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Proposed European Conference of MINISTERS OF Posts and Telecommunications

Report[1]
Committee on Economic Affairs and Development
Rapporteur: Mr Karl CZERNETZ, Austria

1. 1959 - 11th Session - Second part

A. 1. Draft Recommendation

The Assembly,

1. Welcoming the technical progress made so far at t h e Conferences of St. Moritz and Montreux to organise more fully European co-operation in the field of posts and telecomm unications ;

2. Thanking the Committee of Ministers for the information on this matter contained in its last Statutory Report to the Assembly, and for the support which t h e Ministers have given so far to the Assembly's proposals in this regard;

3. Believing nevertheless that only a European Conference of Ministers of Posts and Telecommunication s will : enable progress to be made most effectively and most rapidly; make the best contribution to the promotion of the European idea; develop the most fruitful co-operation already established between the Consultative Assembly, on the one hand and intergovernmental bodies such as 0 . E. E.C,E.C.M.T., and E. C.A.C , on the other ; fully accord with the Committee of Ministers' own programme for the rationalisation of European in stitutions , particulairly as regards the economic use. of staff and the convenience of centralised location for such bodies ; and, finally, can best be fitted in to the system of European co-operation at the level of the Seventeen, which it is hoped a Europe an Economic Association will make possible in the near future;

4. Welcoming the strong support which it understands has been given b y the Austrian Government to t h e Assembly's original proposals ;

5. Noting the signature by the eighteen member countries of the 0 . E. E. C. and by Finland of the final Protocol setting up the European Conference of European Posts and Telecommunications Administrations,

Recommends to the Committee of Ministers :

that it should try to obtain a unanimous decision of Member Governments where by the European Conference of Posts and Telecommunications Administrations will be treated as preparatory to a European Conference of Ministers of Posts and Telecommunications , to be set up as soon as possible and to be linked with the 0.E. E.C. in the same way as the E. G. M. T., and in the manner proposed by the Assembly;

that the Statutes of the Conference should provide, inter alia, for links with the Council of Europe, including t h e submission by the Conference to the Consultative Assembly of an Annual Report , to which the Assembly may reply .

B. 2. Draft Resolution

The Assembly,

Having regard to Recommendation... on a proposed European Conference of Ministers of Posts and Telecommunications;

Having regard also to Resolution (58) 21 of the Committee of Ministers concerning European co - operation in the field of posts and telecommunications ,

Resolves t o ask members to introduce in their own Parliaments an appropriate text designed t o ensure that each Member Government :

> *will instruct its delegates to the Europe an Conference of Posts and Telecommunications Administrations to treat that Conference as preparatory to a European Conference of Ministers of Posts and Telecommunications, as proposed by the Assembly, and to take whatever further measures are necessary to continue the Conference's work on a ministerial basis at an early date ; and*
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> *will instructits representative on the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to support the implementation of Recommendation ... and to give whatever assistance may be needed therein.*

C. 3. Explanatory Memorandum

1.

1. Members of the Assembly will recall that in the proposals which were adopted in the form of Recommendations 102 and 143, we suggested that t he setting up of a Europe an Conference of Ministers of Posts and Telecommunications would be an important step for ward in co-operation at the level of the Fifteen / Seventeen and make a major contri-bution to the development and rationalisation of the postal and telecommunications system in Europe.

2. After a number of setbacks , support for the Assembly's proposals was finally obtained from the Co mmittee of Ministers, and in January this year a meeting was held at St. Moritz, Switzerland, attended by representatives of the postal and telecommunications administrations of the Federal Republic of Germany, France, the United Kingdom, Italy, the Netherlands , Switzerland and, for the northern cou tries , Denmark and Sweden. A further conference attended by representatives of the posts and telecommunications administrations of all OEEC countries and Finland was held at Montreux, Switzerland, in June.

3. The results of the St. Moritz meeting were conveyed to the Assembly in t h e Committee of Ministers' Tenth Report (Doc. 975, see Appendix I, pp. 25-32). Your Rapporteur heartily welcomes the progress recorded in the Ministers' Report and feels that no further comment at present is called for from the Assembly on the technical aspects of the arrangements for co-operation proposed at St. Moritz a n d finally agreed upon at Montreux. Members will no doubt agree that , having obtained the setting up of a system of this kind , we should wait until there has been t i m e for concrete res lts to be achieved before we express a further opinion on what is being done.

4. On the other hand, there are two other very important points which your Committee wishes to bring to the attention of the Assembly as soon as possible.

5. First , there is the decision adopted at Montreux and described in paragraph 1 of Article 2 of the Arrangement [2] establishing the European Conference of Postal and Telecommunications Administrations , where by " t he Conference shall be independent of a n y political or economic organisation " . This stipulation may have been designed by the sponsoring administrations to ensure that other countries would be more willing to join the new organisation if they felt that they would not , in so doing, link themselves with any other international organisation . But, having regard to the fact that the European countries, whose co-operation the Assembly has been most anxious to secure, in the first place already belong to , or are associate member of, such bodies as the 0 . E. E. C. and E. C. M. T., i t seems wrong that the advantages of some common secretariat services and a single location should not be secured right from the start . This is a purely practical economic consideration . But there are other reasons for such a link.

6. At a time when urgent efforts are being made to rationalise European institutions — t h e Committee of Ministers has itself a t last decided to take action in this regard and some practicalre sults have already been produced — i t would be wrong if a step were n ow taken to set up a new European economic institution, having no links of any kind with existing European economic bodies, and located in an entirely new centre. The arrangement which most logically suggests itself is, in fact, that originally proposed by us — that there should be a European Conference of Ministers of Posts and Telecommunications , independent in the sense that the E. C. M. T. is independent, but operated in the most economical way (general secretariat facilities being provided, as in the case of the E. C. M. T., by the. 0 . E. E. C.) and, through being located in the same place and being operated at ministeria level, like the E. C. M. T. and the 0 . E. E. C. itself, ensuring that best results are achieved.

7. As to the stipulation that the Conference should be a ministerial one on the pattern of the E. C. M. T., and not merely a Conference of senior civil servants, the Assembly will no doubt feel, from its experience with the 0 . E. E. C. and the E. C. M. T., tha the possibilities of further direct contact between itself and the Conference will be c o n s i d e r a b l y greater if the Conference is headed by Ministers who can appear before the Assembly and take part in its debates. Moreover, the future creation of a European Economic Association should constantly be borne in mind, and appropriate links between the proposed E. C. M. P . T. and the existing institutions of the Fifteen / Seventeen should be ensured as far as possible in advance.

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2. The text of this Arrangement has been circulated as an Appendix to this Document and is obtainable upon request at the Distribution Service of the Council of Europe.

8. The Assembly may wish, therefore, to draw the attention of the Ministers, as a matter of urgency, to the need for ensuring that this new piece of Europe an co-operative machinery is set up with proper regard to existing machinery in other fields and to the efforts which the Ministers themselves are making to ensure the maximum rationalisation of Europe an institutions.

9. The second point to which your Rapporteur draws attention is the fact that the Article of the Arrangement referred to above (entitled " Relations with International Organisations ") in saying that the Conference shall be independent of any political or economic organisation there by implies, of course, that there will be no link with the Council of Europe or the Consultative Assembly. This is particularly regrettable in view of the fact that the original proposal emanated from the Assembly and in view of the most fruitful co-o peration which the Assembly has established with 0. E. E. C , E. C. M . T . , and E. C. A .C. Our Committee of Ministers would probably be prepared to support an Assembly request that the new European Conference of Posts and Telecommunications Administrations be required, as a first step at least , to submit an Annual Report to the Assembly in t h e same way as is done by the 0. E. E. C , E. N. E. A., E. C. M. T., etc., and that formal links be thus established between the Conference and t h e Council of Europe, in recognition of the latter' s role as t h e general political framework for European co-operation. The Assembly may therefore wish to put this second proposal also to the Committee of Ministers.

10. It is perhaps unfortunate that there presentati ves of the eighteen member countries of 0. E. E. C , together with Finland, signed the final Protocol to the A rrangement setting up the European Conference of Posts and Telecommunications Administrations at the Conference held at Montreux in June , before the Assembly had had an opportunity of putting before Governments our views on this matter . It is gratifying, however, that at least the Austrian Government had fully accepted the arguments put forward so often by the Assembly in favour of a ministerial conference, and has never ceased to press for acceptance of this principle in the negotiations which led to the setting up of the Conference of Administrations . It is not clear how far the Foreign Offices of our Member Governments were consulted in the briefing of national delegations to the Montreux Conference—though i t is clear that , if such consultations did take place , the views of the Assembly carried little weight. It is the view of your Rapporteur, however, that this should not discourage us and that we should, on the contrary, press once again the arguments which militat in favour of a ministerial conference and try to ensure that the Conference of Administ rations now established should so function as to prepare the way for the setting up at an early date of the ministerial conference originall y proposed by us.