COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Eighth Session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE TWO HUNDRED AND NINETY-SEVENTH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York
on Monday, 29 May 1955, at 10.30 a.m.


Article 1 (continued)

Chairman: Mr. HELLM MAN

Reporteur: Mr. WHITLAN

Members:
Mr. HAMM
Mr. LACIE CAMP
Mr. CELIO ECO

Lebanon
Australia
Belgium
Chile
China
Membership

(Continued)

Mr. JUNIARD
Mr. KAKEMOTO
Mr. RAJU
Mr. SEID
Mr. BORASYEKI
Mrs. KESSLER
Mr. KOVALenko
Mr. KERZOV
Mr. KOZAK
Mrs. RUS Cold
Mr. SRDJEVIC
Mr. JUNTUNEN

Also present: Miss KÜHN

Representative of a specialized agency:

Mr. PICCARD

Representatives of intergovernmental organizations:

Category A: Miss SUNDIN

International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU)

Category B: Mrs. LEFEBVRE
Mrs. CLOUGH
Mrs. RUS
Mrs. VEIL
Mrs. D'ABREU
Mr. JACOBY
Mr. RICHARDSON
Mrs. 101STAIN

And Partial:

International Council of Women

International Federation of University Women

Liaison Committee of Women's International Organizations

World Jewish Congress

World Union for Progressive Judaism

International Organization for Human Rights

Secretariat:

Mr. LIN
Mr. DUC
Miss KITCHEN

/ADRAFT
DRIFT INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND MEASURES OF DEFENSACTION:
PART III OF THE DRAFT COVENANT DRAVEN UP BY THE COMMISSION AT ITS SIXTEENTH SESSION
AND PROTOCOLS FOR ADDITIONAL ARTICLES ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Article 77 (continued)

Mr. BRACCO (Uruguay) said that, in his opinion, it would be quite
meaningless to guarantee trade union rights without at the same time guaranteeing
the right to strike. However, the right to strike must be subject to certain
limitations and it was in order to introduce such limitations that he had
submitted his amendment (E/CN.4/L.111) to the USSR amendment (E/CN.4/L.50/Rev. 1)
and the same amendment (E/CN.4/L.111) to the Yugoslav amendment (E/CN.4/L.73).
The inclusion of a completely unlimited right to strike might impair some of the
rights set forth in other articles of the covenant, such as the article on public
health. He emphasized that his amendment was drafted in optional and not
mandatory terms. The first part referred to attempts at conciliation, because
procedures for conciliation existed in most modern States and generally made
provision for the continuation of the essential public services in the event of a strike. The second part of the amendment referred to the possibility of
restricting the right to strike by legislative measures in the case of public
officials. The last two words should perhaps read "public services" rather than
"public officials". There again the idea was to enable the State to take the
necessary measures to keep the essential public services running in the event of a strike. The two ideas were complementary. Normally there would be
conciliation procedures which would provide for the continuation of essential
public services but, even if attempts at conciliation had been exhausted,
Governments should be in a position to prohibit a strike if a breakdown in such
services might result.

The restrictions
The restrictions he was proposing were in fact intended to be in the interests of national security, public health, etc. He had not mentioned national security specifically, because the term referred to emergency situations and States generally had special legislation for such situations. In addition, the term was very elastic and might lead to abuse. In the covenant on civil and political rights, the Commission had mentioned emergency situations (article 2) in which the rights might be temporarily suspended. Some similar provision might be inserted in the covenant on economic, social and cultural rights.

AZMI Bey (Egypt) dealt with the USSR amendment (E/CH.4/L.50/Rev.1) paragraph by paragraph. He fully supported the revised version of the first paragraph incorporating the Lebanese amendment (E/CH.4/L.111). It had the advantage of covering all the essential points without going into unnecessary detail or raising any controversial issues. He felt that the second paragraph was unnecessary since it was simply a repetition of article 21. Paragraph 3 was also unnecessary because its provisions would follow automatically from paragraph 1. As regards paragraph 4, he considered that Governments could easily prevent the intervention of public authorities or officials in the administration of trade unions if such intervention was contrary to the law. Paragraph 5 dealt with the right to strike. That subject had already been discussed at length and in great detail at the previous session and he had himself submitted an amendment proposing certain limitations. His amendment had unfortunately been rejected and he hoped that the text submitted by the representative of Uruguay (E/CH.4/L.118 and E/CH.4/L.119) would meet with more success. He could not accept the inclusion of the right to strike unless it was accompanied by the provisions of the Uruguayan amendment. The sixth paragraph of the USSR amendment dealt with questions which would, in his opinion, come more appropriately in the measures for implementation. Paragraph 7 was covered by the revised version of paragraph 1 incorporating the Lebanese amendment. He emphasized that the International Labour Organisation already existed and that was the appropriate organ in which to discuss the relations between workers, employers and governments. The provisions of paragraph 8 followed naturally from paragraph 1 and were therefore unnecessary.

Turning to the Yugoslav amendment (E/CH.4/L.77), he said that most of its provisions were covered by the revised version of paragraph 1 of the USSR amendment. The words "in particular those enunciated in the present
covenant" did represent an addition and he saw no objection to their inclusion.

In his opinion, the best text was the revised first paragraph of the USSR amendment (E/CON.4/L.50/Rev.1) incorporating the Lebanese amendment (E/CON.4/L.111). If necessary, he was prepared to support additions to that text taken from the Uruguayan amendment (E/CON.4/L.119).

Mr. PICKETT (International Labour Organisation) stated that the existence of free and effective trade unions was of fundamental concern to ILO. At the request of the General Assembly, ILO had adopted an International Labour Convention on the Protection of Trade Union Rights in 1948 and, subsequently, at the request of the Economic and Social Council, it had established a Fact-Finding and Conciliation Commission to conduct an impartial examination of allegations concerning the infringement of trade union rights.

The International Labour Conference had also taken other action in connexion with the freedom of association. In 1949, it had adopted a Convention on the Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining. In 1951, it had adopted Recommendations on collective agreements and voluntary conciliation and arbitration. It was hoped that, in 1952, the Conference would reach a final decision on the question of co-operation between employers and workers at the level of the individual undertaking and would start to discuss possible action at the level of the industry and at the national level. The instruments already adopted had been the result of long and careful discussion among the representatives of workers, employers and governments.

Some of the subjects dealt with in the ILO Conventions and Recommendations were mentioned in the amendments submitted to article 27, but they were not necessarily mentioned in an unqualified form. Other subjects were not specifically mentioned in the amendments. For example, there was no reference to collective bargaining, to which ILO attached great importance. Other points appeared in quite a different context in the ILO instruments and in the amendments before the Commission. For example, ILO attached considerable importance to procedure for voluntary conciliation and arbitration and it had adopted a Recommendation on the subject in which encouragement to abstain from strikes and lockouts was mentioned, always with the proviso that no provision of the Recommendation could be interpreted as limiting in any way whatsoever the right to strike.

/The question
The question of implementation was also important. No recognized
that there were countries in which many industrial relations matters were regarded
as appropriate for settlement between the two parties and the extent of
State control was limited, that being entirely to the satisfaction of the
parties. Account must naturally be taken of the many different national
customs and practices when the object was to achieve the widest possible
ratification of an international covenant.

The whole question was exceedingly complex and he had not attempted
to deal with it exhaustively. He had simply mentioned certain considerations
which bore out his organization's view that it was for the covenant to
establish a basic principle and for the specialized agency concerned to
work out the details. ILO, which brought together representatives of
workers, employers and governments, was ideally suited for the discussion
of such questions as freedom of association and trade union rights and it
had already accomplished a great deal in that respect. In the light of
all these considerations, the Governing Body of ILO would consider it
satisfactory if some formula similar to the existing text of article 27
was adopted.

Mr. JONES (International Confederation of Free Trade Unions)
said that article 27 dealt with one of the most essential rights for workers
in all countries; in both developed and undeveloped countries, and in those
with State-controlled economies as well as those with systems of free
enterprise. Trade union rights should be formulated without any ambiguity
and the measures of implementation should be clear and effective, for
without effective international implementation no text would be of any avail.

ICFTU considered it essential that workers should be guaranteed
the right to organize and join trade unions of their own choosing without
any interference whatsoever, either by the employer, the State or the
political party. Article 27 of the draft covenant was good as far as it
went, but it did not go far enough, because it did not mention the right
to collective bargaining. He hoped that the ILO representative would
help the Commission to find an appropriate formulation for that right.

/Turning to
Turning to the USSR amendment (E/CH.4/L.50/Rev.1), she pointed out that, there again, there was no mention of collective bargaining. That was only natural since the right did not exist in the Soviet countries as far as wages were concerned. She quoted from a publication of the Central Council of Soviet Trade Unions issued in August 1947, showing that the wages of all workers were fixed by the Government in the USSR. That could hardly pass for non-intervention by the public authorities in the affairs of the trade unions, which was recommended in paragraph 4 of the USSR amendment. Paragraph 4 did not mention interference by the Communist party in a one-party State. That again was only natural since the trade unions in the USSR were completely under the domination of the Communist party. In support of that statement, she quoted a passage from Article 126 of the USSR Constitution of 1936 as well as extracts from the issue of 20 April 1947 and 11 May 1949 of the publication Trudi. Also in connexion with paragraph 4 of the USSR amendment, she mentioned that the USSR Constitution had abolished the secret vote in the election of the so-called trade union group organizers.

The USSR amendment stated that the right to strike should be guaranteed, but it made no attempt to define the nature of the strike and could thus be taken as guaranteeing the right to strike for political purposes, in order to overthrow a government. That interpretation seemed to be confirmed by paragraph 6 of the amendment, which would enable unions "to participate in the framing of economic and social policy in enterprises and at the local, regional and national levels. That idea was not new, neither was it in the interests of a free society". In fact, it was the idea of the Corporate State which had first found its expression in the fascist State of Italy. In the genuine democracies, economic and social policies were determined by the freely elected parliaments, which represented all categories of citizens, including the workers. It might perhaps be in the interest of certain Powers to gain control in another country by conquering key positions in the trade unions and, through the transfer of political functions to the unions, establishing vassal States. It was interesting, however, that the potential victims were being asked to prepare the path for such action. The
basis of the right to strike was the right for a worker to leave his job, either by himself or with his fellow workers. That, however, was not allowed in the Soviet Union because there was an order of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR dated 26 June 1940, which provided for punishment by corrective labour if any worker voluntarily left his work in State co-operative and social enterprises. The basic right of the worker to leave his job (i.e. to strike) did exist in the Western democracies and it must be maintained. Even if there were exceptions in the case of civil servants, those exceptions could not be automatically applied to workers in nationalized industries.

In an attempt might be made to argue that, in a Communist country, the economy was in the hands of the workers, but even if that were a fact, there could still be conflict between management and labour.

She hoped that the Commission would agree to include the right to collective bargaining in article 27. If it were at all possible the right to strike should also be included in the covenant. She did not altogether agree with the Uruguayan amendment (5/CHR.4/L.116 and 7/CHR.4/L.119), because, in certain circumstances, it might be justified to call a strike immediately without first resorting to conciliation procedures.

Even if a country's legislation provided adequately for trade union rights, strong, independent trade unions would still be needed to safeguard the rights of workers of all categories and to promote further progress in the future.

M. SANTA CRUZ (Chile) said that the right to form and join trade unions was one of the most important rights in the covenant; and it depended the full enjoyment of the other rights proclaimed.

The question of trade union rights was complicated by the fact that the concept of trade unions differed from one country to another; some trade unions, for example, had a certain relationship to the State and were concerned with political matters as well as the defence of the social and economic interests of the workers.
The right to join and form trade unions had been discussed at length at the previous session of the Commission. Some representatives had argued that no special article recognizing that right was necessary in view of the fact that the right of association had already been proclaimed in article 16. Article 23 of the Declaration of Human Rights, however, specifically proclaimed the right to form and join trade unions and the United Nations had already taken action to ensure the free exercise of that right, as was shown by the ILO Convention on Freedom of Association, which had been concluded with the support of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly. Chile had subscribed to that Convention and had agreed to comply with the principles stated therein.

It agreed with those representatives who said that article 27 as it stood was inadequate: the simple recognition of the right to form and join trade unions was not enough; some provision must be added to ensure the effective implementation of that right. Paragraph 1 of the USSR amendment, incorporating the Lebanon amendment (E/CN.4/L.299), was therefore essential. The reiterated objection that States could not immediately accept the obligation to guarantee the right to free association, since the measures involved were not of an economic nature and could be adopted immediately.

While the wording of the Yugoslav amendment (E/CN.4/L.73) was not entirely satisfactory, it stated an essential right, the right to strike, without which most other rights would be illusory.

It pointed out that the USSR amendment (E/CN.4/L.50/Rev.1) was almost identical with the amendment which the USSR had introduced at the previous session. The Chilean delegation had been opposed to the earlier amendment and was, in general, opposed to the current amendment for the following reasons: firstly, it contained a number of details which could more properly be included in ILO Conventions; and, secondly, it emphasized the political role of trade unions, rather than the defence of the workers' economic and social interests. The delegation was not prepared to accept or reject the USSR amendment as a whole and hoped that it would be put to the vote paragraph by paragraph.
As he had already stated he was in favour of paragraph 1, with the Lebanese amendment.

The non-discrimination clause in paragraph 2 was not necessary since the principle of non-discrimination had already been proclaimed in general terms. Furthermore, numerous rights in both covenants were essential and inviolable. That had not been stated in every case, however, and to state it in the case in point might imply that the right to form trade unions was more essential and inviolable than the right to life or freedom, for example.

With regard to paragraph 3, the term "wage workers" had various meanings in various languages. The Spanish word "salarios" for example applied only to manual workers and he felt that such distinctions were invidious. Moreover, negative provisions prohibiting certain measures were unnecessary if the fundamental right to form and join trade unions was stated in sufficiently strong terms. If the USSR delegation felt that paragraph 1 left the door open to equivocal interpretations the solution was to strengthen and clarify that paragraph, rather than to introduce negative provisions in a later paragraph.

By signing the ILO Convention Chile had agreed to the principles contained in paragraph 4, but the inclusion of such details was not appropriate in the draft convention and would throw article 27 out of balance. Some general reference to those principles might be included in paragraph 1.

His delegation would vote for paragraph 5, since it felt that the right to strike must be specifically stated in the draft covenant.

While he agreed that workers should be entitled to participate in formulating economic and social policy in enterprises, he was afraid that the statement that trade union organizations should be permitted to participate in the framing of economic and social policy at the local, regional and national levels (paragraph 6) might encourage trade unions to interfere in matters that were, in fact, the concern of the national legislative and administrative authorities.

The provisions of paragraph 7 were already covered by paragraph 1, incorporating the Lebanese amendment, and his comments on the negative character of paragraph 3 were equally applicable to paragraph 6.

The Uruguayan amendment (E/CR.4/L.100) contained two ideas: firstly, a general restriction on the right to strike, and, secondly, a particular restriction in relation to public services. In the latter connexion, he drew attention /to the ILO
to the ILO Convention, which did not exclude all public officials from the right to strike, but only members of the armed forces and the police and then only to the extent determined by national laws or regulations. The second part of the Uruguayan amendment therefore constituted a retrograde measure for States which had acceded to the ILO Convention.

The Chilean delegation was in favour of the idea contained in the first part of the Uruguayan amendment, but felt that the draft covenant should merely proclaim the right to strike and that it should be for States to regulate that right in accordance with the provisions of article 32. The first part of the Uruguayan amendment would unnecessarily open the way for the introduction of further exceptions to the general right. He was therefore unable to support that amendment.

Mr. SAIJAN (India) considered that trade union rights were latent in the right of association and should properly be included in the first draft covenant. Nevertheless, if the Commission felt that trade union rights should be transferred to the second draft covenant, they should be given the same status as political and civil rights and he would therefore support paragraph 1 of the Soviet Union amendment, as amended by Ireland, which provided for ensuring these rights and not only for recognising them.

He agreed with the deletion of any reference to article 16, since the two draft covenants would be separate instruments.

He was unable to support the rest of the USSR amendment. He preferred a general clause on non-discrimination to a specific clause attached to each article. Moreover, the Commission should not attempt to guarantee any particular form of trade union organization; a general guarantee was sufficient. Lastly, since article 37, being in the second draft covenant, would not, like article 16, be limited by article 2 of the first draft covenant, the right to strike proclaimed in paragraph 5 of the USSR amendment would be unqualified.

The right to strike was not a primary right, like the right to life; it was more analogous to the right of self-defence and should be exercised only when other rights were endangered. The right to strike must be exercised only when conciliation procedures had been exhausted and it must not be open to public officials or members of the armed forces, otherwise it would endanger the implementation of other rights and be contrary to the general welfare. Furthermore,
the right to strike was consequent on the right to organize and depended on the particular labour organization in each country. It would be difficult, therefore, to include any specific reference to the right to strike and dangerous to include any unqualified reference to it. However, if the Commission felt that it should be included, he would favour a clause along the lines of the Uruguayan amendment, though he felt that that amendment might be better worded. He therefore proposed that the words "may be restricted to" should be replaced by the words "may only be resorted to in", which would more strongly imply that it was obligatory to resort to other measures first. He also proposed that the words "and essential services" should be added after the words "public officials". Subject to those modifications, he would support the Uruguayan amendment.

Mr. KORATTICKI (Poland) said that a number of representatives had opposed the USSR amendment on the ground that its provisions were too detailed for inclusion in the draft covenant. In his opinion that criticism was unjustified and the contention that the covenant should contain only general clauses was in direct contradiction to what the General Assembly had had in mind in asking the Commission to improve the drafting of the covenant. If the general tendency to delete references to specific rights on the ground that they were covered by general clauses were pushed to its logical conclusion, it might be argued that there was no need for any covenant, since the rights that it proclaimed were already stated in general terms in the Charter.

He therefore felt that it was only logical that States which agreed with the principles stated in (a) USSR amendment should vote in favour of it.

Mr. WAFF (Pakistan) said that his delegation recognized trade union rights as being of the utmost importance to all workers.

In Pakistan legitimate trade union activities were developing at a tremendous rate as a result of the rapid industrialization of the country. The Government did not interfere with trade union activities and believed that a healthy trade union movement was essential to a happy relationship between industry and labour and that all labour problems should be solved with the co-operation of the workers.
His delegation would therefore support paragraph 1 of the USSR amendment, as amended by the Lebanese amendment, although it would be unable to support the detailed provisions contained in subsequent paragraphs of the USSR text, since it believed that they were a matter for ILO convention. He would vote in favour of the right to strike, subject to the reservations contained in the Uruguayan amendment.

Mr. KOZLOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) remarked that the USSR amendment (E/CH.4/L.50/Rev.1) had been subjected to criticisms which, while unjustified, covered a remarkably wide range: it had been said, on the one hand, that the amendment granted the right of association to millionaires, and on the other, that it gave workers the right to revolution. He felt it unnecessary to reply to such obviously absurd assertions beyond stating that it should be plain to every unbiased person that the amendment contained neither idea.

The representative of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, instead of assisting the Commission by offering helpful suggestions, had taken it upon herself to criticize the position of the USSR delegation and the USSR amendment. He strongly doubted that such action fell within the province of the non-governmental organization she represented; certainly her slanderous attacks on the Constitution of his country did not. She had alleged that article 126 of that Constitution vitiated trade union rights; a reading of the entire article -- rather than of parts taken out of context -- would show that, on the contrary, it ensured to workers the free exercise of trade union rights and postulated that the Communist Party was the vanguard of the workers and the spearhead of all their organizations. The attempt to prove that workers in the USSR were punished for endeavouring to exercise the right to strike was equally preposterous.

It might be asked, however, why the ICTU representative had spoken with such bitterness against the USSR on several occasions, and why her organization -- quite independently of labour conditions in the USSR -- did not support the USSR amendment which was so phrased that any organization which truly represented the interests of the working masses was bound to support it. The answer was, quite simply, that the ICTU did not represent those interests. It was a dissident organization which had betrayed the workers. He cited The Times --
a newspaper no one would dream of accusing of Communist leanings -- to show that at its recent congress held at Milan the ICOFTU had spent its time in making high-toned speeches instead of attempting to take concrete action to help the workers; and an article by the organization's own secretary-treasurer declaring that workers had to accept strict control and that the organization would, in a sense, have to become an agent enforcing the will of the government. It was not surprising that an organization pursuing such reactionary aims, utterly contrary to the interests of the working masses, had refused all negotiations with the IFTU -- which really represented the workers of the world -- and had begged slander and abuse upon it.

Several delegations had criticized the USTR amendment to article 27 on the grounds that its paragraph 1 included in general terms all the ideas developed in detail in the subsequent paragraphs. The Polish representative had already shown the fallacy in that argument; and he would not weary the Commission by once again defending the thesis that a statement couched in general terms should be followed by a more detailed enumeration of principles leading it strength and substance -- a thesis which applied to article 27.

While he considered all the paragraphs of the USTR amendment necessary, he wished to emphasize particularly the importance of paragraphs 2 and 5. Paragraph 2 asserted that the enjoyment of trade union rights -- which were essential and inviolable -- should be guaranteed to all wage workers without distinction. The necessity for such a provision was proved by numerous communications alleging infringement of trade union rights received under Economic and Social Council resolution 777 (XII); to cite but one example, a communication from the Union des Syndicats Confédérés du Maroc (E/2124/Add.5) showed that there was flagrant discrimination against Moroccan workers, who were deprived of all trade union rights. It was worthy of note that the Moroccan Union addressed a request to the Council for unrestricted trade union rights for all workers, which it based on article 13, paragraph 4 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Thus texts drafted by the Commission lent strength to workers struggling to achieve the exercise of their various rights.

Paragraph 5, which in the briefest terms possible guaranteed the right to strike, should not be limited in any way. At present, when there was a strong movement in capitalist countries to destroy the gains of the working class, when recent legislation in the United States, such as the McCarren, Smith, and

Taft-Hartley
Taft-Hartley Acts, repressed the workers' freedom of association and expression, and this even more reactionary bill, which would make striking in some circumstances and outside aid to strikers actionable, was before Congress, it is absolutely necessary to state unequivocally that workers had a right to strike. The USSR would therefore vote against all amendments placing a limitation on that right, since their adoption would only encourage Governments to put down trade unionism, whereas a clear recognition of that right would place a powerful weapon in the hands of workers in capitalist countries who were fighting for all the other economic and social rights enunciated in the covenant.

Dr. CHUNG JACSON (China) remarked that the purpose of article 27 was not to ensure to workers the right to form associations in order to use various methods for securing and protecting their economic interests, but to give them the right to form associations simply in order to assure and protect their economic interests.

He drew attention to a communication from the ILO (E/CN.4/L.295/Add.3) in which it was stated that since article 27 was designed to protect the right of industrial and other workers to form trade unions, the Commission might consider including in the article a reference to cultivators and agricultural workers, whose rights were of basic importance, and who should be ensured a reasonable return for their labour and protected from unfair conditions.

He would support the Lebanese amendment alone (E/CN.4/L.111), feeling that by adopting more detailed provisions the Commission would be trespassing on the territory of the ILO. Furthermore, it was not proper to guarantee the right to strike without first outlining the many methods -- such as fact finding, negotiation, conciliation, mediation, arbitration -- which should be tried before a strike was declared.

Mr. SUMA CHIZ (Chile) requested the Commission's permission to introduce an amendment to the USSR amendment, as the time set for the submission of such amendments had elapsed.

The Commission agreed to receive the Chilean amendment.

The meeting rose at 2 p.m.

1/ The Chilean amendment was subsequently issued as document E/CN.4/L.167/Rev.1.

2/6 p.m.