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Appointment of a Special Committee on municipal and Regional Affairs

Report
Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs
Rapporteur: Mr Jacques CHABAN-DELMAS, France

A. Draft Resolution

The Assembly,

Decides, in accordance with paragraph 2 of Rule 40 of the Rules of Procedure, to set up a Special Committee on Municipal and Regional Affairs;

Fixes the number of seats on the Committee at 19, two each for the British, French, German and Italian groups respectively, and one each for the other groups of Representatives ;

Instructs the said Committee to establish all necessary contacts with the organisations, governmental or non-governmental, concerned, to proceed to study European problems at the municipal and regional level, to supply these organisations with all information in its possession likely to provide a basis of assessment or action, and to report to the Assembly on any questions referred to it.

B.

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This proposal represents the practical conclusion of a series of considerations which may be summarised as follows :

The spreading of the European idea among the general public constitutes an essential objective for the immediate future; local government representatives, whether municipal or not, can be of the greatest assistance in spreading this idea of transcending importance, since they are very close to the people and far removed from party politics.

As soon as the first European Community has been put into operation, the local authorities will be responsible for applying numerous measures, often of a delicate nature, yet essential for the implementation of decisions of overriding importance. Whether such measures relate to housing, education, professional reassessment, or any other matter, affecting the ordinary live of those concerned, it will be of the greatest importance that local authorities take whatever action is necessary in a deliberately sympathetic frame of mind, which can only be the case if they have already been convinced of the value of the European idea.

The Council of Europe, and more particularly the Consultative Assembly, will have so to organise itself as to be able both to keep itself informed about the projects which have been, or are being carried out, or are under consideration by local bodies, and to be in a position to guide the efforts being made, so that maximum efficiency will be achieved both for the spreading of the European idea and for its most harmonious application.

Certain bodies already exist representing the local authorities, both at the national level, in the various States (Association of Mayors or of Municipalities), and at the international level (Council of European Municipalities, with its Seat at Geneva, and the International Union of Municipal Authorities). The Assembly will thus be able to establish contact with competent bodies and obtain from them progress reports essential for its own information.

By reason of the special character of this very wide field, which may be called the sphere of local communities, and by reason also of the natural multiplicity of the problems to be dealt with (European economic, social and cultural policy), it is essential for the Consultative Assembly to appoint a special committee, to remain in constant touch both with the various organs of the Consultative Assembly and with the bodies representing local authorities from the municipal to the regional, in order to carry out its multifarious tasks.

One member of the Committee objected that it would be improper to request the local authorities to spread the European idea in the minds of the population under their administration.

Other members pointed out that there were already too many committees and subcommittees, with the result that Representatives were overwhelmed with masses of papers and documents. The setting up of a new committee would increase the burden. The same members stated, nevertheless, that they would be willing to take part in the work of the committee if the Assembly decided to appoint it.