Resolution 103 (1956)[1]

Reply to the 3rd Report of the Common Assembly to the Consultative Assembly

Parliamentary Assembly

Introduction

1. The Assembly wishes to thank the Common Assembly of E.C.S.C. and its Rapporteur, M. Struye, for their Third Report, covering the work of the Common Assembly during the year 1955-56. The Consultative Assembly much appreciates the complete, yet concise, nature of this Report.

2. In the present Reply the comments which the Consultative Assembly wishes to make on the Common Assembly's Report are offered in the order in which the relevant points appear in the Report.

I. The Common Assembly and problems confronting the E.C.S.C

A. Mission and Powers of the Common Assembly

(9), - (10)[2]

3. The Consultative Assembly entirely agrees with the Common Assembly in singling out the importance of collaboration between the Common Assembly and national parliaments as the key problem in ensuring adequate parliamentary control in the Community. The Consultative Assembly is itself considering this problem at the present time as far as its own work is concerned, and it hopes to consider in the near future proposals on how this collaboration can be achieved in practice. The matter would seem to be one which members of the appropriate committees of the two Assemblies could usefully meet to discuss at some future time. Such a discussion could cover (a) initial proposals on the methods to be followed, (b) the success which given methods may be found to have had in practice.

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4. The Consultative Assembly feels bound to express enthusiastic agreement with the point made here on the need for keeping public opinion informed. This question is becoming even more urgent with the putting forward of new proposals for European integration in the economic field. In particular, the Consultative Assembly wonders whether, for the purpose of informing public opinion, much wider use could not be made of the distribution of simple leaflets, describing in terms readily understood by the man-in-the-street the work and progress of E.C.S.C. and its institutions. The Consultative Assembly believes that the most important of the new schemes under consideration, such as Euratom and the general common market, would also benefit substantially from a similar type of publicity.

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5. The Consultative Assembly welcomes the fact that it is already possible to see in the working of the Common Assembly "the first indication of political doctrines being formed at a European level". This is certainly the indispensable basis for successful European integration, and, since evidence of its growth can

1. see Doc. 544, draft Resolution presented by the Committee on General Affairs This Resolution was adopted by the Assembly at its 24th Sitting, on 24th October, 1956
2. Paragraph Reference in the Common Assembly Report.

best be seen in real powers, news of progress in this respect is particularly valuable. The Consultative Assembly hopes that subsequent Common Assembly Reports will give some account of the latest developments in this field.

B. Common Assembly and the realisation of the aims of the Community

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6. The Common Assembly's request to the High Authority to "increase its efforts to prevent industrial accidents" is particularly welcomed by the Consultative Assembly. The disaster at Marcinelle, which was as much a European as a national disaster, underlines the importance of this problem and gives a golden opportunity to the Community to demonstrate its capacities in the social field at the European level.

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7. The Consultative Assembly welcomes the idea of introducing European social legislation and refers in this connection to its own work at present in progress on the subject. This is a case in which co-ordination between the plans for Europe of E.C.S.C. and the plans for Europe of the Fifteen is clearly called for; and here, too, one of the most appropriate methods of ensuring this coordination might be joint consideration of projects by members of the appropriate committees of the two Assemblies.

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8. The Report here mentions that the Common Assembly has asked its members to take action in their national parliaments to support the High Authority's policy on transport. The Consultative Assembly would particularly like to know what results were achieved in this case, which is a practical instance of the collaboration between national parliaments and European assemblies mentioned in paragraph 3 above.

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9 The Consultative Assembly welcomes the Common Assembly's request made to the High Authority for a comprehensive statement from the latter of changes that have been brought about in the social conditions of Community workers. It is precisely this kind of information that should be brought to the attention of the public, so that the practical effects and advantages of the Community's operations may be appreciated and stimulated.

(44)

10. The Consultative Assembly is glad to see from the progress made in Community relations with third countries that there is, indeed, no tendency to isolationism within the Community such as was feared in the Consultative Assembly's last Reply to Common Assembly Reports (Doc. 435 of 19th October 1955). The Consultative Assembly regards this matter as one of fundamental importance and hopes that future Reports of the Common Assembly will continue to comment fully on developments in this field.

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11. The proposal mentioned in the Common Assembly's Report for a parliamentary liaison committee between the Common Assembly and British parliamentarians has, since the issue of the Common Assembly Report, proved impracticable as a result of the United Kingdom's being unable to accept it. Lord John Hope's remarks[3] on this subject in the House of Commons seem to give support to the Consultative Assembly's views on this matter, as expressed in paragraph 8 of its Reply to the First and Second Common Assembly Reports : It would be in keeping with the spirit of the Eden Plan if these relationships were organised on the basis provided by the Consultative Assembly, that is by the British Representatives in the Consultative Assembly meeting together with, the Common Assembly in a sort of Sub-Committee of the Joint Meeting". The Consultative Assembly's proposal also suggested that this body could be responsible for considering the General Report of the Council of Association, and, while the Common Assembly would require (as indicated in paragraph 59 of the Common Assembly Report) to make its own examination of the General Report, this need not prevent a further examination, with specific British parliamentary representation, in the manner of the Consultative Assembly's proposal, The Consultative Assembly would be glad to have the Common Assembly's further reaction to this.

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3. Hansard, 9th July 1956, column 34.

12. The Common Assembly's desire to see greater publicity given to the work of the Council of Ministers shows yet a further way in which public opinion can be better informed of the Community's work, and the Consultative Assembly will be interested to hear of further developments in this respect. In its own experience, the presence of Ministers during Assembly debates greatly stimulates public interest in proceedings, and if Ministers will both make statements and answer questions the stimulus is all the greater.

II. The Common Assembly and the new drive for European unity

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13. The Common Assembly's Report says that the Common Assembly considers that it constitutes "the primary foundations of a larger and wider community". Thus the Common Asseroblyts views on the latest schemes for further European economic integration are vitally important for all who examine these schemes. The Consultative Assembly is in the process of formulating its own views on these projects (Euratom and the general common market) in the light of continuing developments, and, naturally, gives the closest attention to the Common Assembly's attitude. The present reply does not propose to enter on a detailed comparison between the positions of the two Assemblies in regard to a general common market and Euratom, though here again any divergences of view that may arise would seem to be appropriate subjects for discussion at joint meetings of members of the appropriate committees of both Assemblies.

(55)

sub-para.9

14. There is, however, one special point the Consultative Assembly would like to make in this connection. The Consultative Assembly, like the Common Assembly Working Party, supports the participation in the new Communities of trade union organisations, and notes that in the view of the Common Assembly "such participation could take the form of at least consultative representation". Presumably, however, such representation should not, in fact, be more than consultative, since the Community as a whole has its proper (and supreme) representation, a parliamentary one, in the Common Assembly, and there must be no arrangement which would derogate from the latter's authority.

III. The Common Assembly and matters of particular interest to the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe

15. This section of the Reply covers the points of interest to both Assemblies as mentioned in the Common Assembly Report and the Consultative Assembly's earlier Reply to the First and Second Reports of the Common Assembly (Doc. 435).

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16. The question of freedom of accession to the Community has already been touched upon in this Reply (see paragraph 10 above). The Consultative Assembly would, however, like to add that, for its part, it will continue to encourage Member States of the Council of Europe to keep under active and sympathetic examination all possibilities of association with the Community. By such encouragement the Consultative Assembly feels that it will match the Common Assembly's own efforts for widening the Community, and contribute thus to the progress of European integration as a whole.

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17. The Consultative Assembly is very glad to note that in the event of chairmen of its committees requesting officially a meeting with their colleagues in the Common Asssembly to discuss questions of common interest, such requests would be favourably received. The Assembly feels, as can be seen from this Reply, that suitable occasions for such meetings will certainly arise, and looks forward to fruitful collaboration between the two Assemblies on this basis.

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18. The question of relations between the Common Assembly and the United Kingdom Parliament has been dealt with above (see paragraph 11).

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19. The Consultative Assembly agrees with the Common Assembly that election by universal suffrage is not a practical proposition at the present time. On the other hand, the progress which it is hoped will be made in stimulating really close public interest in the work of the Community, and, still more, the effects on public interest in European affairs which the setting up of the general common market and Euratom would mean, should certainly keep the possibility of universal suffrage well in the minds of all European parliamentarians. For example, the fifteen years transition period, at the end of which the general common market should have been established, if the present plan is accepted, should certainly be long enough to see European public opinion "Europe-anised" to an extent which would justify serious consideration of election to European Assemblies by universal suffrage after that time at the latest.

(62)

20. In connection with the possibility of granting consultative status to organisations such as trade unions, employer and professional associations, the Common Assembly Report points out that the Consultative Committee of the E.C.S.C. represents categories of the population rather than specific groups. But it is precisely the trade union and other organisations to which the Consultative Assembly has found it useful to give consultative status, feeling that categories of the electorate should properly be represented only through the medium of their locally elected parliamentary representative. As the organisations in question are in no case represented as such in the Consultative Committee of the E.C.S.C, this is a point on which the Consultative Assembly would be glad of further discussion with the Common Assembly.

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21. The Consultative Assembly notes that the Common Assembly agrees to a discussion of both the General Report on the Community's activities and the Common Assembly's own Report at joint meetings of the two Assemblies, but that the Common Assembly, for procedural reasons, does not wish the Annual Report of the O.E.E.C. actually to appear on the Agenda of such joint meetings. The Consultative Assembly accepts the Common Assembly's views on this point.

Conclusion

22. The Consultative Assembly would like to make one general observation in conclusion : with the impending decisions on new forms of economic integration of Europe, the experience of the Coal and Steel Community and the views of the Common Assembly acquire a new signficance. For this reason the Third Report of the Common Assembly has been particularly valuable to the Consultative Assembly, and it is hoped that it will be possible for the next Report to cover the same ground as the present one.