United Nations

Sub-Committee of Technical Advisory Committee on Information

Summary record of Tenth Meeting held on Friday, 18 January 1946 at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Francis Williams

1. The Sub-Committee heard a statement by Mr. Paul Rotha on the organization of the United Nations' film activities. The points raised by Mr. Rotha will be incorporated into the summary of views on this subject which will be circulated to members of the Sub-Committee.

2. Programme of Work of Sub-Committee

The Sub-Committee decided that before continuing with its hearings of the views of experts, it should proceed with the discussion of the points so far raised by specialists on the press, radio and films.

3. Budget of the Department of Public Information

The Sub-Committee noted that the advisory Group of Experts was working on a provisional draft budget for the year 1946. The estimates of the Chief of Section amounted to $1,400,000 to meet the expenses of the Department of Public Information. This figure, however, did not include estimated expenditure on:

(a) Publications, since the printing bill of the Department would probably cover all publications of the Organization; (b) Capital investments of all kinds, including radio broadcasting installations which should not be charged against the budget of the Department of Public Information. It was further pointed out that the running expenses for radio broadcasting would not all have to be borne by the budget of the Department of Public Information, since the United Nations radio stations would also be used for communication with Member Governments and Branch Offices.
The figure of $1,400,000 had been suggested as a temporary estimate without prejudice to the amount that would be needed to cover the work of the Department in future years. It was stated that the expense of running even small national information offices, or their branches abroad, which had been indicated during the hearings, pointed to the need of much larger appropriations in the future if the information services of the United Nations were to render the all-important services expected from them.

After some further views had been aired, the Sub-Committee decided that the budgetary and administrative aspect of the organization of the Department of Public Information could not be studied properly until the work of the Advisory Group of Experts had reached a more advanced stage.

4. Translation of Sub-Committee's Documents into French.

Mr. Guignebert stated that he wished to make a formal protest in regard to the issuing of documents pertaining to the work of the Sub-Committee in English only. It was decided that all documents should in the future be issued in French as well as in English.

5. Examination of the views of press representatives on the facilities and services to be provided by the Department for the Press.

The Sub-Committee had before it a paper (1/IBM/67) summarizing views of experts put forward at its Meetings on 3 and 4 January 1946.

The Sub-Committee agreed that its report should not contain references to the experience of the League of Nations in the field of information.

Paragraphs 1.-5.- the Sub-Committee agreed that it should state that the problem existed of maintaining a balance between the needs of the large papers and agencies with correspondents at the headquarters of the Organization, and the needs of the small papers unrepresented at headquarters.
Paragraph 4 - 7: no comment.

Paragraph 8: Sub-Committee felt that criticisms of the press releases of the Preparatory Commission on the ground that they were too colourless were unjustified, since the releases issued by an international organization were necessarily objective and factual. The Sub-Committee decided not to incorporate the comment contained in paragraph 8 into its report.

Paragraph 9: It was decided that a distinction should be drawn between the two kinds of press conferences: formal press conferences, which should be given only by the Chairman of a Committee or the President of an Organ, and objective background press conferences, which could be handled by the members of the Department of Public Information.

Paragraph 10: It was agreed that the first sentence of this paragraph should be strengthened and clarified. The Department should guard against the danger of the inclusion in its staff of officials for whom no other posts could be found.

Paragraph 11: It was felt that the Sub-Committee could not take any action regarding cabling costs other than formulating a recommendation as to the desirability that they should be reduced. It was pointed out that the daily service to branch offices would ease the burden of cabling costs falling on newspapers and agencies.

Paragraph 12: It was suggested that in addition to a Reference Library, the Department should comprise a library of recorded broadcasts.

Paragraph 13: The Sub-Committee decided to recommend that press releases should be issued as far as possible simultaneously in French and English.

Paragraph 14: No comment.
Paragraph 15: The Sub-Committee decided that it could not recommend that press agencies should be given priority as regards distribution of documents and access to news.

Paragraph 16: It was pointed out that the Department could not control the Organization's calendar of meetings. It was inevitable that many reports would be concentrated on the annual meetings of the General Assembly; on the other hand commissions, organizations and Specialized Agencies would be issuing material throughout the year.

Paragraph 17: It was decided to omit from the Sub-Committee's report a reference to the reception of telegraphic broadcasts by press agencies.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.