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Chapter IV of the Special Message from the Committee of Ministers - Cultural field -

Opinion[1]
Committee on Culture, Science and Education
Rapporteur: Mr Christopher HOLLIS, United Kingdom

A. Opinion

1. The Assembly has given careful consideration to Chapter IV of the Special Message containing the principles on which the Coram it-tee of Ministers feels the execution of its cultural programme should be based. It has, moreover, attentively studied Appendices II to VI enumerating the precise proposals which the Committee of Ministers considers should be, if not put into effect, at least given preliminary examination by its Committee of Cultural Experts.

2. The Assembly welcomes the spirit of initiative underlying this both broad and varied cultural programme. It notes with much interest that the proposals mentioned in Appendix III are already in process of implementation.

3. In general the Assembly feels that the limited financial resources at present possessed by the Council of Europe for developing its cultural activities are quite inadequate to meet the legitimate needs of an organisation which represents the common will of fifteen nations. For this reason it strongly recommends a considerable increase in the cultural budget of the Council of Europe.

4. The views expressed in this Opinion in ho way represent the final views of the . Assembly on the general principles that it wishes to see applied in the cultural field. The Assembly reserves the right to express these to the Committee of Ministers at a later date. • • • I n the meantime, the Assembly would emphasize that in its opinion it is not sufficient-merely to suggest a number of isolated projects and then to proceed to carry them out haphazardly, however desirable the implementation of each of such projects may be. It is rather a question of devising a method whereby the cultural activities of the Council of Europe as a whole may be selected and co-ordinated. First, the rôle which the Council, as an international organisation, might properly play in the cultural field must be ciearly defined. . Secondly, relations between the Council and other international cultural organisations, both governmental and non-governmental, must be systematised, and co-ordinated, since only by such co-ordination can the. different tasks judiciously be allotted. Lastly, suitable criteria should be agreed for the selection and classification of the cultural activities of the ' Council. Such criteria cannot possibly be based solely on budgetary considerations. The sole aim of the present suggestions is to resolve one immediate problem, namely the relations between the Committee 'of Cultural Experts and the Committee on Cultural and Scientific Questions of the Assembly.

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1. Relations between the Committee of Cultural Experts and the Committee on Cultural and Scientific Questions

5. The Assembly wishes to pay special tribute to the Committee of Cultural Experts on whose activities the cultural part of the Programme of "Work was based. It feels that these activities, in which the governmental initiative of the various Member States has proved as dynamic as it has been fruitful, might in many respects serve as a model for all Ministerial organs of the Council of Europe.

6. The Assembly, however, much regrets that it has not been more effectively associated with the work of the Committee of Cultural Experts, particularly as it fully appreciates tho authoritative nature of this experienced body.

7. In preparing this Opinion the Assembly has once again been struck by the evident inadequacy of present contacts between its Cultural Committee and the Committee of Cultural Experts.

8. Fundamentally , this question is bound up with the general problem of collaboration between the corresponding organs — Ministerial and Assembly — of the Council of Europe, a problem which has already been examined in general terms in the Preliminary Report on the Special Message of the Committee of Ministers transmitting to the Consultative Assembly the Programme of Work of the Council of Europe, presented, on behalf of the Committee on General Affairs, by M. Mommer (Doc. 264). The Assembly has again referred to this question in this Chapter of the Opinion since it feels co-operation between the organs in question to be particularly essential in the cultural field. It is, in fact, questionable whether there is any point in retaining lengthy and rigid procedures designed solely to safeguard a highly abstract form of constitutional independence in cases in which the Ministerial and Assembly organs of the Council are in no way at variance on matters of substance, but have, on the contrary, a common purpose and should work together to achieve it with the maximum efficiency.

9. In order, speedily to offset the grave disadvantages of inadequate co-operation, the Assembly, wishes to submit to the Committee of Ministers certain proposals for the more effec five co-ordination of cultural activities within the Council.

1.1. Exchange of documents

The Ministerial and Assembly organs of the: Council should in the first place keep each other as fully informed as possible, from the earliest stages, of the progress made in their respective studies.

The two cultural bodies should work with a full knowledge of each other's agendas.

There is particular need to put an end to the time-lag of months between the study by the Assembly Committee of a subject already under consideration by the Cultural Experts — the inevitable result of confining exchanges to Official documents.

1.2. Personal contacts

O n the other hand the exchange of working papers, however complete, does not in itself provide the complete answer, at least as far as cultural co-operation is concerned and Should be supplemented by personal contacts.

I n fact, the impersonal relations ensured by the exchange of information between the two Committees as such should be supplemented by personal contacts between the representatives of those Committees whenever such contacts will evidently make a positive contribution to the common purpose.

For that reason the Assembly takes the view that there must be regular contact between the members of the Committee of Cultural Experts and the Members of the Committee on Cultural and. Scientific Questions.

I t might, to begin with, be sufficient to arrange informal talks. Ultimately, however, the two organs should be able, where necessary, orally to obtain advice, detailed explanations and opinions one from the other.

1.3. Establishment of a joint sub-committee

Exchanges of documents and personal contacts should further he reinforced by the establishment of a joint sub-committee composed of members of the Committee of Cultural Experts and members of the Assembly Cultural Committee. One of the first tasks of this joint sub-committee might be to arrange that the meetings of the two organs take place as far as possible simultaneous]y, so as to facilitate closer contacts between the members.

10. The Assembly would like to see this method of co-operation introduced without delay and therefore requests the Committee of Ministers to authorise a first joint meeting between members of the Committee of Cultural Experts and of the Assembly Cultural Committee, which could, on an ad hoc basis, take place in October when the Committee of Cultural Experts is due to meet at Strasbourg. The Agenda of this extraordinary meeting would be limited to a discussion of the more general aspects of the cultural programme of the Council of Europe with a view to defining the attitude to be adopted by the Assembly at its May Session in 1955, as mentioned in paragraph 4 above.

2. Association of the Assembly with certain realisations of the Committee of Cultural Experts

11. The Assembly, moreover, considers that co-operation between the Committee of Cultural Experts and the Committee on Cultural and Scientific Questions might extend beyond the preparatory work connected with the items on their respective agendas and should include, in appropriate cases, provision for the association of the Assembly with the realisations of tho Committee of Cultural Experts. In that connection, it was with great satisfaction that the assembly learned of the invitation to the Chairman and Rapporteur of its Cultural Committee to take part in the Round Table held in Rome in 1953. It proposes that this association should be developed, for example by inviting a member of its Committee to sit on the Selection Board responsible for awarding Council of Europe fellowships.