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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

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Bureau and Standing Committee (5th July, 1955-15th April, 1956)

Progress report
Rapporteur: Mr Barthold STÜRGKH, Austria

1.

After the resumption of t h e Ninth Session on 16th October 1957, the Bureau of the Assembly met almost daily from that date up to the end of the second part-Session on 29th October and held two further meetings in Paris on 2nd and 13th December 1957.

1.1. 1. Date and Agenda of the third part of the Ninth Session

On 25th October last, at its 23rd Sitting of the Session, the Assembly fixed the dates for the third part-Session for 14th to 17th January 1958. The Agenda for the part-Session was adopted by the Standing Committee on 2nd December 1957 (Doc. 759).

The Standing Committee also decided on that date again to invite members of the Israeli Parliament to attend the Assembly debates of 14th-17th January 1958.

1.2. 2. Appointment of a member to the Joint Committee

On 2nd December 1957, the Standing Committee appointed M. Czernetz to sit on the Joint Committee in place of the retiring member, M. Toncic.

1.3. 3. Grants-in-aid for the three political groups

The Bureau examined in detail the practical facilities made available to the three existing political groups and concluded that it would be desirable to allow the groups to make their own arrangements as regards secretarial services and organise their work as t h ey thought fit. The present facilities should accordingly be replaced by an overall grant to each group of 500,000 francs.

The Bureau submitted to the Committee of Ministers a request to this effect, supported by the explanations and considerations which will be found in an appendix to the present report. An exchange of views took place on this matter at the meeting of t h e Joint Committee on 13th December 1957, after which the Committee of Ministers decided to reconsider the question.

1.4. 4. Institutional reform of the Council of Europe

On 22nd October 1957 (17th Sitting of present Session), the Assembly adopted a Motion tabled by M. Lucifero and a number of his colleagues reading :

" The Assembly,

Convinced that the Council of Europe does not function effectively on account of shortcomings in the Treaty by which it was created,

Decides to inscribe on the Agenda of its next part-Session consideration of the constitutional reform of the Council. "

The Bureau devoted several meetings to a consideration of the most satisfactory method by which the Assembly might usefully debate this question. It decided to present to the Assembly a report to serve as a basis of discussion at the January Session. M. Teitgen was appointed Rapporteur.

The draft Report submitted by M. Teitgen was examined by the Bureau on 13th December 1957. The Bureau adopted the Report (Doc. 763) and decided to send it to the Assembly together with a communication from the Secretary-General (Doc. 764).

1.5. 5. Committee meetings elsewhere than at Paris or Strasbourg

The Bureau approved the holding of a meeting of the Committee on Local Authorities at Bordeaux on 15th, 16th and 17th December 1957.

Appendix APPENDIX

Conclusions of the Bureau of the Assembly concerning the grants-in-aid requested for Political Groups (Para, 3 of Opinion No. 22 adopted by the Assembly on 3rd May 1957)

1. In accordance with Order No. 94, adopted by the Assembly on 21st. April 1956, the Bureau and the Secretariat-General made certain arrangements for the functioning of the political groups.

At its meeting on 1st June 1956, the Bureau approved and amended a number of suggestions made to it by the Secretariat-General.

2. The chief facilities given to the groups are the following :

Supply of offices, typing and other equipment;

Recruitment of bilingual secretarial staff for each group during sessions of the Assembly;

Placing of a messenger at the disposal of each group;

Translation and reproduction of documents issued by groups;

Interpretation into both official languages at meetings of groups.

3. This system seems to have worked reasonably well. At its meeting on 12th January 1957, however, the Bureau thought it would be more suitable to open a credit for the Political Groups so that each could organise its work as it thought fit.

In a letter dated 15th January 1957, the President of the Assembly put the matter before the Chairman of the Committee on the Budget as follows :

" After consulting the Chairmen of the three political groups, the Bureau has reached the conclusion that it would be desirable to grant a lump sum to each group to cover all its administrative needs :

Staff recruited by the group (Secretary and assistants);

Telephone calls, postage, etc.;

Travelling expenses in connection with Assembly Sessions, committee meetings, etc.;

and, in general, all expenses incurred by the groups in connection with the work of the Council of Europe. "

The Committee on the Budget, acting on this suggestion, proposed to the Assembly that a grant-in-aid of 500,000 francs should be made to each of the three existing groups. Accordingly the Assembly, on 3rd May 1957, asked the Committee of Ministers that the following new sub- Head should be inserted in the 1958 Budget (Opinion No. 22, para. 3),:

— Grants-in-aid to political groups - 1,500,000 frs.

The Budget Committee of the Council of Europe has not come to a decision on this estimate and has referred the matter to the Ministers' Deputies.

4. In order to make clear the purposes for which the appropriation is requested, the Bureau, during the second part of the Ninth Session, consulted the three political groups and examined the position of the groups in the Common Assembly and WEU Assembly.

For the Common Assembly, an appropriation has been made for a grant-in-aid to the Political Groups,., For the Financial Year 1956- 1957, this grant amounted to 2,700,000 Belgian francs, made up as follows :

basic allowance for each of the three groups - 300,000 B. F.

supplementary allowance per member of group - 23,000 B. F.

For the WEU Assembly, a grant of 200,000 francs for each group, making a total estimate of. 600,000. French francs, was requested in the draft Budget for 1958.

5. At its meeting on 25th October 1957, the Bureau decided to submit the following considerations to the Committee of Ministers regarding the utilisation of the appropriation :

If a grant of 500,000 frs. is made available to each group as, from 1958, the Council of Europe, in accordance with the previous conclusions of the Bureau, will no longer recruit a secretarial assistant or pay for telephone calls. But other services (premises, supplies, interpreters, translation, reproduction, messengers...) will continue to be provided by the Council of Europe.

Each group is prepared to supply the auditors with evidence of its expenditure.

Although varying in size (Liberals : 35; Christian Democrats 68; Socialists : 67), the groups will each receive the same grant of 500,000 francs which is considered the minimum needed to run a secretariat.

81 Representatives do not at present belong to any group. Should some of them decide to. form a new group, the above arrangements (5,00,000 frs. per group): would be reconsidered as a whole.

The Clerk of the Assembly is the person authorised to sanction the payment of the grant to the Chairman of each political group.