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Ways and means of promoting the European idea in member countries

Report¹

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A.

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1. The rôle of the Secretariat-General of the Council of Europe in the field of Information

1.1. Preliminary comments

1. When it was set up in 1949, the Secretariat-General was assigned two main functions in the field of information; first, to link the Council of Europe with all sections of the Press; and, secondly, to keep public opinion up to date with the Council's activities. This definition of its functions limited the scope of the Secretariat-General to the Council of Europe as such. " It is the duty of the Secretariat-General ", states the first report on Information in 1951, " to publicise the organisation of the Council, its activity and its achievements, but not to foster the idea of a united Europe or argue in favour of a unification of European States in this or that form ".

2. In practice, it has been difficult to make a rigid distinction between the propagation of the European idea and the publicising of the work of the Council of Europe, for the latter exists in order to promote the former. A film about the work of the Assembly and Committee of Ministers is an implied plea for closer European unity; a booklet dealing with the Cultural Convention, even if it does no more than state its origins and reprint its Articles, is a reminder to Western European public opinion of its common cultural history and responsibilities.

3. However, the Secretariat-General is still prevented by its original terms of reference from discussing ideas which are regularly discussed in the corridors of the Assembly itself. Its officials can make no comment on important matters until they have been fully debated and decided by both organs of the Council. They cannot, for instance, anticipate the Council's decision on the Social Charter by issuing a public explanation of the purposes which the Charter is designed to achieve, since the Charter does not officially exist until it has been approved in all its details by a minimum number of Member Governments. If they were to do so, they would be committing a double offence : first, by advocating a particular way of implementing the European idea; and, secondly, by risking the disapproval of certain Governments if, by accident, their account of the Charter were to be contradicted in some detail by a later decision of the Assembly or Committee of Ministers.

4. The function of the Information Directorate of the Secretariat-General is therefore confined, to factual reporting. It is an organ of publicity, not of propaganda. It cannot comment or suggest. It can state what the Council of Europe has done, but not what it might do. If the Council were already as influential a body as all those associated with it would wish, this limitation on the scope of the information services might not particularly matter. National Parliaments do not need a public relations organisation in order to obtain publicity for their debates and decisions. But, unfortunately, the influence of the Council of Europe, measured by the importance which Governments, Press and public opinion attach to its deliberations, has remained stationary, or has even declined, since its earliest days, and the provision of an efficient Press service has not been enough to ensure that it receives the publicity which it desires and deserves. However good the facilities for reporters, they cannot be expected to report what their editors will not print, and their editors will not print what their subscribers will not read. Interest in the Council of Europe must be stimulated by other means as well, and this involves an extension of the present role of the Information Service and an increase in its budget. It must be permitted to spend more money more imaginatively.

5. There are several reasons why public interest in the Council of Europe has not grown. The first is that the immediate postwar enthusiasm for European unity has become clouded by suspicion as we have approached a more precise definition of what unity actually involves. The practical achievements of the Council of Europe have not taken root because some nations have resented any loss of their sovereignty, and Others have grown sceptical that any supranational Scheme can ever be made to work. Obviously, it will take more than a propaganda campaign to reverse an attitude which Centuries have created, but the Information Service has a special responsibility for helping to bring about a gradual change. It can only fulfil its task if it is allowed to explain the underlying motives and practical advantages of each decision of the Council in a wider setting than a mere report of the debates and resolutions will permit. Secondly, the decisions of the Council of Europe have tended to remain paper-decisions, and the European public has formed the impression that nothing the Council has done or can ever do could possibly affect their own lives. The Coal and Steel Community and the Saar have ceased to be connected in the public mind with the Council of Europe, and nothing that has happened since has made an equivalent impact. The way back into public interest is perhaps not so much through reports of debates, conventions and resolutions, important though those are, as through activities undertaken within the member countries in the name of the Council of Europe. If the Council can once become known as a body which gets things done on a comparatively small scale, greater importance will be attached to its proposals on a larger scale. The Social Charter, for instance, could become a topic of discussion within every family, if beforehand the public had come to associate the Council with exhibitions, athletic festivals, conferences, television programmes etc. which could be made part of their day-to-day lives and newspaper reading. Otherwise it is in danger of being dismissed as the vague aspiration of a few idealists. When we speak of the Information Services, we should therefore not imagine that they alone are responsible for making the Council of Europe better known : the responsibility is shared among all its organs. Money spent on direct propaganda such as booklets or films could often be as well or better spent on an International Fair, on publicizing the activities of the Commission of Human Rights, or on exchange visits. If a collection of money could be organised by the Council throughout Europe, for the benefit of some common cause such as the Refugees from the East, then some practical good would be done, the name of the Council would be better known and belief in its effectiveness would be strengthened. It is to such methods as this that we must increasingly look. It is relevant to recall in this connection Recommendation 74 (1955) on the establishment of a Cultural Fund of the Council of Europe envisaging individual contributions and stipulating that " the interest of the citizens of Europe in the cause of European unity would be stimulated if they were given the opportunity of contributing personally to certain of the measures taken to further that cause. "

6. The Press and public cannot be unaware of the apathy which has crept over the Assembly itself. Many leading Representatives, whose names are well known all over Europe, do not attend at all, or if they attend, seldom speak. The hémicycle is often half-empty on important occasions, and resolutions have been passed or rejected by less than 50 % of the Representatives entitled to vote. The debates are apt to take the form of a series of set speeches, and those stimulating interruptions, which in each of the national Parliaments form the very stuff of democratic debate, at Strasbourg have wrongly come to be regarded as impolite, if not actually out of order. The atmosphere of the Assembly is increasingly academic. There is too little attack on the official reports of committees, and the reports themselves are written in order to give least offence, rather than to stimulate discussion. The fear of provoking further conflict between the Assembly and the Committee of Ministers has led to the drafting of such " innocuous " resolutions that the Committee is discouraged from taking any action on them. This deadening respectability has not helped the Information Services in their task of persuading the world that the Assembly is not only alive, but effective and exciting.

7. It might also have been expected that Representatives, on their return to their own countries, would take every opportunity, particularly in their Parliaments, to raise matters which they had recently discussed at Strasbourg, and to demand action from their Governments in the name of the Council of Europe. Unfortunately, these opportunities do not appear to have been fully seized. There are few Parliaments which actually debate the adoption of the European Conventions, and fewer which discuss the work of the Council of Europe as a whole. Parliamentary publicity is often the most effective publicity of all. How can editors be expected to respond to demands on their attention if the Representatives themselves appear to forget Strasbourg between one session and the next?

8. From these preliminary comments, three suggestions have emerged :

- a. The Information Directorate should no longer be prohibited from propagating the European idea. It should not be regarded as a mere Press bureau. It should be the centre from which the idea of European unity radiates. It should be permitted to explain the achievements of the Council of Europe in the context of basic objectives, and to discuss the implication of particular measures even before they have received the final approval of the Council.

- b. Several of the committees of the Consultative Assembly could help the work of popularising the European idea and the name of the Council by organising more activities within member countries. The committees might be invited to suggest suitable activities of this kind, on the assumption that the Budgets of the Council of Europe will be increased accordingly. Member Governments, too, should be encouraged to spend more money on Council of Europe matters in their own countries.
- c. The effectiveness of the Council depends partly on the interest shown in it by Representatives while they are at Strasbourg and after their return home. The debates and Resolutions should be more invigorating, and Governments publicly pressed to implement the recommendations of the Assembly².

9. As this Introductory Report deals mainly with the Directorate of Information itself, little more need be said of these wider issues. But it is as well to remember the words of the 1951 Report, which are still valid : " Experience has shown that modern methods of informing the public may well involve considerable expense, and still have but little effect." The huge expenditure on publicity by the United Nations is a case in point. Certainly, there is nobody who has not heard of the United Nations, but its failures have stamped its character in the public mind more than its successes, and have produced a derisory scepticism among the ignorant which will only be overcome with difficulty. For that reason the Secretariat-General of the Council has been very wise not to lead the public to expect too much of the Council of Europe. While the time is now probably ripe to interest a wider public in our activities, the old principle of the Information Services must still stand : influence the leaders of public opinion, and let them influence the masses. This method is safer, because you are appealing to an educated, unprejudiced and already interested group; it is, obviously, cheaper; and it is more effective because the European idea will be spread downwards by men whom the people already know and trust, instead of by an unfamiliar organisation situated in central Europe, which cannot be expected to interpret ideas in the terms most acceptable to each individual nation. Some of the publicity methods already adopted or suggested above, have a direct mass appeal. But in what follows, it must be assumed that the chief intention is to inform and influence the leaders of opinion in each country. The main responsibility for spreading the idea further must remain with them and with the appropriate organs of each Member State.

1.2. Concrete proposals

10. The present publications of the Directorate of Information of the Council of Europe fall into two categories : the Council of Europe News ; and the booklets, which summarise the activities of the Council, and reproduce the texts of the various conventions. (a) The Council of Europe News, of which about 70,000 copies are distributed monthly in the four chief languages, contains abstracts of the Assembly debates and the full texts of adopted Resolutions. In addition, it periodically devotes a special issue to a summary of the Council's activities in a single held. Nobody, least of all its editors, would pretend that the News was an exciting publication. It is not intended to be. It is a bulletin of pure information and a useful record. Its value has been proved by a recent poll among 200 Belgian teachers, judges and lawyers who received the publication on a tentative basis, 65 % of whom took the trouble to reply requesting that they should continue to receive copies. It would be a mistake to abandon its publication, or radically to alter its character. But in one or two ways the service might be improved. FOP example ; it could be made more attractive and legible by better typography and make-up : it should contain summaries of the main committee reports, which are often of even greater interest than the speeches by which the Rapporteurs introduce them to the Assembly : and Member' Governments into whose languages the Nem is not at present translated should be encouraged to produce and distribute shortened national editions of their own. (6) In addition to the Council of Europe Neves, there is a need for a supplementary publication of fact and opinion about the Council of Europe. It is too early to contemplate a truly popular magazine ; the difficulties of production, translation and distribution would put too great a strain on the present Information Directorate and its budget, and experience has shown that public response to such a magazine is still too small for the experiment to be worth repeating on a commercial scale. On the other hand, the Council of Europe should not be without its serious journal of opinion. As a first step, it might be possible without heavy extra expense to produce a monthly Newsletter, which could contain controversial articles written by members of the Consultative Assembly and other prominent Europeans. It might be published in French and English at the start, and later expand the number of its foreign-language editions as well as its size. The Newsletter would become the main organ of the Councel for influencing educated opinion in the concept of European unity. (c) The existing booklets are excellent, but there is too little money to keep them up to date in all languages and to assure a wider distribution for them. These obvious defi-ciencies should be made good first. Subse-quently, the Council might consider more ambitious

2. Cf. Opinion No. 13 (1955).

publications, such as illustrated yearbooks, a more popular edition of the Handbook for use in schools, editions of the lesser-known European classics, and other publications which from time to time have been suggested to the Cultural Committee of the Assembly,

11. Service, to the Press, etc. The Information Services are already well equipped to carry out what was their original task. It would be difficult to imagine what could be usefully added to existing facilities for the rapid dissemination of news from Strasbourg itself. Press-reporters, broadcasters, photographers and cameramen are admirably served. The permanent staff of the Directorate, apart from one or two further editorial staff, appears adequate not only for their present tasks but for the expanded pro-gramme which is suggested in this Report. Press interest in the proceedings at Strasbourg might be further stimulated by preparatory and follow-up contacts with special newspapers and individual journalists. For example, before each session of the Assembly, foreign correspondents resident in Paris could be notified of any subjects of special interest to their countries which are coming forward for discussion at Strasbourg. They could also be permitted to see, but not to report on, advance copies of important documents which are to be laid before the Assembly. Correspondents representing newspapers with a special interest in European problems could be briefed from time to time in Paris, as is frequently done by the O E E C information services. The Director of Information and his Deputy should be voted sufficient funds to enable them to travel round Member States between sessions and speak to editors and others about the work of the Council. Finally a mailing list of the specialist and technical press could be compiled, so that items of specialised interest might be sent to them for information after each session of the Assembly.

12. Films, Radio, Télévision The European sound and television link-ups wonderfully illustrate the unity of the European tradition by taking people of different nations directly into each other's homes and cities. The effect of international broadcasting of this kind, designed for pure entertainment, could be spoiled if a political moral was too obviously imposed on it. Besides, the programme directors would not allow it. Radio and cinema time cannot usually be bought; it can only be won, by the offer of material more attractive than competitive material. The Council of Europe already has good material to offer, both in the form of ideas, of recordings, of news and of films made specially for television. If we confine ourselves to the Council of Europe itself, the possibilities are, obviously, limited, and public interest will soon dry up : but if, as has been argued above, the role of the Information Services is extended to cover the European idea as a whole, the possibilities are infinite. Whatever extra money is made available for sound and visual publicity, the bulk of it should go towards adding to the number of television films, produced by private companies but commissioned by the Directorate of Information. Longer films for presentation in cinemas are not likely to have an equivalent appeal in proportion to their cost. Strasbourg should become known as a central pool of ideas and material on all subjects of common interest to Europeans. The Council of Europe and intra-European television came into existence at about the same time. The coincidence is a happy one. Each should make the maximum use of the other. If Council of Europe films were widely shown each year, and an equivalent number of ideas for live broadcasting were accepted by the Television Companies, the effect would be tremendous.

13. Other visual publicity

- a. Posters have not been widely used or been very successful. The happiest examples are those erected by the European Movement at frontier-posts, telling the traveller : " You are leaving France (Germany, Holland, etc.) but you are still in Europe ". A big poster-campaign would not be worth the expense; a small one would be without significant result.
- b. A travelling exhibition which is now touring Europe could be much enlivened if more money was available. The impression it now makes is a bleak one, and for the Council of Europe to present itself in dull, utility clothing is surely more damaging than if it did not appear at all.
- c. The Council of Europe emblem³ should in future not only be flown over the buildings in which the organs of the Council of Europe meet; it should also be on display in the meeting rooms themselves. We must prevail upon the Parliaments to follow the example of the Bundestag in Bonn and hoist our flag whenever subjects of European interest are being discussed. We must give practical effect to our recommendation of September, 1955 and persuade European institutions to adopt this common emblem; although the Committee of Ministers has authorised the Secretary-General to send the new emblem to other institutions, he has not asked them to make use of it. From the reports of the Secretariat-General we learn that every year 25 to 30,000 people visit the Council of Europe building in

3. On 8th December, 1955 the Council of Europe acquired an emblem when the Committee of Ministers adopted the circle of twelve golden stars on an azure ground, which the Assembly had recommended. This flag is flown on the Council of Europe building at Strasbourg and on the Paris Office; it was flown at Coventry and Palermo when the Consultative Assembly Committees met there. The Bundestag flew it on the day of the big European debate in the spring of 1956.

Strasbourg : each one of them should be given a badge with a reproduction of this emblem. In addition, all Member States of the Council of Europe should be recommended to fly the Council emblem beside the national flag at all frontier-posts. Representatives to the Consultative Assembly should affix to their motor-cars an enamelled badge with a reproduction of the emblem.

- d. It is regrettable that the first European stamp, to be issued next September, contains the emblem " E " which is bad aesthetically, wrong heraldically and not what we have adopted. Such mistakes must not be allowed to occur again.

14. Permanent representation outside Strasbourg There is a national correspondent, responsible to the Director of Information Services, in each Member State except France, Iceland and the Saar. The correspondents' duties are to report back to Strasbourg the state of national opinion about matters affecting European unity; and secondly, to act as agents for the dissemination of news about the Council of Europe. That their activities are on a modest scale is shown by the budget allowed for them ; the twelve correspondents cost 10,400,000 francs in 1955—which includes their expenses at home and the cost of travel to Strasbourg once a year and subsistence while there. Under such conditions their remuneration, which in most countries is not tax-free, is so low that they are not thereby permitted to work full-time for the Council of Europe. In Western Germany, there is in addition a lecturer, and in the United Kingdom the national correspondent also gives lectures in schools, military camps, etc. Here, there is obvious room for expansion. The national correspondent should be paid sufficiently well to allow him to entertain the editors of leading newspapers, prominent politicians, etc. There should be a lecturer in each of the chief countries. But the time has not yet come for a regular Council of Europe office to be set up in each of the main capitals. External offices would create more work in Strasbourg without adding to the Council's efficiency or prestige.

15. External Offices of the Council of Europe It is paradoxical that, whereas the Secretariat of the Council lacks direct contact with the main French and international press circles through being isolated in Strasbourg, Paris is one of the few capitals where the Council has no national correspondent. One might therefore have expected to find an official from the Information Directorate permanently attached to the Paris Bureau of the Secretariat; but several of us know only too well from our own experience of committee meetings held in Paris that this is not the case. Information work in the French capital must cease to be regarded as work for an amateur. Contact with Paris information organs must be maintained by highly qualified professionals like those in Strasbourg. Your Committee therefore suggests that funds be provided to increase the staff of the Information Services of the Secretariat for this purpose,

16. The Supplementary Budget of the Information Directorate of the Council of Europe

The approximate extra cost of implementing the suggestions contained in the above paragraphs would be 50 million francs, composed as follows :

Para - Item - Remarks - Approx.cost per annum. million frs.

10 Newsletter 2

Two extra editorial staff 3

11 Supplementary travel expenses - For visits to Member States on information business

12 Films - 10 films for television running 5-10 mins. each

13 Badges, flags, etc. - 1

13 Travelling exhibition - 10

Brought forward - 37 1/2

17. The link between the Consultative Assembly and the Information Services Whatever the outcome of the forthcoming debate on the Information Services, it is clearly desirable that there should be a permanent link between the Information Services of the Secretariat-General and the Assembly. Various suggestions for a joint liaison committee, a special committee, or a subcommittee of an existing committee have been made during the past few years, but a decision has been delayed by the reference of the question to the Committee on Rules of Procedure, which is considering the reorganisation of the committee system as a whole. Pending its report, the present sub-committee was appointed by the Committee on Cultural and Scientific Questions to draw up an introductory report on information questions, as a basis for a debate in the Assembly at the Eighth Session. It would be inappropriate for a sub-committee of three members to be the permanent body responsible for such an important matter : on the other hand, the existing number of Standing Committees is already large, and the Assembly would be reluctant to increase it by adding another to deal with Information

questions. Perhaps the compromise lies in an enlarged sub-committee of the Committee on Cultural and Scientific Questions, which might later develop into a body that includes Representatives from other committees. No final decision can be taken, evidently, till the Committee on Rules of Procedure make their views known. If the main argument of the present Report is accepted, it is all the more obvious that the Secretariat-General and the Assembly will mutually benefit from a permanent link between them.

18. Motion for a Recommendation calling for the establishment of a European Information Centre On 11th December, 1954, the Assembly referred to the Committee on Cultural and Scientific Questions, for report, and to the Committees on General Affairs and Municipal and Regional Affairs, for opinion, the motion for a Recommendation ([Doc. 329](#)) tabled by Mme. von Finckenstein, calling for the establishment of a European Information and Education Centre under the auspices of the Council of Europe. The explanatory memorandum accompanying this motion stressed the need for an instrument of propaganda designed to strengthen the spirit of European solidarity, failing which European organisations and institutions would remain insecure. The funds to maintain the proposed Centre were to be derived from a decision by the Member States of the Council of Europe to earmark 1 % of their military budgets for European propaganda. Your Committee on Cultural and Scientific Questions has examined the expediency of setting up such a Centre as part of its broader study of methods of intensifying the preparation of the European idea in member countries, and has reached the following conclusions :

18.1. There can be no doubt of its usefulness.

18.2. However, the present political situation makes it impossible to contemplate its creation under the auspices of the Council of Europe.

18.3. There already exists in Paris a " European Information Centre " receiving governmental contributions, which could be adapted to many of the tasks that the motion wishes to assign to such an institution.

B. Draft Recommendation on improving methods of promoting the European idea in member countries

The Assembly,

Taking note of the Report of the Committee on Cultural and Scientific Questions concerning ways and means of promoting the European idea in member countries;

Believing that the action of the Secretariat-General can achieve the most effective results by informing and influencing the leaders of opinion in each country;

Considering that this Report reveals a need to increase the effectiveness of the Secretariat-General by enabling it to propagate the European idea and not act merely as a Press Bureau;

Considering that the budgetary proposals contained in this Report constitute a reasonable basis for the further development of the Information Services of the Secretariat-General,

Recommends that the Committee of Ministers

1. Take into consideration the contents of the Report of the Committee on Cultural and Scientific Questions and ensure that Member Governments make this report the basis of the information policy to be followed by the Council of Europe;
2. Issue new instructions in the field of information to the Secretariat-General, whereby it will no longer be forbidden to propagate the European idea; but will be able* *inter alia*, to draw public attention to the implications of proposals tabled in the Assembly even before they have been adopted ;
3. Approve the publication of a monthly news-letter printed On the Council of Europe premises to reduce costs to the minimum, and containing, among other information, controversial articles by prominent Europeans;
4. Give sympathetic consideration to the possible grant of the budgetary means necessary for the implementation of the proposals embodied in the report of the Committee on Cultural and Scientific Questions.

C. Draft Recommendation on the use of the emblem of the Council of Europe

The Assembly,

Noting with satisfaction the adoption by the Committee of Ministers on 8th December, 1955, of a Council of Europe emblem consisting of twelve 5-pointed stars on a field azure;

Recalling its own Recommendation 88 of 25th October, 1955, whereby it asked the Committee of Ministers to instruct the Secretary-General to enter into negotiations with other European institutions in order to ensure that the emblems adopted by them shall bear a close resemblance to that adopted by the Council of Europe;

Noting that the Committee of Ministers has instructed the Secretary-General to notify other European institutions of its decision to adopt this emblem, but without requesting them to comply with the terms of Recommendation 88;

Believing it desirable that other European institutions should comply with Recommendation 88 when adopting their own emblems ;

Believing also that the emblem should be displayed by Member States wherever appropriate and more particularly at frontier posts, to remind travellers that they remain in Europe even when passing from the territory of one Member State to that of another,

Recommends that the Committee of Ministers :

1. Instruct the Secretary-General to request other European organisations to comply with the terms of Recommendation 88;
2. Propose to Member Governments that, Where the national flag of a Member State is flown at a frontier post, the emblem of the Council of Europe shall also be displayed.

D. Draft Resolution on the use of the Council of Europe emblem

The Assembly,

Considering that since 8th December, 1955, the Council of Europe has had its own emblem, namely a circle of twelve 5-pointed stars Or on a field azure;

Believing that the purposes of the Council of Europe will best be served by the widest possible display of this emblem,

Resolves :

1. that the emblem be displayed both inside and outside premises where the Consultative Assembly or its Committees are sitting, whether at Strasbourg or elsewhere;
2. that Representatives to the Consultative Assembly be authorised to carry a plate bearing the emblem on their motor-cars and that the Committee on Rules of Procedure and Privileges shall draw up, in this connection, rules for the proper display of the emblem;
3. that it is desirable that national Parliaments follow the example set by the Parliament of the Federal Republic of Germany on 22nd March, 1956, by flying the flag of the Council of Europe on their Parliament buildings when questions of European interest are under discussion and that the President of the Assembly be invited to convey this Resolution of the Assembly to the national Parliaments;
4. that it is desirable that some convenient form of the emblem be made available as a souvenir to visitors to the House of Europe.

E. Draft Resolution for the establishment of a more broadly based Sub-Committee on Information within the Committee on Cultural and Scientific Questions

The Assembly,

Believing it essential that the Council of Europe be enabled to pursue an effective information policy;

Bearing in mind that proposals for the organisation of the committee structure of the Consultative Assembly are now before the Committee on Rules of Procedure,

Resolves :

1. that, pending receipt of a definite opinion from the Committee on Rules of Procedure concerning the said Committee structure, a more broadly based Sub-Committee on Information be appointed within the Committee on Cultural and Scientific Questions, to ensure effective liaison between the Assembly and the Secretariat-General on information questions;
2. that the membership of this Sub-Committee shall be broadened to include members of other Assembly committees.

F. Draft Order to the Secretary-General on collaboration with the European Information Centre at Paris

The Assembly,

Taking note of Document 329 on the creation of a European Information and Documentation Centre;

Noting that there is a European Information Centre at Paris, supported by contributions from Governments;

Considering that the purpose of the proposal could be fulfilled by close collaboration between the Secretariat-General of the Council of Europe and the European Information Centre,

Instructs the Secretary-General :

to establish contact with the said European Information Centre and arrange for effective measures of collaboration;

to inform the Assembly in due course of action taken to this end.

Appendix The European Information Centre at Paris⁴

Origin

At the invitation of the Working Party of the Constitutional Committee of the Ad Hoc Assembly, meeting at Strasbourg on 17th September, 1953, under the chairmanship of M. von Bren-tano, Members of Parliament from Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and the Federal Republic decided to set up a "European Information Centre " in collaboration with governmental representatives.

History

The first plenary meeting of the European Information Centre was held on 19th November, 1953 at Paris, when the following were appointed members of its Bureau

President : M. van der Goes van Naters (Netherlands)

Vice-President : M. Roger Gromand, Prefect (France)

Rapporteur : Mile. J. Worms (France).

At this meeting, the Centre decided that its task should be to help improve information and relations between the European peoples and further the progress of the European community.

At first, the activities of the Centre were concentrated upon the E. D. C and therefore upon France, although suitable methods of conducting propaganda in Italy were also studied. The Centre arranged for French Members of Parliament of all political tendencies to visit the Netherlands, Germany and Berlin and subsidised publications and organisations campaigning on behalf of the E. D. C, as well as posters.

As a result of the rejection of the E. D. C. by the French Parliament, on 30th August, 1954, and its repercussions on the policy of European integration—more especially on the Political Community— there followed what might be described as a period of " hibernation ".

At the last meeting of the Working Party of the Constitutional Committee of the Ad Hoc Assembly, held in December, 1954, the European Information Centre was declared autonomous. Since then it has continued its work on behalf of existing European organisations, particularly the E. C. S. C. and institutions then in the process of creation, the W. E. U. and the armaments pool, and has campaigned for European parliamentary control of such institutions.

Structure

The European Information Centre is composed of European parliamentarians from the six member countries of the E. C. S. C. and of governmental representatives. Owing to the extension of its work to include the W. E. U., a British Member of Parliament has been invited to become associated.

The Centre holds plenary meetings, which lay down its policy and general activities, and meetings of the Bureau, which acts in an executive supervisory capacity.

Activities

Since January, 1956, the European Information Centre has begun to act directly rather than through intermediaries, with the publication of " documentary notes ", which are sent to European Members of Parliament, 'national Ministries and parliamentary groups, and " information bulletins " which contain basic articles on European problems. These two types of publication are issued, as a general rule, in French, English, German Italian and Dutch.

It has now begun to publish national bulletins.

The European Information Centre reserves the right to use all appropriate methods. It should be explained that its political aim is progressive European integration and that it therefore supports all European endeavours and achievements throughout free Europe.

4. This information concerning the European Information Centre in Paris was obtained in the course of an exchange of views between the members of the Sub-Committee on Information of the Committee on Cultural and Scientific Questions and the Centre in Paris on 10th December, 1955.