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Chapter II of the Special Message from the Committee of Ministers - Economic Questions -

Opinion[1]
Committee on Economic Affairs and Development
Rapporteur: Mr Per FEDERSPIEL, Denmark

A. Opinion

1. General Considerations — paragraphs 23—26

1. The Consultative Assembly is in full agreement with the Committee of Ministers concerning the right of initiative of the Council of Europe in all questions connected with the economic organisation of Europe, including those which are under consideration by other international organisations. The Assembly considers, however, that this right of initiative should apply not only in the technical, economic and social fields, but also in the field of general economic policy. The Consultative Assembly has always considered that its role in the economic field was to act as a European parliamentary tribune for discussing regional economic co-operation in Europe. The Assembly has never had any intention of itself implementing the policy of economic integration in Europe. It regards itself as a body through which public opinion can in-' fluence the economic co-operation undertaken by various organisations, and through which these specialised organisations can, in their turn, address public opinion. Moreover, the Assembly has always felt it its special responsibility to consider the economic measures proposed within the context of their political and social consequences, to which more technical' organisations, on account of their differing constitution, cannot devote the same degree of attention. The Assembly is gratified to learn that the Committee of Ministers shares this view, and it regards paragraphs 23 to 26 as confirmation of the policy so far pursued by the Consultative Assembly in the economic field.

2. The Consultative Assembly welcomes the suggestion put forward by the Committee of Ministers that it should increase the proportion of its debating time devoted to the discussion of major economic questions in order to keep public opinion informed on the progress of economic integration in Europe. The Committee on Economic Questions of the Assembly has already taken certain measures to this end. In September, 1953, for instance, the Committee instructed the Secretary-General to prepare, in consultation with O.E.E.C., E.C.E. and E.C.S.C, a study of the present position of economic integration in Europe, in order to ascertain whether the various methods of integration hitherto employed were compatible with one another, and to put forward constructive proposals concerning future efforts in this field. The Committee on Economic Questions hopes to have its final report on this problem ready for the first part of the Seventh Session oE the Consultative Assembly, and asks the Committee of Ministers for support both as regards the publication of this study and its transmission to the specialised organisations.

3. The Consultative Assembly trusts that the Committee of Ministers will take all appropriate steps to improve or facilitate relations between the Assembly and the Secretariat-General, on the one hand, and the various specialised organisations working in the economic field, on the other.

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2. Specific proposals

Paragraph 27 — Strasbourg Plan

In its Recommendation 61 of May, 1954, the Consultative Assembly made known its views on the comments of O.E.E.C. on the Strasbourg Plan.

The Assembly notes that, in its Supplementary Report, the Committee of Ministers expressed the intention of reaching a conclusion regarding the proposals put forward by the Assembly in its Recommendation 26 of September, 1952, as also its Recommendation 61 of May, 1954.

Before it does so, however, the Assembly requests that the question be discussed in the Joint Committee, in the presence of representatives of the Committee on Economic Questions,

Paragraph 28 — Economic development of Southern Europe

The Consultative Assembly welcomes tho suggestion from the Committee of Ministers, that it should examine the problems of the economic development of Southern Europe. In accordance with the instructions given by the Assembly during the first part of the Sixth Session (Order of the Aissembly No. 57), the Committee on Economic Questions has decided to set up a Working Party consisting of a representative of each of the countries concerned and three representatives for the remainder of the Member States. In view of the manifest urgency of early action to improve economic conditions in the area under consideration, this Working Party proposes to embark on its studies on the spot as soon as the necessary material has been made available, and will present its report to the Seventh Session of the Consultative Assembly.

Paragraph 29 — Convertibility

The Assembly has always been aware of the importance of the problem of convertibility of currencies — a problem which is of particular interest at the present moment.

It is transmitting its' conclusions on this point to the Committee of Ministers in a special recommendation.

Paragraphs 30-33 — Low Tariff Club

The Consultative Assembly, which entirely approves the procedure followed and the action contemplated by the Committee of Ministers in this connection, considers that it would also be desirable for the Member Governments of the Council of Europe to call the attention of their representatives to G.A.T.T., to this Council of Europe plan and to the importance they attach to the regional aspect of this problem, which G.A.T.T. regards chiefly from a world point of view.

Paragraph 34 — European Companies

The Committee on Economic Questions considers that the establishment of European Companies would not in every case represent a constructive contribution to the economic integration of Europe. The Committee considers, however, that European Companies with a legal and administrative status jointly defined by Member States might be of real value in certain specific cases.

The Committee on Economic Questions hopes that during the Seventh Session it will be able, in conjunction with the Committee on Legal Questions, to submit definite proposals on this subject.

Paragraph 35 — European Transport

The problem of co-ordinating European transport will be touched upon in the report, referred to above, on the present position of integration in Europe.

Paragraph 36 — Agriculture

Nothing to report.

Paragraph 37 — Patents

The Consultative Assembly expresses its satisfaction with the results already achieved by the Committee of Ministers in this sphere, particularly as regards the questions of classification.

Paragraphs 38-40 — Prevention of animal epidemics and protection of plants

The Consultative Assembly welcomes the suggestions put forward by the Committee of Ministers, and considers that a solution should be sought on the regional level.