

# UNITED NATIONS TRUSTEESHIP COUNCIL



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## TRUSTEESHIP COUNCIL

Sixth Session

AD HOC COMMITTEE ON PETITIONS

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE TWENTY-SECOND MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,  
on Thursday, 23 March 1950, at 3 p.m.

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Present:

Chairman:

Mr. PEACHEY (Australia)

Rapporteur

Members:

Mr. CHIH-CHEN WANG

China

Mr. FRANCO y FRANCO

Dominical Republic

Mr. CARPIO

Philippines

Mr. CRAW

New Zealand

Mr. McKAY

United States of  
America

Also Present:

Mr. LAURENTIE

France

Mr. WATIER

Special Representative  
of the Administering  
Authority for the Trust  
Territory of the  
Cameroons under French  
Administration

Secretariat:

Mr. Wieschhoff

Secretary to the  
Committee

EXAMINATION OF THE GENERAL QUESTIONS RAISED IN THE PETITIONS CONCERNING THE CAMEROONS UNDER FRENCH ADMINISTRATION. (Document T/521 Section III)(Continued)

(c) Economic Advancement (Continued)

(iii) Freedom of Cultivation (Document T/521 Section III (c))

Petitions: T/PET.5/42 - 4/29  
T/PET.5/52  
T/PET.5/60 - 4/32

Mr. WATIER, Special Representative of the Administering Authority for the Trust Territory of the Cameroons under French administration, noted that the petitioners asked for the annulment of the Order of 10 May 1937 regulating the cultivation of coffee. As he had already explained to the Council, that Order did not forbid the cultivation of coffee by one section of the community in order to benefit another, but had been introduced in order that a certain amount of land should be reserved for the cultivation of essential foodstuffs. It provided that plantations could be established only on licence from the Haut Commissaire, who in granting such licences took into account the type of produce to be grown, and could refuse authorization if the plantation was not in the immediate neighbourhood of the planter's dwelling. The Order also contained various useful sanitary provisions. In asking for its annulment, the petitioners were mainly concerned with decreasing the powers of the local Administration, and not with freedom of cultivation.

Mr. MCKAY (United States of America) proposed that the Special Representative's explanation should be noted, as a reason for taking no action on the petitions.

It was so agreed.

(iv) Industrialization (Document T/521 Section III (d))

Petitions: T/PET.5/33 - 4/27  
T/PET.5/53 - 4/30  
T/PET.5/R.4 - 4/R.1

The CHAIRMAN ruled that the anonymous petition (document T/PET.5/R.4 - 4/R.1) and any other anonymous petitions encountered should be held over, as had been agreed at the previous meeting, until a decision in principle on the treatment of anonymous petitions had been reached. The petition of the Union des Populations du Cameroun (U.P.C.) of Douala (document T/PET.5/53 - 4/30) and that of the Union régionale des Syndicats confédérés de Bamileké (document T/PET.5/33 - 4/27), summarized in paragraph 1, appeared to be covered by the Council's recommendation on industry of the previous year (Report of the Trusteeship Council covering its Fourth and Fifth Sessions 6 August 1948 - 22 July 1949, page 22) which noted that with a marked flow of capital towards the Territory the development of new industries was being encouraged, and recommended that the Administering Authority do everything in its power, by making grants and loans or other forms of assistance available, to encourage and enable indigenous inhabitants to take a full part in industrial development. The petitioners' attention could be drawn to that Resolution.

Mr. McKAY (United States of America) supported the Chairman's proposal.

Mr. MATIER, Special Representative of the Administering Authority for the Trust Territory of the Cameroons under French administration, said the petitioners' requests corresponded to what was the actual policy of the Administering Authority. He would have no objection to their being sponsored by the Committee.

The CHAIRMAN proposed that the Resolution to be prepared should take note of that assurance.

It was so agreed.

(v) Forest Management and Mining (Document T/521 Section III (e))

Petitions: T/PET.5/72 - 4/63  
T/PET.5/52  
T/PET.5/54  
T/PET.5/53 - 4/30



The CHAIRMAN recalled that the Council had adopted a Resolution on Mining at its previous session (page 22 of its report), noting with interest the establishment of a State Corporation (the Bureau of Mines of Overseas France), with power to acquire mining concessions and to undertake all phases of mining operations, and expressing the hope that the progressive expansion of the activities of the Bureau would have the effect of greatly increasing the share of the indigenous inhabitants in the mineral wealth of the Territory.

He agreed with a suggestion by the United States representative that the questions of Mining and Forest Management should be dealt with in two separate Resolutions.

Mr. WATIER, Special Representative of the Administering Authority for the Trust Territory of the Cameroons under French administration, said he had partly covered the points raised by the petitioners in his reply to written questions on the Annual Report for the Territory. A number of mining successions had been granted to Africans; where concessions of secondary importance were concerned, such as quarries etc., the number of licences granted had been about 160. With regard to forest management, no discrimination was exercised against Africans, but in practice few Africans had the technical competence and financial resources for rational forest exploitation. Forest management was, therefore, mainly in the hands of large European companies with considerable capital, but there were many instances of forest concessions granted to Cameroonians.

The CHAIRMAN recalled that the Visiting Mission had drawn the attention of the Trusteeship Council to indigenous hostility to the principle of forest control, and enquired whether the Drafting Committee had prepared any recommendation on forest management.

Mr. McKAY (United States of America) answered in the affirmative. The Drafting Committee's resolution was based on the findings of the Visiting Mission and consisted of two parts, one dealing with the classification of forests, the other with the granting of forest concessions. Under both heads

it urged the Administering Authority to do everything in its power to base its policy on the consideration of the traditional rights of indigenous communities on the one hand, and on the future economic development of the Trust Territory on the other.

The CHAIRMAN proposed that the Resolution on Mining should include the assurances given by the Special Representative in the written reply to questions on the Annual Report for the Trust Territory. With that addition, the Council's Resolutions appeared to cover adequately the questions raised on forest management and mining and the Committee's Resolutions should therefore be based upon them.

It was so agreed.

(vi) Handicrafts (Document T/521 Section III (f))

Petitions: T/PET.5/34  
T/PET.5/41

The CHAIRMAN considered that the questions raised were partly covered by the recommendation on industry of the previous year.

Mr. WATIER, Special Representative of the Administering Authority for the Trust Territory of the Cameroons under French administration, noted that the petitions summarized in paragraph 1 (document T/PET.5/34) complained mainly of the size of licence fees. Such fees in the case of small craftsmen amounted to 5,000 francs per year; the petitioner, who was a cobbler, would be able to pay for his licence by two weeks' work. Such fees were certainly not exorbitant, but the Representative Assembly had recently lowered the licence fees for small craftsmen, and raised the cost of export licences, which were mainly sought by Europeans. The petitioners' complaint had therefore already been met to some extent. With regard to the request contained in that petition and the petition summarized in paragraph 2, relating to the provision of suitable workshops, the Administration was ready to give every facility to co-operative groups wishing to set up workshops, but the initiative would have to come from the persons concerned.

Mr. CHIH-CHEN WANG (China) considered the requests in paragraph 2 to be reasonable, and suggested that the Administering Authority should be invited to take action to satisfy them. He wished to know whether any apprentice training centres existed.

Mr. WATIER, Special Representative of the Administering Authority for the Trust Territory of the Cameroons under French administration, recalled his statement at the morning meeting on the Statute of Apprentices, which was now being drafted. It would allow Africans to become apprentices in private workshops as well as in those run by the Administration, under full legal protection and with the prospect of qualifying for a diploma at the end of a certain period. In addition, one school in each region had a workshop for the vocational training of pupils who were not proceeding to secondary schools. So far, neither the apprenticeship system nor the school workshops had met with much success, since once they were able to read or write Africans preferred clerical to manual work. A public works contractor at Dschang had offered a free two-year course and subsequent employment to pupils of the local school, a course which would have enabled them to become skilled workers in timber and metals. No pupil had accepted the offer, and the contractor had been obliged to fall back on illiterate labourers. It was also the general experience that the school workshops were attended only by pupils who were unable to pass their Certificat d'Etudes.

Mr. CRAW (New Zealand) asked what steps were being taken to preserve local culture as represented by traditional handicrafts such as leather work, metal work, weaving etc., mentioned in the Annual Report of the Trust Territory. Was attention paid to that matter in the ordinary schools?

Mr. WATIER, Special Representative of the Administering Authority for the Trust Territory of the Cameroons under French administration, recalled his statement at a previous meeting to the effect that an inspectorate of handicrafts formed one of the sections of the Education Council. A handicrafts workshop, together with a museum exhibiting specimens of traditional crafts, had been set

up at Foumba with the object of preserving the technique of local arts and crafts. A crafts school specializing in ivory work had also been set up at Ebolowa.

Mr. McKAY (United States of America) asked whether the system of licence fees for craftsmen was intended as a revenue-producing measure, or primarily as a means of regulation.

Mr. WATIER, Special Representative of the Administering Authority for the Trust Territory of the Cameroons under French administration, said that it served both purposes. It made it possible to identify craftsmen and to enforce commercial regulations, and at the same time was the first step towards a more equitable distribution of taxation.

Mr. CARPIO (Philippines) noted that the petition summarized in paragraph I contained other complaints than that about the cost of licences, claiming, for instance, that the right to buy wholesale was reserved to white traders. If that were true, it would be an obvious injustice.

Mr. WATIER, Special Representative of the Administering Authority for the Trust Territory of the Cameroons under French administration, said the position was very similar to that which he had described in connection with forest management. Licences for wholesale trade, importation or exportation were available to Africans and Europeans on an equal basis, but few native traders were in a financial position to engage in such large scale trade. The wholesale trade had thus become a de facto though not a de jure monopoly of certain very large European firms whose operations extended over a wide area. In recent years an increasing number of Africans with capital amassed on their plantations had been forming companies with Syrians, Lebanese, Greeks and sometimes Frenchmen for import and export trading.

Mr. CARPIO (Philippines) proposed that the Committee should recommend a reduction in the licence fees for craftsmen. The industrialization of the Territory, which was only at its beginning, would not be encouraged if licence fees were imposed for the sake of securing revenue, although there might be some justification for them as a regulating measure.

Mr. WATIER, Special Representative of the Administering Authority for the Trust Territory of the Cameroons under French administration, said that the level of taxation and licence fees were not fixed by the Administration, but were entirely a matter for the Representative Assembly, which was predominantly African.

Replying to a question by the CHAIRMAN, he stated that should the Trusteeship Council adopt such a recommendation as that suggested by the Philippines' representative, the Administering Authority could bring the matter to the attention of the Representative Assembly, which would doubtless be gratified that the Trusteeship Council was taking an interest in its work.

The CHAIRMAN noted general agreement that a recommendation on the lines proposed by the Philippines' representative should be included in the Resolution, and that, so far as the other questions were concerned, the hope should be expressed that the Administering Authority should give all possible assistance to the development and improvement of indigenous handicrafts.

(vii) Customary land rights (Document T/521, Section III (S))

Petitions:

T/PET.5/12-4/23  
T/PET.5/13  
T/PET.5/14  
T/PET.5/16  
T/PET.5/17  
T/PET.5/19  
T/PET.5/21  
T/PET.5/29-4/25  
T/PET.5/32-4/26  
T/PET.5/33  
T/PET.5/39  
T/PET.5/42  
T/PET.5/44  
T/PET.5/52  
T/PET.5/53-4/30  
T/PET.5/60  
T/PET.5/74  
T/PET.5/75  
T/PET.5/R.1  
T/PET.5/R.2

Mr. WATIER, Special Representative of the Administering Authority for the Trust Territory of the Cameroons under French administration, said the Drafting Committee had dealt at length with the question of customary land rights, and had drafted an important recommendation, which he suggested the Committee should make its own.

Mr. McKAY (United States of America) reported that the draft resolution in question, in addition to dealing with forest management in the sections already quoted, requested the Administering Authority to define more precisely the conception of vacant and ownerless lands and to take into account both the traditional rights of all kinds of indigenous communities and the future economic requirements of the Trust Territory. It further requested the Administering Authority to provide additional surveyors to help the indigenous inhabitants to take advantage of the present procedure for ensuring recognition of individual land rights. In connection with the granting of land concessions for agricultural purposes, it requested the Administering Authority to give preference on principle to settlement projects undertaken by the indigenous inhabitants themselves.

Replying to an observation by Mr. Carpio (Philippines) to the effect that the petitions made specific reference to virgin forests, he added that in the earlier paragraphs dealing with forest management the Administering Authority had been requested to take into consideration the traditional rights of the indigenous communities in the classification of forests, and to be guided in the granting of forest concessions by the requirements of the economic development of the Trust Territory, without neglecting the traditional rights of the inhabitants.

Replying to Mr. Caw (New Zealand), he said that it was clearly understood that the economic requirements of the Trust Territory included the necessity of continuing the establishment of State forests and forest reserves for the control of soil erosion etc.

Mr. CARPIO (Philippines) supported the proposal that the Committee should adopt the draft resolution in question.

It was so agreed.



## (viii) Communications (Document T/521, Section II(h))

## Petitions:

T/PET.5/12-4/23

T/PET.5/13

T/PET.5/31

T/PET.5/44

T/PET.5/46

T/PET.5/54

T/PET.5/56-4/31

T/PET.5/61

Mr. McKAY (United States of America) said that the Council had adopted a resolution commending the Administering Authority for its zeal in improving the road system and expressing the hope that road communications would be still further developed.

Mr. WATIER, Special Representative of the Administering Authority for the Trust Territory of the Cameroons under French administration, said that the effort already made by the Administering Authority could be assessed by the fact that in 30 years the road network had been expanded from 360 to 100,000 kilometres. It was gratifying that the indigenous inhabitants understood the importance of developing communications and were asking for such development to be carried further. The Administering Authority's Ten-Year Plan in fact made considerable provision for the development of roads, railways, ports and bridges.

The specific request for a means of public transport on the river network of Sanaga Maritime had already been met by an appropriation in the 1950 budget for the purchase of a ferry. The request in paragraph 3 for the construction of three particular roads was a more difficult matter. The Administration had long considered the construction of such roads, but the nature of the land they would have to traverse would make them extremely costly. Their construction was in the Administration's programme, but could not be given first priority.

Mr. CARPIO (Philippines) suggested that in reply to the request in

paragraph 3, the Committee should note the intention of the Administering Authority to construct the roads in question and express the hope that that intention would be carried out as soon as possible.

Mr. CRAW (New Zealand), noting that the question raised in paragraph 2 had been settled, expressed misgivings lest a recommendation to the effect that the roads referred to in paragraph 3 should be constructed as soon as possible might not look like bringing pressure to bear on the Administering Authority to give them priority at the expense of other schemes.

The CHAIRMAN, noting that the Philippines representative confirmed that he had had no such intention, thought the latter's proposal could be adopted, due care being taken to find a form of words that would avoid creating such an impression as the New Zealand representative had mentioned.

It was agreed that the petition summarized in paragraph 3 should be treated on the lines suggested, and that the reply to the petitions summarized in paragraph 1 should be based on the report of the Drafting Committee with, in addition, mention of the place occupied by communications in the Administration's Ten-Year Plan.

(ix) Freedom of trade (Document T/521, Section III(i))

Petitions:

T/PET.5/12-4/23

T/PET.5/53-4/30

T/PET.5/60-4/32

T/PET.5/56-4/31

Mr. WATIER, Special Representative of the Administering Authority for the Trust Territory of the Cameroons under French administration, replying to a question by Mr. Carpio (Philippines) as to whether the liquor trade, to which two of the petitions referred, was forbidden to indigenous inhabitants, said that was not actually the case. The Administering Authority had found itself in a difficult position since on the one hand it was its policy to admit of no discrimination between white men and the indigenous inhabitants, whereas on the other the St. Germain-en-Laye Convention forbade the sale of alcohol to the



latter. The Administration had therefore taken the course of imposing very high licence fees for the sale of alcohol, beyond the means of most native Africans on the other hand, all native restaurants could freely obtain licences to sell beverages with a low content of alcohol (i.e. beer and wines) and non-alcoholic drinks.

The CHAIRMAN pointed out that the first two petitions summarized in paragraph 1 raised two issues, that of freedom of trade, which he understood to refer to freedom of trade within the Territory, and that of the sale of alcoholic beverages.

Mr. WATIER, Special Representative of the Administering Authority for the Trust Territory of the Cameroons under French administration, declared that with regard to freedom of trade, the Administering Authority abided by the United Nations Charter and the Trusteeship Agreement. There was thus complete freedom of trade and no possibility of discrimination of any kind. Hence the freedom of trade claimed for indigenous women by Petition 5/60-4/32 already existed so far as administrative measures were concerned; what excluded women from certain branches of trade was simply local custom. With regard to the request for the suppression of commercial trusts in the hands of non-indigenous persons (paragraph 2), the trusts had been created subject to the laws relating to private companies, and the Administration could not intervene to ensure that such trusts could be created only by indigenous inhabitants. Africans were quite free to create commercial trusts if they wished.

The CHAIRMAN considered that the Special Representative's assurances on the general freedom of trade covered that aspect of the petitions summarized in paragraph 1.

Mr. CARPIO (Philippines) agreed, but proposed that the Committee should recommend the taking of all appropriate steps to efface any impression existing among the indigenous inhabitants that such freedom of trade did not exist.

It was so agreed.

Mr. CRAW (New Zealand), referring to restrictions on the sale of liquor, recalled that during the discussion on the British Cameroons, he had understood that in accordance with the Convention of St. Germain-en-Laye, a line had been drawn north of which spirits could not be sold to indigenous inhabitants. He wished to know whether that line was continued across the frontier into the Cameroons under French administration.

In the second place, the criterion determining restrictions should not be whether the Cameroons had acceded to a formal convention, since conventions could become outmoded, but whether control of the manufacture and distribution of liquor was in the interests of the inhabitants concerned. If that were not the case, the convention should be reviewed, at any rate as it applied to the Trust Territory.

Mr. WATIER, Special Representative of the Administering Authority for the Trust Territory of the Cameroons under French administration, said that the indigenous inhabitants had no wish to see the trade in liquor controlled. Many of them had complained that they were forbidden to import and manufacture liquor themselves. It was none the less the duty of the Administering Authority to limit the trade in liquor, so that alcoholism in the Trust Territory could be suppressed.

Mr. CRAW (New Zealand) welcomed that assurance as corresponding to a policy of which he fully approved. The situation was similar to that in respect of fire-arms, which the indigenous inhabitants wished to possess, but which the Administering Authority did not allow them to have. If the control of the sale of liquor were clearly in the interests of the inhabitants, he was entirely in favour of it.

Mr. CARPIO (Philippines) thought the emphasis on the liquor trade in the petitions suggested that that trade had assumed too much importance in the Trust Territory.

Mr. WATIER, Special Representative of the Administering Authority for the Trust Territory of the Cameroons under French administration, replying to a

question by the Chairman on the application of the Convention of St. Germain-en-Laye to the Trust Territory, said that that Convention was considered as still valid, but was less strictly interpreted than it had been formerly, precisely in order to avoid any discrimination between indigenous inhabitants and others. The Convention forbade the sale and circulation of "alcool de traite" - Trade alcohol specially manufactured for sale in Africa with none of the quality guarantees that would be required for sale in Europe or the United States of America. What liquors constituted such alcohol had never been precisely defined. Imported liquors from Europe, with a well-known trade mark, were not considered as coming under that category and could be sold.

The Convention constituted a difficulty, because of the distinction it drew between Africans and non-Africans, which ran counter to the policy of the Administering Authority.

Mr. CRAW (New Zealand) declared that even in the absence of such a Convention the Administering Authority might find it its duty to restrict the liquor trade in the interests of the social advancement of the indigenous population.

Mr. WATIER, Special Representative of the Administering Authority for the Trust Territory of the Cameroons under French administration, replying to a question by Mr. McKAY (United States of America), said he would prefer the resolution prepared by the Committee to omit mention of the St. Germain Convention, and merely to recommend that all possible measures should be taken to limit the sale of alcohol in the Trust Territory. Such a recommendation would please the Administration, though not the petitioners.

Mr. McKAY (United States of America) agreed with the New Zealand representative that such measures would be in the interests of the social advancement of the Territory.

Mr. CRAW (New Zealand) suggested that the Committee should simply note the statement of the Special Representative, from which it was to be gathered that the liquor trade was controlled in the interests of the inhabitants themselves.

Mr. McKAY (United States of America) thought the Committee should proclaim that it was taking no action in view of the Special Representative's assurances, since the policy therein indicated was in the interests of the indigenous inhabitants.

The CHAIRMAN noted general agreement that a resolution should be drafted on such lines.

Mr. McKAY (United States of America) noted that the petition summarized in paragraph 2 concerning commercial trusts would be covered by the reply on freedom of trade in general.

(x) Price Fixing (Document T/521 Section III (a) ).

Petitions: T/PET.5/20  
T/PET.5/52

Mr. WATIER, Special Representative of the Administering Authority for the Trust Territory of the Cameroons under French administration, dealing first with the petitions summarized in paragraph 2, said that the "white market" referred to had existed for certain goods, mainly imported from Europe, which had been in short supply owing to transport difficulties and under-production, so that Europeans had been given a priority for purchasing them. That situation had cleared up with the disappearance of the conditions which had caused it; the goods in question were now abundant. Similarly, the request to the Government to stabilize prices and put a stop to the black market referred to conditions which were now of the past. When such articles as needles, thread, nails etc. had been in short supply, importers had sold them at high prices to small, indigenous traders who had re-sold them at still higher prices. The part played by the Administration in stabilizing prices was less important now that free competition had returned and prices generally had returned to normal.

The Administration endeavoured indeed to maintain the prices of native products at a reasonable level. It had had to intervene to fix prices in accordance with the purchasing power of the franc at a time when a rapid rise in wages had led to a loss of all sense of values. The Councils of Notables, however,

played a large part in the fixing of prices; the request in the petition summarized in paragraph 1 for a revision of the Administration's price fixing policy failed to take account of the actual position.

With regard to the request in paragraph 2 that the management of controlled-price shops should pass to a board on which trade union delegates would predominate, before such shops had been opened the Administration had proposed to meet the difficulties of the workers at Douala by setting up communal restaurants to be managed by the trade unions. The trade unions had refused that responsibility. The Administration had then opened the controlled-price shops which had done much to regularize prices. Now that they had proved successful the trade unions wished to assume control of them. There was no need to endorse such a request. The trade unions in question could be invited to open their own shops.

Replying to a question from Mr. CARPIO (Philippines) he said it was untrue that goods were ever supplied at lower prices to Europeans. Europeans had, however, had the advantage of being able to buy in town shops, whereas the natives most often bought from pedlars who had themselves bought their wares in the towns. The indigenous inhabitants were completely free to buy in any shops they wished.

To a further question from the Philippines representative, he replied that the controlled-price shops were owned by the Administration, but could be set up by anyone who wished to do so. The head of the Douala region had rented the shops, which sold at a price covering cost price, cost of transport and overhead expenses. They sold only foodstuffs consumed by the indigenous inhabitants. They were known as "pilot" shops because they set out to show that it was possible to sell at reasonable prices and yet earn a livelihood.

Mr. McKAY (United States of America) drew attention to the fact that the petition summarized in paragraph 1 had no such contents as were indicated; its only reference to price fixing was the complaint that "good prices are not yet offered for our crops". Paragraph 1 should therefore be deleted.

It was so agreed.

The CHAIRMAN noted general agreement that note should be taken of the statements of the Special Representative as a full reply to the petition in paragraph 2, and that no action was called for.

(xi) Economic Organization (Document T/521, Section III (k) ).

Petitions: T/PET.5/12 - 4/23  
T/PET.5/19  
T/PET.5/53 - 4/30

Mr. WATIER, Special Representative of the Administering Authority for the Trust Territory of the Cameroons under French administration, said that all the petitioners were asking in substance for wider participation in the one existing economic organization, the three-fold Chamber of Commerce, Agriculture and Industry. The members of that body were elected by registered traders and producers, both African and European. Many of the Africans realised, however, that it was impossible for them to play a preponderant part in the organization since their enterprises were not so big as those in European hands, particularly where the wholesale trade, forest exploitation and mining were concerned. In such fields the elected representatives were inevitably Europeans. In view of the system of free election, it would be difficult to impose a wider representation of indigenous concerns.

Mr. CRAW (New Zealand) agreed that the Government could not interfere in the internal affairs of such a body. The Committee could therefore not recommend any action on the part of the Administering Authority.

The CHAIRMAN noted general agreement that since the Chamber of Commerce, Agriculture and Industry was a private organization no action by the Trusteeship Council was called for.

(xii) Loans and Subsidies (Document T/521, Section III(1) ).

Petitions: T/PET.5/52  
T/PET.5/56 - 4/31  
T/LET.5/R.4-4/R.1



Mr. WATIER, Special Representative of the Administering Authority for the Trust Territory of the Cameroons under French administration, pointed out that the petitions bore on two distinct issues, the granting of loans and subsidies to small indigenous undertakings, and the setting up of a mutual assistance fund. With regard to loans and subsidies, the Administration had advanced 120,000,000 francs to small undertakings and co-operatives, but since over 70 per cent of that sum had never been repaid, the Representative Assembly had decided that no further loans should be granted out of the budget of the Trust Territory. The Administration had then created the Crédit Camerounais, a banking corporation which advanced loans on favourable terms to small undertakings for the development of trade and the building of houses. If that experiment proved successful, the system would be expanded and the Government subsidy to the bank increased. With regard to the request summarized in paragraph 2 for the setting up of a fund providing mutual assistance, such funds were always created on private initiative, though they might eventually be subsidized by the Government.

Mr. McKAY (United States of America) proposed that the Committee should note the assurance given by the Special Representative and express the hope that the banking corporation referred to would prove successful and receive increased Government aid.

Mr. CARPIO (Philippines) suggested that the resolution on industry, adopted by the Council at its fourth session, might be incorporated in the reply to the petitioners.

The CHAIRMAN agreed, but thought it better to frame a new resolution on similar lines including the points suggested by the United States representative.

It was so agreed.

(xiii) Taxation (Document T/521, Section III (m) ).

Petitions: T/PET.5/12 - 4/23  
T/PET.5/53 - 4/27  
T/PET.5/53 - 4/30  
T/PET.5/41  
T/PET.5/56 - 4/31  
T/PET.5/60 - 4/32  
T/PET.5/R.4 - 4/R.1

Mr. WATIER, Special Representative of the Administering Authority for the Trust Territory of the Cameroons under French administration, referring to the request for abolition of the poll tax, recalled that at the fourth session of the Council he had expressed regret that so primitive a type of tax had to be maintained. It had so far been impossible to replace it by a graduated tax on income, because of the impossibility of identifying a large proportion of the indigenous population and the difficulty of ascertaining the size of all incomes. The Administration intended to carry out such a reform, and was hesitating only because of the expense that would be involved in the organization of a tax system requiring the assessment of the incomes of all inhabitants of the Trust Territory. With regard to what was erroneously described in paragraph 2 as a request for the abolition of death duties, the complaint actually bore on an alleged practice of demanding taxes for persons who were no longer living. As the census lists on which the poll tax was based were revised every two years, cases where the tax was claimed from deceased persons were not frequent and when they occurred the error was rectified as soon as it was brought to the notice of the Authorities. Recently, measures had been adopted exempting from tax the first wife, and raising the age at which poll tax was payable from fourteen to sixteen.

With regard to licences for small traders, referred to in the petition summarized in both paragraph 1 and paragraph 3, there was no reason for their suppression. Such fees were demanded only in the more important markets, and the takings of the traders concerned were sufficient to enable them to pay the small sums involved.

The CHAIRMAN recalled that at the fourth session the representative of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics had stated that the poll tax system laid



the burden of taxation on the poorest part of the population, and should be replaced by a progressive income tax or at least by an income tax system which would take into account property qualifications. The Council had not seen fit to adopt a specific recommendation to that effect and could therefore be considered as having given implicit sanction to the maintenance of the poll tax for the time being.

Mr. McKAY (United States of America) agreed with the Chairman. The question had often been discussed at length in the Trusteeship Council. No action was therefore required on the petitions summarized in paragraphs 1 and 2, while those summarized in paragraph 3 had been already covered when the question of licences fees had been dealt with earlier in the meeting.

Mr. CARPIO (Philippines) agreed with the United States representative so far as paragraph 3 was concerned. It had, however, been his impression that the Administering Authority in its Annual Report on the Trust Territory had recognized that the poll tax entailed some injustice, as it was imposed upon every individual alike regardless of his income. In view of that admission, would it not be possible to express the hope that somehow steps would be taken to remedy the situation?

Mr. WATIER, Special Representative of the Administering Authority for the Trust Territory of the Cameroons under French administration, said that the injustice of the poll tax lay in the fact that, being adjusted to the lowest income level, it made too small a demand on persons of greater wealth. Persons with no incomes were exempt, and the tax was too small to constitute any hardship for those on whom it fell.

Mr. CRAW (New Zealand) had gathered that the Administering Authority intended in the future to study the possibility of replacing the poll tax by a progressive income tax. He agreed with the representative of the Philippines that the hope might be expressed that the question should receive serious study.

Mr. WATIER, Special Representative of the Administering Authority for the Trust Territory of the Cameroons under French administration, said that steps to introduce a progressive income tax had already been taken, in the case of a number of Africans whose incomes were easily determined. The initial system thus introduced would be progressively expanded.

The CHAIRMAN noted general agreement that the reply to the petitioners referred to in paragraphs 1 and 2 should take the lines proposed by the representatives of the Philippines and New Zealand.

(d) Social Advancement

(i) Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (document T/521, Section IV (a).

Petitions: T/PET. 5/6 - 4/32  
T/PET. 5/22 - 4/24  
T/PET. 5/28  
T/PET. 5/31  
T/PET. 5/33 - 4/27  
T/PET. 5/72 - 4/63  
T/PET. 5/74  
T/PET. 5/R.2.

Mr. WATIER, Special Representative of the Administering Authority for the Trust Territory of the Cameroons under French administration, contrasted the allegations in the text of most of the petitions with the testimony of the Visiting Mission which made it quite clear that such allegations had no foundation whatever. The fact that the petitioners had been able to approach the Visiting Mission and express their grievances so freely, proved that the French Administration respected their liberty, including the specific liberties of which they claimed to have been deprived. The promises made by the French Government during the second world war to grant freedom of association, speech and the press, referred to in paragraph 2 had been kept to the letter; it was the same with freedom of expression. The fundamental freedoms were both safeguarded by the French Constitution and proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which had been published in the Cameroons. The findings of the Visiting Mission on page 48 of its Report gave full and sufficient answer to all the petitions involved.

Mr. CARPIO (Philippines), while entirely accepting the assurance given by the Special Representative, thought the hope might be expressed that the Administering Authority would take steps to make the existence of the fundamental freedoms perfectly clear to all the inhabitants of the Trust Territory. The number of organizations represented by the petitions suggested that misapprehension of the position was fairly widespread.

Mr. FRANCO y FRANCO (Dominican Republic) suggested a wording to the effect that the Administering Authority should be urged to continue its efforts to ensure the full exercise of human rights and the fundamental freedoms in the Trust Territory. The draft resolution should also note both the Special Representative's statement and the Report of the Visiting Mission.

Mr. WATIER, Special Representative of the Administering Authority for the Trust Territory of the Cameroons under French administration, pointed out that the variety of organizations represented by the petitions was only apparent. All came either from branches of the Communist U.P.C. or from the Trade Union Confederation affiliated to the Cominform.

The CHAIRMAN noted general agreement that a draft resolution should be prepared on the lines suggested by the representatives of the Dominican Republic and the Philippines.

(ii) Liberation of Women (Document T/521, Section IV (b)).

Petitions: T/PET. 5/45  
T/PET. 5/54  
T/PET. 5/60 - 4/32

The CHAIRMAN noted that all present were familiar with the problems of dowry, polygamy etc. The Committee might note an assurance from the Special Representative that all steps were being and would be taken to ensure that the necessary reforms were carried through as quickly as possible.

Mr. WATIER, Special Representative of the Administering Authority for the Trust Territory of the Cameroons under French Administration, agreed to give such an assurance.

Mr. CARPIO (Philippines) pointed out that the first petition summarized came from the Vicarite of Douala (document T/PET.5/45). From the Annual Report on the Trust Territory it seemed clear that women were treated as objects of commercial transactions under the marriage customs of the Territory. The hope should be expressed that such conditions should be eradicated as soon as possible,

The CHAIRMAN agreed.

Mr. McKAY (United States of America) proposed that the resolution might refer to the Visiting Mission's statement that reasoned arguments had been advanced to the effect that arbitrarily to lower the amount of dowry too substantially would only lead to evasion of the law.

The SECRETARY pointed out that that passage was not applicable, since it was not presented as a conclusion reached by the Visiting Mission, but referred only to an incident at a single meeting. He suggested that in the preamble of the Resolution the Council should express the hope that the Administering Authority should take all possible steps to improve the social conditions of women in the Trust Territory.

Mr. WATIER, Special Representative of the Administering Authority for the Trust Territory of the Cameroons under French administration, was entirely in sympathy with the complaints of the petitioners, but considered that the remedy for social scourges of the type described lay in education. They could not be disposed of by Governmental action.

Mr. FRANCO y FRANCO (Dominican Republic) suggested that the Resolution should contain the statements of the Special Representative and express the hope that improvement would be achieved in as progressive and rapid a manner possible.

The CHAIRMAN noted general agreement that a resolution should be drafted on the lines suggested.

The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.