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COMMITTEE ON ARRANGEMENTS FOR CONSULTATION WITH
NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Communication from the American Federation of Labor,
dated 11 October 1948

Circulated to the members of the Council for their information in pursuance of paragraph 2 of Chapter IV of the Report of the Committee on Arrangements for Consultation with Non-Governmental Organizations, approved by the Council on 21 June 1946. Resolution No. 2/3 of 21 June 1946. (Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, First Year, Second Session, pages 360-365).

/RECOMMENDATION

RECOMMENDATION TO THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL
IN CONFORMITY WITH DOCUMENT E/940/Add.4

The American Federation of Labor has participated in the work of the Economic and Social Council for almost two years. It has not only taken an interest in the Council work itself but has also taken part in the basic work done in the various commissions of the Council. While this activity was in the developing stages, the Federation abstained from proposing that the rights of the consultants in category "a" be increased. Its policy has been to prove the usefulness of this institution by its contribution to the work in all those subject-matters in which the membership of the American Federation of Labor has special experience or interest. It has delegated, in addition to its permanent representatives, a number of specialists into commissions such as the Statistical Commission, the Economic Commission for Latin America, etc.

The American Federation of Labor is fully aware that the institution of the consultant is still in the developing stage. However, to the degree that this was possible, the American Federation of Labor has demonstrated that it considered its assignment as a consultant to the Economic and Social Council as a responsible task for the common good and especially as a responsibility in the name of democratic labour of various parts of the world.

The experience thus far shows that the best work could be done in the standing commissions of the Council; however, when the result of this activity came before the Council, the consultant was handicapped in bringing the viewpoint and position of democratic labour to the knowledge of the members of the Council. This was especially the case in the seventh session of the Economic and Social Council, when all those items that had been put on the agenda upon the suggestion of non-governmental organizations in category "a" had been postponed. This meant repeated postponement of certain items. In the expectation that the subsequent meetings of the Council will give more considerate treatment to these items, the American Federation of Labor abstains at this time from any suggestion on this point.

The proposal we wish to make concerns the experience of the last two years on another point. Up to now the consultants of category "a" have been only granted the right to express their organization's advice in the standing commissions of the Council. However, in the committees which are being established during the sessions of the Economic and Social Council, this right has thus far not yet been granted. This tends to diminish the value of our activity. The decisive stage of the decision on the subject-matter is being reached in these committee meetings. This is especially true since the last session of the Economic and Social Council when the practice was
/introduced

introduced to have items on the agenda referred directly to the respective committees of the Council without preceding discussion in the plenary meeting. It has also to be kept in mind that the personnel in the membership of the Council Committee is different from that of the standing commissions, so that the statements of the consultants made before the standing commissions are unknown to them. As a result, the activity of the consultants is in danger of becoming, in effect, illusory. Certainly this was not the intention of the members of the United Nations when they wrote Article 71 in the Charter of the United Nations reading:

"The Economic and Social Council may make suitable arrangements for consultation with non-governmental organizations which are concerned with matters within its competence. . . ."

The American Federation of Labor, therefore, respectfully submits the suggestion that the consultants in category "a" be granted the right to make statements in the committees of the Economic and Social Council on matters with which they are concerned. This seems to be a necessary step in the sincere endeavour to give the institution of the consultant its real meaning.

The American Federation of Labor views with serious concern the treatment given to the non-governmental organizations in the course of the last session of the Economic and Social Council. Yet, the American Federation of Labor abstains at this time from any requests in that direction. We hope that the following Council meetings will render greater justice to our organization.
