agency was justified not only on the basis of human considerations but also because it had helped to maintain a climate in which the forces capable of solving the problem could work effectively.

4. Despite the Agency's efforts, however, as the Director had pointed out, the life of the refugees was still one of hardship and disappointment, with no opportunities for self-advancement, and their hopes of repatriation and compensation were no nearer to fulfilment. Yet, in so far as UNRWA was a means of alleviating human suffering and increasing stability in the Middle East, there was every justification for its continued existence, despite the financial burden it entailed. The Agency had done admirable work in many fields and the host Governments had borne much of the burden, particularly in the matter of education. Many other Governments had made munificent contributions. Nevertheless, since the refugees were determined to return to their homeland, the problem could not be solved simply by resettlement, as had been the case in his own country, which had succeeded in reintegrating nearly 9 million refugees.

<sup>1/</sup> See Official Records of the General Assembly, Second Session, Supplement No. 11, vol. II, appendix III.

5. India had every sympathy for the Palestine refugees and hoped that conditions of peace and harmony favourable to the solution of the refugee problem would soon prevail in the Middle East. A first step in that direction might well be a sincere and objective attempt to give effect to paragraph 11 of resolution 194 (III), which all Members of the United Nations had repeatedly reaffirmed. His delegation would revert to the matter at a later stage if any specific proposals were submitted.

6. Mr. SASTROAMIDJOJO (Indonesia) said that the problem of the Palestine refugees remained basically the same as in previous years. There were however two new facts to be borne in mind: UNRWA was due to terminate its work in the middle of 1960; and the Secretary-General had submitted a document (A/4121) containing proposals for the Agency's work and the future of the refugees. In addition, the representatives of the Arab States had submitted comments on those proposals (A/4236).

7. His delegation believed that the problem could not be discussed from the standpoint of humanitarian principles alone; the Palestine refugees differed from other refugees in their history and in their impact on the region in which they lived. Their accommodation and diet were totally inadequate and their bleak future was engendering bitterness and frustration. As the Director of UNRWA had said in the introduction to his annual report, their life of enforced idleness had affected their outlook and morale, and the complete lack of opportunity for the young people was more tragic in terms of human waste than the need for improved food, shelter and clothing. Moreover, their numbers were increasing owing to births and new arrivals from Israel. For instance, on 3 October 1959 the Egyptian-Israeli Mixed Armistice Commission had announced that more than 350 Bedouins of the Azazma tribe had been forced to seek refuge in Sinai because of the hostile acts of Israel troops.

8. When the United Nations partitioned Palestine in accordance with General Assembly resolution 181 (II), many of the Territory's peaceful citizens had been forced to seek refuge from the alien people who had come to their country and claimed their lands. Others

had been forcibly expelled to make way for the new immigrants. The refugees had not been poor people; they had been obliged to abandon all their property. They now wished only to return to their homes under the conditions laid down in resolution 194 (III), whose terms had been repeatedly reaffirmed by the General Assembly. Successive UNRWA reports had emphasized that the refugees would never accept any plan for their economic integration in the neighbouring Arab countries if they saw in it an infringement of their legitimate right to return to their homes. Such a solution could only undermine their faith in the United Nations, which was the only body they could turn to for assistance, protection and justice. Indeed, they already regarded the partition of Palestine as a grave injustice. In view of the growing concern aroused by the proposals for economic integration, his delegation felt that the Committee should reaffirm the validity of resolution 194 (III), which guaranteed the right of the refugees to return to their homes. The final communiqué of the Asian-African Conference held at Bandung in 1955 had upheld that right and had called for the implementation of the United Nations resolutions on Palestine. His delegation had always maintained that it was only by endeavouring to implement resolution 194 (III) that the United Nations would find an equitable solution to the problem of the Palestine refugees. He hoped the Committee would study the provisional measures proposed by the representative of Saudi Arabia at the 149th meeting; namely, that the Conciliation Commission for Palestine should reactivate the Office established in 1950 for the implementation of paragraph 11 of resolution 194 (III); that the inhabitants of the frontier villages of Jordan, and also the inhabitants of the Gaza area and the refugees in that area, should be allowed to cultivate their lands on the other side of the armistice demarcation line; and that the many Bedouin expelled by Israel should be allowed to return to their former homes in the south of Palestine. Like the previous speakers, he was in favour of extending the mandate of UNRWA so that it could continue to assist and reassure the refugees until a solution was found.

The meeting rose at 11.35 a.m.