



Doc. 733

22 October 1957

Practical measures for the application of urgent procedure (Rule 44 of the Rules of Procedure)

Opinion¹

Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs

In view of the large number of requests for urgent procedure, the Bureau of the Assembly considers that it has become essential to prevent the indiscriminate raising of new questions in the Assembly, by recourse to such procedure, without adequate prior notification of Representatives.

At its meeting held in Rome on 8th June 1957, the Bureau decided to consult the Committee on Rules of Procedure on this matter.

The Committee on Rules of Procedure studied the question at its meeting of 16th October 1957 and reached the conclusions set forth in M. Van Cauwelaert's letter of 19th October, which is appended hereto.

The Bureau took note of that letter at its meeting of 21st October 1957 and, as stated in the reply from M. Dehousse to M. Van Cauwelaert, dated 22nd October (also appended), decided to submit the proposed practical measures of application to the Assembly.

1. 1. Letter from the Chairman of the Committee on Rules of Procedure to the President of the Assembly

Strasbourg, 19th October 1957

Mr. President,

You have been good enough to inform me that the Bureau finds it necessary to lay down rules for the consideration of requests for urgent procedure. It is true that during recent Sessions such requests have been particularly frequent, and at its meeting on 8th June last, the Bureau decided to seek the opinion of the Committee on Rules of Procedure concerning certain practical measures for applying Rule 44, paragraphs 1 and 2, and Rule 15, paragraph 4. The measures in question, it was suggested, might be as follows :

" The Bureau will examine requests for urgent procedure at a meeting held halfway through the current part-Session. It will express its opinion on the requests in accordance with the terms of Rule 44, para. 2, having due regard to the work still in hand.

The Assembly will decide on requests for urgent procedure at the following Sitting. Questions for which urgent procedure is adopted shall, as a general rule, be placed on the Orders of the Day of the last Sitting of the current part-Session."

The Committee on Rules of Procedure considered this matter at its meeting of 16th October 1957. It felt that we should be warned by experience to treat cautiously any requests for urgent procedure, since we frequently tend to confuse what is urgent with what is merely topical. Certain allegedly urgent questions might be more judiciously considered at the next Session than would be possible if urgent procedure were applied.

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Moreover, the Bureau is broadly responsible for planning the Assembly's work, and, in the particular case of urgent procedure, has to state its views on the degree of urgency involved before the Assembly gives a ruling.

The Committee therefore supports a reduction in the number of urgent questions and believes that the Bureau is the best judge of the practical measures that should be taken, subject to avoidance of over-rigid regulation.

May I also emphasize that there can be no question of encroaching on the right of Representatives to resort to urgent procedure. The sole purpose of the measures in question is to facilitate the work of the Bureau and of the Assembly itself.

I have the honour to remain, Mr. President,

Your obedient Servant,

Signed : F. VAN CAUWELAERT

Chairman of the Committee.

2. 2. Letter from the President of the Assembly to the Chairman of the Committee on Rules of Procedure

2.1. Strasbourg, 22nd October 1957

Sir,

In your letter of 19th October you advised me of your Committee's opinion on the practical measures advocated by the Bureau of the Assembly for the application of urgent procedure.

The Bureau took note of your letter at its meeting held today. Since its views were well received by your Committee, it has decided to bring the proposed practical measures to the knowledge of the Assembly.

I wish to confirm your statement that these measures must not encroach on the right of members of the Assembly to resort to urgent procedure, their sole purpose being to avoid the indiscriminate raising of new questions in the Assembly, without adequate prior notification of Representatives.

I have the honour to remain, Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

Signed : Fernand DEIIOUSSE.