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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Doc. 85
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Conclusion of the Debate on the Report from the Committee on General Affairs

Conclusions[1]
Parliamentary Assembly

1. Resolutions adopted by the Committee on General Affairs and agreed to by the Assembly 18th August 1950, at the conclusion of the Debate on the Report from the Committee on General Affairs

1.1. The Committee on General Affairs

Considering that it is highly desirable, for the efficiency of the work undertaken by the Consultative Assembly and its Committees, that the members of national parliamentary assemblies should be kept regularly informed of the activities of the Council of Europe and should be able to associate themselves with such activities,

associate themselves with such activities, : Requests that the Secretary-General arrange for a Report to be drawn up on the practical methods whereby such liaison could be assured, basing this Report on the observations made by members of the Committee,

Requests that the Assembly undertake a study of the proposals contained in the Secretary- General's Report at its next Session.

1.2. The Committee on General Affairs

Considering that it is highly desirable that Members should take practical steps to make public opinion more directly aware of the reality of European Union,

Considering that it is urgent that the education of public opinion in each country as regards such action should be extended to include all matters relating to the realisation of a closer union between Members and to the activities of the Council of Europe,

Requests that the Secretary-General arrange for a Report to be drawn up on the practical steps which might be taken for this purpose and authorises him to prepare a plan for developing the activities of the Directorate of Information of the Secretariat-General : the Directorate should carry out its task in the different Member states with the collaboration of the competent Governmental Departments,

Requests that the Assembly, at its next Session, undertake a study of the Proposals contained in the Reports of the Secretary-General and that it should recommend that the Committee of Ministers examine these plans and provide the Secretariat with the necessary means for their early execution.

1. See Doc. 4, Report.

Appendix 1

Report of the Secretary-General on practical methods which might he adopted to keep Members of Parliament of Member States regularly informed of the activities of the Council of Europe and enable them to associate themselves with such activities

During its fourth Session, the Committee on General Affairs adopted the following Resolution (Doc. 4, § 65) :

"• The Committee on General Affairs,

" Considerin g that it is highly desirable, for the efficiency of the work undertaken by the Consultative Assembly and its Committees, that the members of national parliamentary assemblies should be kept regularly informed of the activities of the Council of Europe and should be able to associate themselves with such activities,

" Request s that the Secretary-General arrange for a Report to be drawn up on the practical methods whereby such liaison could be assured, basing this Report on the observations made by members of the Committee,

" Request s that the Assembly undertake a study of the proposals contained in the Secretary- General's Report at its next Session.

During its first year of activity the Directorate of Information of the Secretariat-General has drawn up a certain number of documents for the information of Representatives.

On the 25th of each month Assembly Representatives are sent a collection of documents as follows

a. Documentary notes on a specific subject, under the title " Studies and Documents ".

b. Information on th e activities of the Council of Europe during the past month, with copies of all material issued to the Press on such activities under the title " News from Strasbourg ".

c. Documents of general interest published by other organisations (e.g. the Labour Party Manifest on European Unity, the 0. E. E. C. documents on the European Payments Union, etc.).

d. An official bulletin of the Council of Europe will shortly be published.

After a trial period, these documents are now issued more or less in their final form. The Secretariat-General has recently acquired new equipment which will enable it to improve the presentation of these documents and increase the number of copies printed. Members of the Assembly have been asked many times to give us the benefit of their criticisms of these publications and any suggestions for improving their contents.

If the Secretariat-General can obtain the necessary funds, it will be able to arrange for the circulation of those documents to all Members of Parliament of Member States or at least to those indicated by Assembly Representatives as being particularly interested in European problems. This would seem to be the simplest and most practicable and efficient solution to the problem raised by the Committee on General Affairs.

Appendix 2

Report by the Secretary-General on the practical steps which might be taken to make public opinion directly aware of the reality of European Union and on the development of the education of public opinion by the Directorate of Information of the Secretariat-General with the collaboration of the competent Government Departments

During its Fourth Session the Committee on General Affairs adopted a Resolution worded as follows (Doc. 4, § 66) :

" Th e Committee on General Affairs,

" Considering that it is highly desirable that Members should take practical steps to make public opinion more directly aware of the reality of European union,

" Considerin g that it is urgent that the education of public opinion in each country as regards such action should be extended to include all matters relating to the realisation of the closer union between Members and to the activities of the Council of Europe,

" Request s that the Secretary-General arrange for a Report to be drawn up on the practical steps which might be taken for this purpose and authorises him to prepare a plan for developing the activities of the Directorate of Information of the Secretariat-General : the Directorate should carry out its tasks in the different Member States with the collaboration of the competent Governmental Departments :

" Request s that the Assembly, at its next Session, undertake a study of the Proposals contained in the Reports of the Secretary-General and that it should recommend that the Committee of Ministers examine these plans and provide the Secretariat with the necessary means for their early execution."

The problem of the education of the masses had previously been mentioned in two Recommendations which the Consultative Assembly adopted during their Ordinary Session of 1949 : on the one hand, within the framework of the Recommendation on the rôle of the Council of Europe in the economic field; on the other hand, in the form of a reference back to the Standing Committee for examination of the problem of the systematic organisation of the instruction of the great mass of the people on the subject of union for Europe(Doc. 71 et 73, ordinary session 1949).

The first Recommendation was examined by the Committee of Ministers and led to instructions being given by it to the Secretary-General to draw up a common plan with the 0. E. E. C. The Secretariat-General of the Council of Europe and the 0. E. E. C. agreed on a certain number of steps to be taken to give effect to this Recommendation.

A Report on the second Recommendation has been made by the Secretariat-General for submission to the Standing Committee. In practice, the Committee on General Affairs has taken over the mandate which had been given to the Standing Committee along these lines..

The problems raised by the Resolution from the Committee on General Affairs are of two kinds : firstly, examination of the steps to be taken to popularise the European idea, and, secondly, the steps to be taken by the Secretariat- General to ensure the education of Euro^ pean public opinion with the collaboration of Governmental Departments inside the various Member States. These two problems will be dealt with in turn below.

CHAPTER I - PRACTICAL STEPS TO MAKE PUBLIC OPINION DIRECTLY AWARE OF THE REALITY OF EUROPEAN UNION

The steps to be taken towards this goal can be conceived very variously. Certain of them have been suggested by the Consultative Assembly and are being implemented. Others have been examined either by the Secretariat-General or by the Committee of Cultural Experts appointed by the Committee of Ministers or by organisations outside the Council. Below are the main points arising oxit of their work.

The European flag

It seems advisable that the idea of union between the States of Europe be given concrete form by a symbol[2].

On behalf of the European Parliamentary Union Count Coudenhouve-Kalergi has laid before the Secretariat-General a Proposal to be submitted to the Consultative Assembly for the Council to adopt the flag of the Pan-European Movement. Furthermore, several persons have sent to the Secretariat-General designs for a flag for

the Council of Europe. Finally, the Secretariat-General has studied the problem and has prepared suggestions which might with advantage be examined by the Assembly during its 1950 Session. These suggestions concern both the form of the flag and the rules for its use, so as to ensure its dignity and regulate its official use by Member States.

It is urgent to pronounce on this problem : the need for a flag is strongly felt, and there is a risk either that enthusiasts may in all good faith appropriate colours properly belonging to certain movements, or that flags will spring to life from the realms of pure fantasy.

The Assembly Bureau, after examining the question, considered that it was for the Assembly itself to give a decision and that it would be desirable for a small sub-committee to study the problem before it was submitted to the Plenary Assembly during the present Session.

Freedom of movement in Europe

During its Sitting of 8th September 1949, the Consultative Assembly adopted a Recommendation to the Committee of Ministers in which it stressed the symbolic value of a European passport and requested that the question be studied by the competent national ministerial departments (Doc. 112).

It is obvious that the use of one and the same passport by Members of the Council of Europe would be of great value as a step to make people aware of European unity. The question is being studied but from now on there are grounds for fearing that certain objections will be encountered, due especially to the fact that already visas have been abolished to a large extent between European countries. In this connection a wide circulation of documents showing to what extent freedom of movement between the Member States of the Council of Europe has been instituted, might be a useful preliminary gesture.

A European stamp

On the Assembly's suggestion the Committee on Economic Questions of the Consultative Assembly has examined the possibility of creating a European stamp.

From the angle with which we are concerned here, the first and most impressive step might be to obtain a preferential European tariff for postal communication between Member States of the Council of Europe. It will be noted with interest that France and Italy have recently extended their internal postal tariff system to cover correspondence between their two countries. The general extension of such a system should be undertaken immediately.

As for the stamp itself, the most simple arrangement would be to have a common stamp •—-with a single design, of a single colour—either for a single internal tariff to cover the whole of Europe-or to be used by Member States for general franking of international correspondence. This single design, the colour of which will be fixed within the framework of the Universal Postal Union, would also bear the name of the country of emission and the value of the stamp in the currency of that country.

If certain countries object that they cannot use postage stamps which do not bear the effigy of their Head of State, it would be necessary to be content with the idea of the common theme recently used by the Universal Postal Union on the occasion of its own 75th anniversary,

European Broadcasts

The idea of broadcasts common to Member States of the Council of Europe is theoretically very attractive. It should be recognised how-! ever that national broadcasting systems are very attached to their own arrangements and methods, and that such European broadcasts raise problems of the languages to be used, the listening habits of listeners in each country, and even that of the size of the listening public (it is certain

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2. It is perhaps useful to quoto hero an extract from an article published recently by the French writer Daniel Rops, " Drapeau d'Europo " (European flag) : " All this, it should bo stated clearly, is important. More important than it seems. And it would bo holpful if this endeavour made in France by a few teams of young people in the most generous and disinterested manner, was heard of in other countries. A flag is only a symbol : agreed. It is only tho expression of a myth. But, oven before Georges Sorol it was constantly being borne out that it is the great myths that lead the world and that symbols have a profound effect on men. The day that a European Hymn salutes the European flag, as to-day tho national Hymn salutes the national flag in various countries, a great step will have been mado along the road towards this essential union. That is why the Volunteers are right to continue their crusade for all the great towns of Fiance to bo docked with flags on J u l y 14th; on this day, when we celebrate both liberty and fraternity, such a manifestation would havo its full effect."

that a short broadcast, slipped in in an appropriate place between national programmes would have a better chance of reaching a public not directly interested in European questions than would narrowly specialised broadcasts).

With such considerations in mind, the Committee of Cultural Experts which met in Strasbourg at the end of June 1950 on the request of the Committee of Ministers has considered that the institution of a European radio station is not desirable at the present moment. It should not be forgotten, moreover, that such a creation would involve enormous difficulties (raising of necessary capital, lack of available wave-lengths, practical impossibility of setting up a broadcasting organisation starting from scratch, etc.).

The experts considered it more expedient to suggest that the attention of national broadcasting systems be drawn to the necessity of devoting regular programmes to European problems, and to request the Secretariat-General to provide these broadcasting systems with the recordings and scripts which would allow such broadcasts to be made.

The Assembly could support this point of view by including a " minimum clause " to guarantee that these broadcasts shall in fact take place and shall occupy at least a quarter of an hour per week.

Common programmes broadcast simultaneously should necessarily be reserved for very special circumstances. This was the case, for instance, on New Year's Eve, 1949, when the Netherlands Socialist Broadcasting System asked permission to broadcast the bells of Strasbourg striking midnight : the Secretariat-General took the initiative of offering this broadcast to radio stations of all the Member countries and added spoken messages from the Chairman of the Committee of Ministers, the President of the Consultative Assembly and the Secretary-General of the Council. Other broadcasts of the same order could be made but it is essential that they should only be done in exceptional circumstances if they are to preserve their psychological value.

The sound equipment installed in the new building of the Council of Europe will allow the Secretariat to record numerous documents and perhaps to reproduce documents sent by the broadcasting systems of Member States with a view to making deferred common broadcasts to be rebroadcast by each of the national broadcasting systems.

European Television

It is perhaps of use to draw attention to a question of great psychological importance which is arising now. Television is being installed in Europe. The problem is one of " definition ". i.e. the number of lines which make up the image. Receivers cannot be adapted to different systems of " definition." This means that if different definitions are adopted by the various European States it will be impossible for receivers in one State to pick up television programmes from a neighbouring State, and that the exchange of programmes between them over Hertzian cables will be impossible. Briefly, the situation would be as ridiculous and as out of date as that of countries which are intimately linked but yet employ different gauges on the railways.

This danger exists at the present moment. Member States of the Council of Europe are not agreed on the definition to adopt. It would be of high political importance for the Assembly to review this question and make positive suggestions so that the necessary unification, perfectly possible from the technical point of view, may come about.

Cultural and Scientific Unification

The exchange of students and scholars should be encouraged and extended, either during holidays or—even better—in the course of the academic year.

A further matter of capital importance is the equivalence of degrees, a question which has already been studied to some extent by the Committee of Cultural Experts.

The Cultural Experts further recommended that the cultural identity card in force in the Member States of the Brussels Treaty should be extended to Member States of the Council of Europe. This measure is of great interest even as it stands, but it might be advisable to consider extending it beyond the purely university sphere and to apply it to workers undergoing courses, worker's educational organisations, etc. The proposal to encourage and publicise widely the university courses which the Member States have organised on the subject of European problems is equally interesting, although necessarily limited to a fairly restricted public.

European Sporting Events

Neither should the great attraction to the popular masses of sporting competitions be overlooked. It is true, of course, that sports are by their nature highly international, and tho term " Europe " is used in a very broad sense (cf. the " European " Zone of the Davis Cup, " European " football teams, etc.).

Nevertheless, the encouragement of competitions between athletes belonging to Member States would certainly provide a good opportunity to make use of the word " European " —the repeated use of this term is an essential factor in gaining the desired ends-—and the European flag should be flown for the benefit of those whose minds are closed to all other argument.

A further idea which it might be well to consider is that of instituting European Trophies under the auspices of the Council of Europe, to be presented to those athletes belonging to Member States who showed exceptional prowess in the course of the year.

European Congresses

Steps taken along these lines should be of a very general nature, encouraging such congresses to deal with the widest possible range of questions and bringing together representatives of Member States or of a large proportion of such States; further, that the policy should be pursued of enabling persons of varying views to come face to face with each other, by encouraging the presence of observers, speeches emphasising the possibilities inherent in wider European co-operation, and so forth.

Such a policy would help to instil our ideas and principles, and a sense of co-operation and unity, in the minds of those belonging to specialised organisations.

Popular European Movements

In principle, it is not within the sphere of action of the Council of Europe to foster direct European action vis-à-vis the popular masses. This is rather the task of the private organisations which have played so large a part in the Council's initial creation. The Council of Europe might help by supplying them with necessary documentation and utilising their observations in preparing its own information material.

It is perhaps in this manner that private Movements for European Union might best deploy their efforts.

Sundry other measures

The range of possibilities for the achievement of our aim is extremely wide. There are all kinds of valuable steps which might be taken, some in the most unexpected ways.

Suggestions from Members of the Consultative Assembly would be of great value, and it would be of assistance if they would inform the Secretariat- General not only of any measures they would like to see put into practice, but also of any measures which to their knowledge have already been adopted on a limited scale in circles known to them personally. Such measures might then be widely circulated by the Secretariat-General and the consequent exchange of information would help to strengthen the feeling of European unity. The important thing is to bring home the idea of the unity and reality of Europe at all times and places.

It is suggested that the Consultative Assembly should endeavour to adopt precise Recommendations on the above nine points.

CHAPTER II - THE DEVELOPMENT OF INFORMATION TO THE PUBLIC ON CLOSER UNION BETWEEN MEMBER STATES AND THE ACTIVITIES OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

The Resolution of the Committee on General Affairs indicates that information to public opinion in Member States should be developed by the direct action of the Directorate of Information of the Secretariat-General, in conjunction with the competent governmental departments.

The present situation may be summed up as follows :

The Secretariat-General is using the following sources of information :

a. Documents drawn up by the organs of the Council, of Europe;

b. Review of Newspapers;

c. Review Press Agencies reports;

d. Radio monitoring;

e. Reports from its national correspondents in the various countries.

Conversely, the output of the Secretariat-General in the field of information is as follows

a. A daily Press review for internal office use ;

b. A daily radio bulletin for internal office use;

c. A series called " Studies and Documents " for the benefit of Representatives of the Assembly and persons with a particular interest in the Council of Europe;

d. A monthly review of the Council's activities entitled " News from Strasbourg " for the benefit of Representatives of the Assembly;

e. Various pamphlets and other publications (during the first year of activity, the printing of information pamphlets was delayed with a view to giving them more permanent value on final printing and enabling them to present thereby a clearer picture of the organisation when matters such as the list of Member States and procedure to be adopted were more definitely known) ;

f. Visual material (cf. e) above);

g. Material destined for the use of lecturers ;

h. Scripts for radio programmes and accompanying recordings for use in feature programmes;

i. Studies on various subjects connected with European union in general and the Council of Europe in particular;

j. Press communiqués and statements.

The various papers produced by the Directorate of Information of the Secretariat-General are at present distributed to Representatives, journalists or the Secretariat-General for internal use, as the case may be.

With the aid of the means outlined above it should be possible to put the Proposal of the Committee on General Affairs into effect, provided that the necessary funds are forthcoming for their development and improvement. Under this Proposal papers and material would be distributed among the various Member States with the co-operation of the Information Services of the respective countries. This co-operation should be effected in four ways

a. Selection of subjects of particular " national " interest;

b. Decision as to the form of the publication for the country in question (choice of views, presentation, discussion of lay-out, etc.);

c. Documents drawn up in collaboration to be printed either by national organisations or by reserving a large sum in the budget of the Council of Europe for financing the costs for all the countries concerned;

d. Distribution of these publications by the national services in accordance with a plan drawn up in collaboration with the Directorate of Information of the Council.

It would be very difficult to try at the outset to work out a publicity programme large enough to reach 280 million Europeans. Requirements must therefore be put in order of priority and the most pressing needs met first. All the same, the Directorate of Information should be provided with the necessary means to supply information on the activities of the Council of Europe and the most important problems to various institutions, such as the following :

a. The Press (although measures are already being taken in this field, they should be extended in order to reach a wider section of the Press, including provincial newspapers and periodicals) ;

b. Parliamentary and political circles in general, Members of Parliament of European countries, major political organisations such as the various Parties and Movements, etc.;

c. Officials;

d. Trade Unions;

e. Universities and educational institutions;

f. Religiou s bodies and charitable organisations which are also concerned with educational work.

Co-operation with the national government services is essential for the development of such activities. Contacts should be made with various national Departments, concerned with Council of Europe, European Affairs, Public Information, the office of the Prime Minister, the Radio, Public Education, etc. Each country's circumstances should be examined individually.

The Assembly should recommend the Committee of Ministers to include in the Budget of the Council of Europe the sums necessary to carry out a programme based on the points mentioned here. It should also request the Committee of Ministers to adopt a Recommendation proposing that the Governments " instruct the Departments in question in the respective countries to communicate with the Directorate of Information of the Secretariat-General of the Council of Europe with a view to organising a permanent collaboration, so that the popular masses may be informed about Europe's problems in general, and the activities and achievements of the Council of Europe in particular."