

STATISTICAL COMMISSION

FOURTH SESSION

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE FORTY-EIGHTH MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Wednesday, 4 May, 1949, at 10 a.m.

Contents:

1. CONSIDERATION OF DRAFT REPORT OF THE FOURTH SESSION
OF THE STATISTICAL COMMISSION TO THE ECONOMIC AND
SOCIAL COUNCIL - FINANCIAL ESTIMATES OF THE PROGRAMME
OF WORK (Item 11 of Agenda) (Continued)
2. PROGRAMME OF WORK.

N.B. Will delegates who wish to have corrections made to the
Summary Record please submit such corrections in writing
on the official notepaper of their delegation to the
Secretariat, Room C.452, as soon as possible after
distribution of the Summary Record.

Present:

Chairman: Mr. IDENBURG Netherlands

Rapporteur: Mr. CAMPION United Kingdom

Members:

Mr. MARSHALL Canada

Mr. LIEU China

Mr. DARMOIS France

Mr. MAHALANOBIS India

Mr. JAHN Norway

Mr. RYABICHKO
(Vice-Chairman) Ukrainian Soviet
Socialist Republic

Mr. RYABUSHKIN Union of Soviet
Socialist Republics

Mr. RICE United States of
America

Representatives of
Specialized Agencies:

Mr. WOODBURY International Labour
Organization

Mr. CHOMBART
de LAUWE Food and Agriculture
Organization

Mr. HOFMAN United Nations
Educational, Scientific
and Cultural Organiza-
tion

Mr. HICKS International Monetary
Fund

Representative of Non-
Governmental Organization:

Mr. GOUDSWAARD International
Statistical Institute

Secretariat:

Mr. LEONARD Representing the
Assistant Secretary-
General for Economic
Affairs

Mr. BRUCE Secretary to the
Commission

Mr. LOFTUS Statistical Office

CONTINUATION OF CONSIDERATION OF DRAFT REPORT OF THE FOURTH SESSION OF THE STATISTICAL COMMISSION TO THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (Document E/CN.3/W.13 and Addenda 1, 2, 3 and 4 thereto) - FINANCIAL ESTIMATES OF THE PROGRAMME OF WORK (Document E/CN.3/80) (Item 11 of the Agenda)

Chapter I: Statistical Classification.

Classification of Occupations.

Paragraphs 21 and 22 (continued)

The CHAIRMAN drew attention to the Rapporteur's proposed amendment of paragraphs 21 and 22, submitted in accordance with the decision taken at the previous meeting and set out in working paper MCS/11/49.

The Commission adopted paragraphs 21 and 22 in the form proposed in working paper MCS/11/49.

Alphabetical Index of Commodities entering into International Trade

Paragraphs 23 and 24

The Commission adopted paragraphs 23 and 24 without comment.

Chapter II - Report of the Sub-Commission on Statistical Sampling

Paragraphs 25-27

The Commission adopted paragraphs 25-27 without comment.

Paragraph 28

Mr. RYABUSHKIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) proposed that the words "in order that experimental work might be carried out along the lines suggested by the Sub-Commission" be deleted.

Mr. RICE (United States of America) and Mr. DARMOIS (France) were prepared to accept the Soviet Union representative's amendment, since the reference to experimental work, which they felt to be important, was in any case contained in the report of the Sub-Commission,

which would be brought to the attention of governments.

The Commission adopted paragraph 28 as amended by the proposal of the Soviet Union representative.

Paragraph 29

Mr. RYABUSHKIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) considered that the statement that the Commission felt that the Sub-Commission should have sufficient freedom to enable it to explore new subject fields where no specific instructions had been given to it by the Commission was both undesirable and superfluous. The Sub-Commission would naturally submit to the Commission any proposed enlargement or revision of its programme.

Mr. MARSHALL (Canada) suggested that the intention of paragraph 29 was to indicate to the Sub-Commission that it should accord low priority to studies of national income and other related subjects, because of their complicated nature, while not considering that it was altogether precluded from examining them, and the CHAIRMAN added that the same was true of questions of quality control.

Mr. CAMPION (United Kingdom), Rapporteur, pointed out that neither quality control nor national income statistics lay outside the Sub-Commission's present terms of reference. The point he thought the Commission had wished to make was that whereas the Sub-Commission should enjoy sufficient freedom or flexibility to enable it to explore new subject fields falling within its terms of reference, even in the absence of any specific instructions to do so from the Commission, it should not neglect the problems of current and practical importance on which it was already engaged.

After further discussion, Mr. RYABICHKO (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) proposed that paragraph 29 be amended to read as follows:

"In considering the future programme of work of the Sub-Commission, the Statistical Commission felt that the Sub-Commission should bear constantly in mind such problems of current and practical importance for governments as fell within its terms of reference."

Mr. MAHALANOBIS (India) was prepared to accept the proposal of the representative of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic subject to the addition of the words "continue to" before the words "bear constantly in mind".

The Commission adopted the proposal of the representative of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic as amended by the representative of India.

The Commission adopted paragraph 29 as amended.

Paragraph 30

Mr. RYABUSHKIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) proposed that sub-paragraph (a) of the third paragraph of the resolution contained in paragraph 30 be amended to read:

"the compilation and dissemination of further detailed information about methods used in sample surveys of current interest;"

and that a further sub-paragraph be inserted between sub-paragraphs (a) and (b), to read as follows:

"the development of standard terminology and of various other standards relating to the use of sampling;"

Mr. MAHALANOBIS (India) welcomed as improvements both the amendments proposed by the Soviet Union representative.

The Commission adopted paragraph 30, as amended by the proposals of the Soviet Union representative.

The CHAIRMAN recalled that the Commission had decided to consider the financial implications of projects in connection with the chapter of the Report to which they referred. He therefore drew attention to the statement on page 2 of Document E/CN.3/80 to the effect that "activities relating to some of the [Sub-Commission's] recommendations are already in hand in connection with General Assembly Resolution 200 (III) relating to Technical Assistance in Economic Development of under-developed countries, and that "in carrying out those activities, the Secretary-General will take note of the Sub-Commission's views."

Chapter III : Co-ordination of Statistical Activities.

Paragraphs 31 to 33.

The Commission adopted paragraphs 31 to 33 without comment.

Paragraph 34.

Mr. CAMPION (United Kingdom), Rapporteur, stated that the representatives of the International Monetary Fund and the Food and Agriculture Organization had proposed two amendments to the draft resolution contained in paragraph 34.

The first amendment proposed was the addition after the words "for the co-ordination of statistical activities" in the first paragraph of the resolution the following phrase: "co-ordination involves consultation with the Specialized Agencies on all matters appropriate to them which are referred to the Secretary-General in this Report."

Mr. RICE (United States of America) agreed with the proposed amendment. He pointed out that if it were adopted, it would be possible to omit from the report the special references to consultation with the Specialized Agencies which had been included in connection with a number of specific projects.

The Commission adopted the amendment, proposed by the representatives of the Food and Agriculture Organization and the International Monetary Fund, to the first paragraph of the resolution contained in paragraph 34.

Mr. CAMPION (United Kingdom), Rapporteur, stated that the second amendment proposed by the representatives of the International Monetary Fund and the Food and Agriculture Organization was that the last paragraph of the resolution be re-drafted to read as follows:

"REQUESTS the Secretary-General to establish a means by which the plans of all Specialized Agencies for the collection, analysis or publication of statistical data or methodological investigations may be communicated to the Secretary-General while still in the planning stage; and that the Secretary-General establish means to circulate this information, together with similar information on the plans of the United Nations, to all the appropriate Specialized Agencies."

The Commission adopted the amendment, proposed by the representatives of the Food and Agriculture Organization and the International Monetary Fund, to the last paragraph of the draft resolution contained in paragraph 34, subject to modification, proposed by Mr. RYABUSHKIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), of the last phrase to read as follows: "to circulate the appropriate information, together with similar information on the plans of the United Nations, to all the interested Specialized Agencies."

The Commission adopted paragraph 34 as amended.

The SECRETARY drew attention to the statement on page 2 of document E/CN.3/80 to the effect that there were no financial implications arising out of the Third report of the Secretary-General on the Co-ordination of Statistical Activities.

Paragraphs 35 to 46.

At the request of Mr. RYABUSHKIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), the Commission deferred until its following meeting consideration of paragraphs 35 to 46, dealing with the report of the Regional Meeting of European Statisticians.

Chapter IV : Development of National Statistics.

The Commission further decided, also at the request of Mr. RYABUSHKIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), to defer until its next meeting consideration of Chapter IV of its Draft Report.

Chapter V : Research in Statistical Methods.

Paragraphs 101 and 102.

The Commission adopted paragraphs 101 and 102 without comment.

Population and Vital Statistics.

Paragraphs 103 to 105.

The Commission adopted paragraphs 103 to 105 without comment.

Censuses of Population in 1950 and 1951.

Paragraphs 106 and 107.

The Commission adopted paragraphs 106 and 107 without comment.

Industrial or Social Status Groups.

Paragraphs 108 to 110.

The Commission adopted paragraphs 108 to 110 without comment.

Economically Active Population.

Paragraphs 111 and 112.

The Commission adopted paragraphs 111 and 112 without comment.

Improvement of Vital Statistics.

Paragraph 113.

The Commission adopted paragraph 113 without comment.

Paragraph 114.

At the suggestion of Mr. RYABUSHKIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) the Commission decided to insert the words "of giving attention to the problems" before the words "of improving the completeness of registration" in the first paragraph of the resolution contained in paragraph 114, so as to conform to the wording used in the report of the Population Commission.

The Commission adopted paragraph 114 as amended.

Statistics of National Income.

Paragraph 115.

The Commission adopted paragraph 115 without comment.

Paragraph 116

Mr. RYABUSHKIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) felt that neither the Commission as a whole nor its individual members had emphasised the need for publishing regular series of national income statistics for as many countries as possible. That was a very different matter from the proposal that the Secretariat should publish any national income statistics which were in its possession.

Mr. CAMPION (United Kingdom), Rapporteur, recalled that the point had been made during discussion that it would be valuable if the Secretariat were to publish such revisions as were available of the national income statistics of the different countries, which were often published at biennial intervals.

Mr. DARMOIS (France) pointed out that the word "estimates" in the English text of this paragraph had been wrongly interpreted for the purposes of the French and Russian translations as meaning "forecasts". The word "estimations" should be substituted for the word "prévisions" in the French text.

Mr. RYABUSHKIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) suggested that the value of national income statistics for the purposes of international comparison lay not so much in their up-to-dateness as in their being presented to permit international comparability.

After further discussion, the Commission decided, on the proposal of Mr. CAMPION (United Kingdom), Rapporteur, to amend the first sentence of Paragraph 116 to read as follows: "In its discussion of the report the Statistical Commission urged that the Secretariat should publish regularly the latest figures available of the national income statistics for the different countries" and to amend the final phrase

of the second sentence to read "experience in compiling statistics of capital formation".

The Commission adopted Paragraph 116 as amended.

Paragraph 117

At the suggestion of Mr. MAHALANOBIS (India), the Commission agreed that a footnote should be appended to paragraph 117 indicating that questions relating to social accounting were treated in paragraphs 152 and 153.

Mr. RYABICHKO (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) proposed that the word "real" be omitted from line 5.

Mr. MARSHALL (Canada) pointed out that the Ukrainian proposal would involve a serious substantive alteration, since the figures measuring national income would then no longer be corrected to take into account changes in prices.

The Commission agreed, at the CHAIRMAN's suggestion, to substitute the words "in constant prices" after the words "national income" and to omit the word "real".

In order to remedy the misplaced emphasis in the last sentence, the Commission agreed to delete the words "not only" after the words "should cover", and to replace the words "but also" in line 7 by the words "and of".

The Commission adopted paragraph 117 as amended.

Paragraph 118

The Commission adopted paragraph 118 without comment.

Indices of industrial production.

Paragraphs 119 and 120

The Commission adopted paragraphs 119 and 120 without comment.

Paragraph 121

Mr. RYABUSHKIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics)

considered that it should be made plain that the paper referred to had been prepared by the Secretariat.

The Commission agreed to insert the words "by the Secretariat" after the words "An attempt had been made in the paper";

The Commission adopted paragraph 121 as amended.

Paragraphs 122, 123 and 124

The Commission adopted paragraphs 122, 123 and 124 without comment.

Price Indices

Paragraphs 125 and 126

The Commission adopted paragraphs 125 and 126 without comment.

Paragraph 127

Mr. RYABUSHKIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics)

considered that reference to the geometric average should be omitted from sub-paragraph (c), since its value was highly questionable. He also saw no reason for singling out that particular type of average. It was assumed that the Secretariat would consider them all.

Mr. CAMPION (United Kingdom), Rapporteur, explained that the geometric average had been mentioned because it had been specially discussed in the Commission.

The Committee adopted the Soviet Union representative's proposal to delete the reference to the geometric average from sub-paragraph (c).

The Commission adopted paragraph 127 as amended.

Wholesale Prices

Paragraphs 128 and 129

The Commission adopted paragraphs 128 and 129 without comment.

Import and Export Prices

Paragraph 130

Mr. RYABUSHKIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) considered that no reference should be made to the fact that note had been taken of the views expressed by the European statisticians on import and export prices. He was not in fact altogether clear as to what those views were.

Mr. CAMPION (United Kingdom), Rapporteur, asked whether the Soviet Union representative would be satisfied if specific reference were made to the Report of the Regional Meeting of European Statisticians (Document E/CN.3/Conf. 1/3).

Mr. RYABUSHKIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) stated that the reference as it stood appeared to imply that note had been taken of the views as a whole of the European Statisticians. He would be opposed to such a reference, as he considered certain of their recommendations to be undesirable.

Mr. CAMPION (United Kingdom), Rapporteur, pointed out that the Commission had been specially requested by the Secretary-General to take the views of the European Statisticians into account during its discussions.

The CHAIRMAN suggested that in order to meet the Soviet Union representative's objection the words "on this subject" should be inserted after the words "views expressed" in the third line, so as

to make it quite clear that the reference was only to views on import and export prices.

Mr. RYABUSHKIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) suggested that the words "the Commission considered" be substituted for the words "it took note of".

The Commission adopted both the proposal of the Soviet Union representative and that of the Chairman and the Rapporteur.

The Commission adopted paragraph 130 as amended.

Paragraph 132.

Mr. RYABUSHKIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) had serious objections to raise to the inclusion of the whole of paragraph 132, as he considered the recommendations it embodied to be premature. They had not been exhaustively discussed and as far as he was aware no general agreement had been reached upon them. Therefore they were not at the present stage in a sufficiently final form to be suitable for presentation to governments. In particular, no indications were given as to the methods whereby they could be implemented. The Commission should accordingly confine itself to requesting the Secretariat to prepare, in co-operation with the appropriate specialized agency, technical recommendations on the problem of volume and price indices of external trade, which could then be considered at the next session.

Mr. HICKS (International Monetary Fund) stated that sub-paragraph (d) was too weak as it stood. It was important that quantum indices should be adjusted so as to bring out changes in trade in general. The validity of such figures would, of course, be increased in proportion to the number of commodities covered. He would therefore propose the following wording for sub-paragraph (d): "it is important in all cases to construct or adjust quantum indices so as to show

changes in total trade rather than changes in the items directly included in the index".

There was also some inconsistency between sub-paragraphs (a) and (e). The former did not indicate which year was to be selected as the base year for post-war weighting, whereas the latter assumed that 1948 would be chosen; it should be recognized that that might not always be the case. He would suggest therefore that sub-paragraph (e) be amended by the insertion of the words "or a later year" after the words "choosing 1948" and the words "on that base beginning with the year 1947" after the words "publish figures": the words "for 1946 and" being deleted.

Mr. RYABICHKO (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) shared the views of the Soviet Union representative. He was surprised that countries were being asked in sub-paragraph (c) to provide quarterly figures of the quantum of trade in view of the statement made in paragraph 131 that it would be undesirable to ask countries to publish separate indices of quantum and prices for groups of commodities, using the League of Nations classification.

Mr. MAHANALOBIS (India) agreed that paragraph 132 required some modification, but considered that there was the general feeling of the Commission in favour of the recommendations on those subjects being circulated to governments.

Mr. MARSHALL (Canada) had some sympathy with the views expressed by the Soviet Union representative. It was regrettable that the study of those problems had not reached a more advanced stage which would have enabled the Commission to include recommendations of a methodological character. Nevertheless, he could not agree that the whole paragraph should be deleted, in view of the real need of countries for guidance, as a result of which it would be useful for the Commission to transmit whatever conclusions it had already reached.

Mr. RICE (United States of America) agreed with the Canadian representative that, if the Commission was to retain its position as a leading authority in the field it could not shrink from taking a stand upon questions relating to quantum indices of external trade.

Mr. RYABUSHKIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) agreed with the representatives of Canada and the United States that countries needed guidance on quantum indices for external trade but stated that the recommendations in the paragraph under consideration, in no way provided such guidance. There was, for example, no indication as to how the indices were to be compiled. Special difficulties would arise for certain countries. There were no instructions as to the methods which should be employed in making the necessary adjustments proposed in sub-paragraph (d). Without such instructions each country might select a purely arbitrary technique. The whole tone of the paragraph, which failed to take into account the special interests and problems of member governments and expressed merely the point of view of the Secretariat, seemed to him unsatisfactory.

Mr. CAMPION (United Kingdom), Rapporteur, referring to the point raised by the representative of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic with regard to the alleged inconsistency between sub-paragraph (c) and paragraph 131, pointed out that the former applied to total trade figures. The latter referred specifically to indices for groups of commodities.

With regard to the objections raised by the Soviet Union representative, he felt that perhaps too much was being read into the proposals contained in paragraph 132. Nor could he see why the Commission should be precluded from expressing its views at the present stage. If sub-paragraph (a) were accepted, sub-paragraph (c) should not involve any difficulties, since it dealt with technical matters of

presentation. As to sub-paragraph (d), it was of course neither for the Commission nor for the Secretariat to instruct countries on how adjustments were to be made. All that was being done was to request that those adjustments should reflect movements of total trade.

Mr. DARMOIS (France) considered that the retention of paragraph 132 would serve a useful purpose and would assist governments in orientating their views on the subject.

Mr. MARSHALL (Canada), observing that it would probably be difficult to reach a compromise on paragraph 132, moved that the debate be closed.

The Soviet Union proposal that paragraph 132 be deleted in its entirety was put to the Commission and rejected.

As paragraph 132 was to be retained; the CHAIRMAN re-opened the discussion thereon, and invited further comments or amendments.

Mr. RYABUSHKIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) stated that although he had found the original text of paragraph 132 entirely unacceptable, he did not know in what form it would emerge after amendment. He therefore reserved his right to express his opinion on the new text.

Mr. MAHALANOBIS (India) pointed out that sub-paragraph (b) quite unjustifiably assumed that a base year would be adopted immediately in every country. That could not be taken for granted, and the words "when adopted" should therefore be inserted after the words "new post-war base year".

The Commission adopted sub-paragraphs (a) and (c) and sub-paragraph (b) as amended by the representative of India.

Mr. RYABICHKO (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) requested that further discussion on paragraph 132 be deferred, so as to enable representatives to give further consideration to the problems involved.

This was agreed.

Index Numbers to Deflate Estimates of National Income.

Paragraph 133

Paragraph 133 was adopted subject to certain textual alterations in the Russian and French texts.

Paragraph 134

The Commission adopted paragraph 134 without comment.

Transport Statistics.

Paragraph 135

Mr. RYABUSHKIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) felt it was inappropriate to describe the Report of the Secretariat as "valuable". It would suffice merely to take note of it. The mere fact that the Commission had not drawn attention to any shortcomings intimated its appreciation.

The Commission adopted paragraph 135 subject to the deletion of the word "valuable".

Paragraphs 136, 137, 138 and 139.

The Commission adopted paragraphs 136, 137, 138 and 139 without comment.

2. PROGRAMME OF WORK.

Mr. RYABUSHKIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) expressed concern over the speed with which the Commission was despatching various sections of the Report. The Report was one of the most important documents before it, and required careful and detailed consideration. He hoped every effort would be made to avoid mechanical and ill-considered decisions.

The CHAIRMAN entirely agreed with the Soviet Union representative that considerations of speed should on no account be allowed to interfere with the proper discharge of the Commission's functions.

Mr. MAHALANOBIS (India) also agreed with the view of the Soviet Union representative that full justice should be done to the Report, but suggested that the Commission should not yet tie itself to a definite time table.

It was so agreed.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.