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President: Sir Douglas COPLAND (Australia).

Present:

The representatives of the following countries: Argentina, Australia, China, Czechoslovakia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, France, India, Netherlands, Norway, Pakistan, Turkey, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Venezuela, Yugoslavia,

Observers from the following Member States: Belgium, Brazil, Indonesia, Iran, Mexico.

Observers from the following non-member States: Bulgaria, Federal Republic of Germany.

The representatives of the following specialized agencies: International Labour Organisation, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, World Health Organization.

AGENDA ITEM 3

World social situation (E/2569, E/2747 and Add.1 and 2, E/2758, E/CN.3/179—E/CN.5/299, E/CN.5/301/Rev.1—ST/SOA/21) (*continued*)

1. Mr. POPOVIĆ (Yugoslavia) expressed his delegation's appreciation of the *International Survey of Programmes of Social Development* (E/CN.5/301/Rev.1—ST/SOA/21). It was an important contribution to social research and could be of practical use both to countries attempting to raise their social standards and to the United Nations in the planning of its activities. The method followed of summarizing trends—quoting specific countries only as illustrations—was undoubtedly the correct procedure. The *Survey*, however, fell short in one respect: the omission of any reference to the People's Republic of China indicated a decided lack of universality. Again, the East European countries, although hardly mentioned in the chapters dealing with the various social fields, appeared in a separate section, thus implying a somewhat unilateral attitude as regards the submission and utilization of data and information from those countries. With regard to the illustrations, he was gratified to note the number of examples taken from Non-Self-Governing and Trust Territories. He pointed out, however, that the illustrative part of a world survey should be an adequate picture of the trends of social development in the world. Otherwise, one might get

an unreal picture of the situation, particularly in the countries which had won their independence and begun to develop their own national life recently.

2. The last chapter, constituting an attempt at an analytical study of concepts, policies and methods, was of particular significance. Although it was stated that there had been no attempt to cover all the countries of the world, it had been made clear that the purpose of the chapter was to give an indication of the various ways in which the social or social-economic plans were organized and administered in different parts of the world. For that reason, he regretted that Yugoslavia—regarded not as a country but as a separate instance of approach to social development—should have been omitted, for it was well known that his country had followed a distinctive path in its economic and social development. Such shortcomings, however, did not detract from the value of the document, which completed the factual picture given in the *Preliminary Report on the World Social Situation* (E/CN.5/267/Rev.1) and provided a solid basis for future co-operation in social matters.

3. His delegation took the view that the Council should concentrate on the evaluation of the world situation on the basis of broad scientific research. Without stressing the change for the better in the political atmosphere, it could be said that the United Nations was facing a new era in the social sphere. Certain conclusions which could serve as guidance for the establishment of the programmes of the United Nations and the specialized agencies could be drawn from the present situation. The close interdependence of economic and social factors had been repeatedly stressed in the Council's discussions; and there was no doubt that, viewed from the social aspect, the world situation showed very marked differences in health standards, expectation of life, housing conditions and educational facilities, and it seemed that the gap between countries with high and low standards of living was becoming even broader. In the under-developed countries it was inevitable that the resources devoted to social purposes should be smaller than those spent on economic improvement, despite the close relationship between the two aspects of the question. The backbone of social backwardness ought to be broken through economic development. On the other hand, social improvements and adjustments were often the necessary prerequisites for economic development. As against this objective situation, in recent decades there had been considerable changes in outlook; and the peoples of the poorest regions of the world had become conscious of their social rights. That fact was becoming the driving power of contemporary society.

4. The volume of social programmes in the world was inadequate for essential needs, and the *Survey* pointed

out that lack of personnel, technical information and material resources was a great obstacle to the raising of standards of living. Social problems, however, represented far too large a complex for a simplified solution. There was a growing acceptance of the principle of the responsibility of the State for social welfare and of State intervention in social welfare programmes. But it must be emphasized that a successful solution of social problems would be possible only when they had become the responsibility of society as a whole.

5. In Yugoslavia, an effort was being made to solve social and economic problems by harmonizing individual and communal interests through the direct participation of citizens in workers' councils and communities, which were the basic social and economic elements of Yugoslav society. That method facilitated the shaping of an integrated economic and social policy.

6. Community development, broader local self-government, workers' self-management, co-operatives and the like all reflected the principle that the community as a whole should assume responsibility for social development. His delegation considered that the problem of community development should be selected at that session as one of the primary subjects for the Council's study. The United Nations could not, of course, interfere in the internal policies of individual countries; it could, however, influence those policies by promoting modern concepts, defining contemporary social standards, making recommendations and drafting conventions. In the past ten years—witness the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the large number of resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and the Council, not to mention decisions of the specialized agencies—the United Nations had been decidedly active. It must be admitted, however, that international tension had sometimes led to political issues overshadowing the progressive principles adopted in the otherwise economically under-developed countries.

7. In existing conditions, the United Nations could, through its so-called clearing-house activities, contribute efficiently to the training of technical personnel and transmission of technical information. The advisory social services and technical assistance represented the main United Nations action in the implementation of the tasks of the Charter regarding the raising of living standards. It must be realized, however, that such activities in the social field were considerably less substantial than corresponding services and assistance in the economic field. Concern over such a situation was reflected in the resolution adopted by the Social Commission at its tenth session, which urged "a significant increase in resources, within the present level of the United Nations budget, for the programme of Advisory Social Welfare Services for 1956 and following years".¹ That problem was one of the most important facing the Council at that session, and he would urge that appropriate measures should be taken to solve it.

8. If a contemporary society wished to break the chains of poverty, illness and ignorance binding a large proportion of mankind, immeasurably larger resources than

those being invested would be needed, and international co-operation and assistance were absolutely vital. Investment for social purposes was a long-term problem, to the solution of which the United Nations could contribute by research and statistical work, by educating public opinion and by influencing Governments. The total of resources available for the social activities of the United Nations and the specialized agencies was inadequate, but the United Nations could promote more rational investment of it. The allocation of part of the available sum not only to clearing-house activities and technical assistance, but also to the provision of financial aid on a matching basis for social purposes would have an immense moral and practical effect. In that connexion he would quote the remarkable success of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), despite its very limited resources.

9. Mr. ROWE (Australia) thought it most appropriate that in the tenth year of the United Nations the Council should attempt to make three major surveys of its social and economic work, for one of the purposes stated in the Charter was to achieve international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural and humanitarian character.

10. The tasks which had confronted the United Nations in the economic and social fields at the conclusion of the Second World War had been broadly of two types. In the first place, there had been relief activities and emergency measures to help the millions of people struggling for their very existence as a result of the war. In the second place, there had been the planning of continuing activities and programmes for raising the living standards of all peoples of the world. The achievements of the United Nations and the specialized agencies in immediate post-war relief had been so impressive that they had captured the imagination of the world. Thanks to the activities of such bodies as the International Refugee Organization (IRO) and UNICEF, to mention only two, it was now possible to concentrate on a long-range programme designed to raise living standards and to bring about a permanent improvement of social conditions.

11. The *International Survey of Programmes of Social Development* had been designed to supplement the *Preliminary Report on the World Social Situation* and could be of great assistance to Governments in planning their own social programmes. Although the *Survey* inevitably contained certain faults of emphasis and omission, it was nevertheless a most valuable document.

12. He wanted at the present stage of the discussion to suggest the perspective in which the results of ten years' work should be assessed. It had been said that the Council's work was divorced from reality, but such criticism was ill-founded. It should be remembered that the Council's main task, briefly outlined in the preamble to the Charter, was to endeavour to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples. The Australian delegation considered that the role of the United Nations in the social field was largely one of investigation, stimulation, guidance, assistance and co-ordination, and that international action could only be complementary to the

¹ Report of the tenth session of the Social Commission (E/2758—E/CN.5/318), annex III, page 10.

action taken by national authorities and groups. Although the United Nations could conduct surveys, investigate problems, make recommendations and provide a limited amount of technical assistance and advice, the main steps for improving social conditions must be taken in each country through governmental and private action.

13. He wished to stress, as had the representatives who had spoken before him, the great importance of schemes of community development. Community development had been the subject of a report from the Secretary-General (E/CN.5/303), which had been discussed at the Social Commission's last session. The discussions in the Social Committee both on the Secretary-General's report (E/CN.5/303) and on the report of the Social Commission (E/2758) would certainly be of great assistance to Governments which wanted to ensure a greater participation of their citizens in the organization and planning of their social life. Although the full potentialities of community development had not yet been brought to light, the extensive investigations already carried out clearly showed that community development schemes offered one of the most hopeful solutions for various problems associated with the adaptation of societies to changing conditions. The Australian delegation had listened with great interest to the comments made by the Under-Secretary, Mr. de Seynes, on the work which the Secretariat intended to do on the problem of groups passing from a subsistence to an exchange economy, and would study its results with great interest.

14. Since the end of the war, Australia had been engaged in an ambitious programme of economic development, and the already high standards of social services in education, health, and the protection of citizens against the hazards of an unstable world had constantly been improved. It was the firm belief of the Australian delegation that social justice was the handmaid of economic progress. Australian social policy covered education, health, pensions and other income security provisions, maternity and child allowances, unemployment and sickness benefits, and assistance to housing programmes. In recent years provision for those varied elements had been growing at a greater rate than the national income itself, although the high level of economic expansion had enabled the national income to rise rapidly. Total expenditure on all phases of social services represented not less than 25 per cent of total government expenditure and not less than 10 per cent of the national income, and it was the considered policy of Australia that whatever gains might come from economic expansion, an increasing proportion of those gains should be devoted to raising living standards.

15. In the Trust Territory of New Guinea and the Territory of Papua, Australian policy was designed to promote the social welfare of the indigenous peoples. The net expenditure of the Australian Government on the Territories was over £A8,000,000 per annum, and emphasis was placed upon the necessity for social improvement to go hand in hand with economic development. The local community was taken as the focal point for development schemes, and particular attention was paid to schemes of community development which, it was hoped, would bring full social maturity. Concern for

the welfare of the inhabitants of the Territories, and a conviction that the promotion of social improvement was an international responsibility, had led the Australian Government, in conjunction with the Government of New Zealand, to take as early as 1944 the first steps that had led to the establishment of the South Pacific Commission. The Commission, which now consisted of six countries, had undertaken many activities designed to improve techniques relating to the social advancement of the indigenous peoples concerned, and it could be said to constitute a pioneer enterprise in a field in which the Council had since developed much fruitful interest. By convening the South Pacific Conference the Commission had enabled delegates from all territories to discuss their common problems, and notably those of community development.

16. Australia was also contributing in a wider field towards improving social conditions. Under the Colombo Plan many students and social workers came to Australia from countries of South-East Asia in order to gain experience in administration, the development of social policy and health techniques, education and other fields. Such a scheme not only helped the countries concerned, but also developed a community of interest between Australia and her neighbours. It was a good example of the co-operation which was essential in order to transform the ancient economies of certain South-East Asian countries in the smoothest possible way.

17. The *Survey* revealed the extent to which social improvement was accepted as one of the fundamental elements of national policies throughout the world, and the very fact that the improvement of general social conditions on an international scale had been discussed in the United Nations for the last ten years had been in itself a great stimulus to national action. If progress in health control continued at the rate described by the Deputy Director-General of the World Health Organization, the average expectation of life in many countries would be substantially raised and the rate of increase in population would be greater than at any time in human history. Such a rapid increase would itself create both social and economic problems of the first magnitude and would put heavy strains on the machinery of the United Nations. Fortunately, this machinery was now well established and the basis for co-operation among the several agencies and commissions was assured, so that an optimistic view could be taken of the future. The United Nations would meet a challenge in the economic and social field, but this challenge could be cheerfully accepted.

18. Mr. EGGERMANN (International Federation of Christian Trade Unions), speaking at the invitation of the PRESIDENT, said that the ICFTU had always been concerned to improve social conditions and raise the living standards of the working masses, and it had already had occasion to submit observations and suggestions on the subject to the Council. It commended the work carried out by the Secretariat and the Expert Committee, and felt that the *International Survey of Programmes of Social Development* was an essential complement to the work done previously by the United Nations. Hence, Governments could not be too strongly urged to submit adequate documentation to the United Nations. The

programme of work instituted by the Social Commission would no doubt make it possible to exchange views periodically, and would facilitate the task of all bodies anxious to promote social well-being throughout the world. The *Survey* would undoubtedly help to bring about improvements in the social legislation of a number of countries.

19. Nevertheless, as the *Survey* confined itself to describing measures taken at the national level, there was a danger of losing sight of the interdependence of nations in economic and social matters. Hence the three factors in the *Survey* should be considered simultaneously. Moreover, its value would be all the greater if it reported wherever possible the results achieved by the various Governments. To do that, its authors would of course need to have at their disposal information on international assistance in that field. The Federation hoped that the *Survey* would be carried on, kept up to date and publicized as widely as possible and as soon as possible, so as to enable Governments and professional organizations to gain full benefit from it.

20. In the opinion of the Federation, chapter I of the *Survey* should also have mentioned the efforts put forward to achieve complete emancipation of workers, since the attainment of a relatively high level of living did not necessarily mean that workers were fully emancipated. The Federation had always endeavoured to achieve full participation of the workers in economic and social life. The present economic and social position, characterized either by a spirit of material gain or by the prestige and economic power of the State, was the negation of the primacy of human beings. Hence reforms were called for to bring about real collaboration between the various sectors of professional life, and to ensure the participation of all those various sectors in the running of undertakings. That was the way to lay the foundations for true social and economic democracy. No doubt such a measure of reform could not be accomplished overnight, but for that very reason it was essential to tackle the problem in good time.

21. The IFCTU had always maintained that education, and particularly higher education, should be accessible to all. Hence it subscribed entirely to the arguments put forward in chapter V. In that connexion, it trusted that the Governments administering Non-Self-Governing Territories would fulfil their responsibilities in the matter of native education. Appropriate measures should be taken for the training of the necessary personnel to ensure a balanced development in the Territories. Incidentally, the Federation felt it was unfortunate that the *Survey* did not sufficiently bring out the vital role which vocational guidance could play in regard to opportunities for women in economic life. In that, the Federation shared the opinion expressed time and again by the Commission on the Status of Women.

22. His organization was glad to find in chapter VI that, in the opinion of Governments, their productivity policies depended on the workers' collaboration. Unfortunately, it must be said that increased productivity was only too frequently inspired by greed for gain and not sufficiently by the desire to increase the volume and quality of goods and services available to the community.

23. The question of relations between employers and employees also deserved closer study, especially with respect to the function of trade unions. The Federation had always held the view that improvements in human relations in undertakings could not be achieved without the effective participation of trade union organizations.

24. Turning to chapter VIII, he pointed out that, whatever the mode of financing social insurance, the benefits should be regarded as deferred pay belonging to the workers and intended for their sole use. The management of such funds should therefore be in the hands of workers' organizations, under the supervision of the public authorities.

25. The Federation would like to express its particular appreciation of chapter X on special programmes of social development for rural areas. However, more emphasis could have been laid, especially with regard to the under-developed countries, on the necessity of recognizing the right of individuals to belong freely to trade union and co-operative and community organizations, the latter having an important part to play in the matter of education and morals. Those various organizations had, in fact, the task of helping the inhabitants to adapt themselves to new circumstances resulting from economic changes. Furthermore, that conception of freedom of association was in keeping with the spirit of a number of ILO conventions. While the Social Commission had rightly asked the Secretary-General to pay particular attention to the co-operative movement, the Federation felt that consideration should also be given to the contribution which community organizations could make, and had already made, in a number of countries.

26. In view of its constant concern to see a rise in the living standards of the working masses quite apart from their wages, the Federation was keenly interested in the report *International Definition and Measurement of Standards and Levels of Living* (E/CN.3/179-E/CN.5/299). It particularly endorsed the desire expressed by the Social Commission for the initiation or development of statistical systems, above all in under-developed countries. It supported the Commission's request that family living surveys should be carried out, but wished to stress the need for studying the problems raised by the employment of married women. The Federation also supported the proposal made by the World Movement of Mothers in document E/2747/Add.2.

27. As for the problem of under-employment, the importance of which was underscored in the experts' report, he would draw attention to the special position of certain sections of the community, such as self-employed workers and small traders, in many of the developed countries, since their position, which was not reflected in the unemployment statistics, had obvious repercussions on the general level of living.

28. It was the Federation's hope that the Governments and private bodies concerned would take the necessary steps to extend to the public the benefit of the research work undertaken in connexion with the *Survey*.

29. The Federation supported the Secretary-General's suggestions and the Social Commission's decisions concerning the training of social welfare personnel. It drew attention, however, to the heavy responsibility resting

on the States in charge of under-developed or Trust territories. True, many of them were doing their best to send out the largest possible number of social welfare workers to those territories, but the personnel available should be distributed systematically, for while it was true that social workers could do very good work in the service of official bodies, they could nevertheless contribute more directly in other posts to raising the social level of the indigenous workers.

30. In conclusion, he was sure that studies of the kind he had just mentioned would help to increase the common good and thus pave the way for an era of peace and prosperity.

31. Mr. DESSAU (World Federation of Trade Unions), speaking at the invitation of the PRESIDENT, recalled that the *Preliminary Report on the World Social Situation* had brought out the magnitude and urgency of needs in the social sphere, particularly with respect to nutrition, housing, social security, conditions of work and education. It had, moreover, revealed an appreciable lowering of standards in several of those fields and stressed the poverty in which large sections of the urban population in the under-developed countries were living. In so doing, the report had merely confirmed facts to which the WFTU had persistently drawn attention both before the Council and elsewhere—facts which still existed to-day. The report had also emphasized the need for the rapid development of social policy in various fields, implying that the Council should undertake wider and more closely co-ordinated action in that connexion.

32. The *International Survey of Programmes of Social Development* was designed to meet that need. But if the present situation of the working masses was borne in mind, it became apparent that a mere description of social legislation or social programmes was not enough. The day-to-day experience of the workers proved that social advances were always the outcome of a struggle between progressive and reactionary forces and that improvements were mainly due to the action of the workers and their trade unions, whilst the employers did their utmost to evade their obligations under social legislation.

33. Thus, only a minority of countries had legislation providing for a minimum basic wage and, even then, it often applied only to a minority of the workers. Furthermore, the spread of systems of payment by results was steadily reducing the share of the basic wage in the worker's total remuneration, thereby rendering minimum wage regulations inoperative. On the whole, the general level of wages was too low and was even tending to fall, especially in relation to the increased effort demanded of the workers.

34. With regard to the level of employment, it should be pointed out that, despite the impression obtained from the *Survey*, monopolist policy was leading to an increase in unemployment. Despite a recent reduction in unemployment figures, the total number of unemployed in the ten major countries of western Europe, and in the

United States of America, Canada and Japan, had risen from 5,389,000 in 1948 to 8,210,000 in 1954. Similarly, statistics revealed a heavy increase in unemployment in Asia.

35. In spite of the legislation in force in a few countries, employers in almost all capitalist countries were steadily increasing the hours, and stepping up the speed of work, thereby overtiring the workers and increasing the number of accidents and cases of sickness among them. Hence, despite what was stated on page 117 of the *Survey*, the number of industrial accidents was undoubtedly rising, while existing working conditions were causing a higher incidence of occupational diseases against which workers were afforded no protection. Finally, nothing, or practically nothing, was being done to solve the problem of aged workers whose physical and nervous strength had been prematurely exhausted by the working conditions inflicted on them and who were entitled neither to a pension nor to adequate social protection.

36. Such a state of affairs was undoubtedly due to the measures taken to raise so-called "productivity". Hence, the WFTU could not endorse the opinions expressed in chapter I, page 7, according to which the objectives of social policy should depend on the achievement of higher output, for that method of approach would be tantamount to a negation of any true social policy.

37. While the *Survey* obviously represented a preliminary stage of the Council's work, the Council should promptly intensify its efforts if it wished to meet the needs of the peoples of the world. The first thing to be done was to deepen and broaden the analyses contained in the *Preliminary Report on the World Social Situation*. In that connexion, the WFTU had submitted to the Statistical and Social Commissions observations on the international measurement of standards and levels of living, which were reproduced in document E/CN.5/302. It was also advisable to amplify the study of social development programmes and, above all, to collect information on the actual implementation of those programmes and the results obtained. Lastly, the Council should formulate a model social development programme setting out the guiding principles governing its activities and those of the specialized agencies in that field, to encourage Governments to take some action.

38. The WFTU had already drafted proposals to that effect, based mainly on the programme of the International Social Security Conference organized on its initiative in 1953. It was prepared to co-operate with the Council on the basis of the experience and achievements of the world trade union movement.

39. The formulation of a vast social development programme, taking account of the progress already made, the work of the international organizations and the aspirations of the toiling masses, would undoubtedly help to raise levels of living and to ensure social progress.

The meeting rose at 12.5 p.m.