Parliamentary Assembly
Assemblée parlementaire
https://pace.coe.int

COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Doc. 211
23 September 1953

Use of television as a medium for securing support among the general public for the European idea

Report
Committee on Culture, Science and Education
Rapporteur: Mr Christopher HOLLIS, United Kingdom

A. Draft Recommendation

The Assembly,

Considering the importance of T.V. as an international means of creating that common body of European opinion upon which the political structure of Europe must ultimately depend ;

Taking note of the findings of the Committee on Cultural and Scientific Questions based on the working party of experts convened by the Secretary-General at the request of the Committee ;

Taking note that important international T. V. developments which are taking place at the technical level under the auspices of the European Broadcasting Union and other bodies are, nevertheless, hindered by difficulties susceptible of solution by international political agreement,

Recommends to the Committee of Ministers :

a. to transmit to Member Governments the suggestions of the Committee on Cultural and Scientific Questions with regard to the reduction of costs in international transmission, and to the removal of legal and other obstacles to the production and exchange of programme material ;

b. to take all steps within its power to assist the rapid completion of the European T. V. network which is at present being built up by the T. V. industry; and

c. to take steps to arrive at a European Convention on copyright which will facilitate the exchange of programme material;

d. to request Member Governments to encourage where appropriate the production by national T.V. systems of programmes designed to make better known the cultural, economic and political life of other European peoples and to foster the European idea.

B. Explanatory Memorandum

1.

The Committee on Cultural and Scientific Questions, at its meeting of the 23rd June, 1953, considered a resolution submitted to it by Mr. Smithers on the international aspect of television. It was decided as a result of this discussion to appoint a working party of techni-cal experts who could advise the Committee whether there were any steps which it could usefully recommend to the Council of Europe in order to stimulate as wide an international cooperation as possible in television between the member countries of the Council.

As a result of their decision two meetings of that working party have taken place —the one in London on July 6, the other in Strasbourg on September 2. Four papers by experts were submitted to the second meeting. They were a report by Prof. Nestel of the Nordwestdeutscher Rundfunk, a report by Mr. McCall, of the B.B.C. submitted by Mr. Conner, a report of M. de Muynck, submitted by M. Neuville of the Belgian Ministry of Communication and a report by M. Sallebert, of Radiodiffusion Française.

As a result of these reports and the discussion that followed on them it was evident :

a. that the experts greatly welcomed the fact that the Council of Europe was prepared to take an interest in this very important question in which they themselves were so keenly interested;

b. that, on the other hand, the Council would clearly make a mistake if it gave an impression of assuming that it was the first body to interest itself in this problem or of feeling itself in any way competent to teach those in the industry their own business. There could be no question of the Council imposing a detailed plan on the television industry, and harm might easily be done by impatient statements which overlooked difficulties with which those in the industry knew themselves from daily experience to be faced.

The practical points on which it emerged, from the discussion in the Committee, that Governments and the Council of Europe might possibly help international development of television were as follows :

1. The cost of international relays could be greatly reduced if each nation had transmitters near to its frontiers—in particular, if the B.B.C. had a transmitter at some such place as Dover.

2. Confusion is at present caused by national differences in copyright law. UNESCO is at present considering the possibilities of standardising all copyright laws. The one great obstacle to standardisation is the United States. It might well be possible to standardise European copyright law without waiting for American agreement. If that were done the Commonwealth countries would certainly fall into line.

3. Films might he made in co-production under the auspices of the Council of Europe on matters of European interest for hiring out to the national services as required.

4. The Council of Europe might recommend Governments to give financial guarantees which would cover both the making of television films for hire from other countries and the cost of hiring itself.

5. International links might be built by Governments through their post offices and hired by the broadcasting corporations.

6. It is on the basis of these conclusions that the Committee has decided unanimously to submit the following draft Recommendation to the Assembly.