

# UNITED NATIONS INFORMATION SERVICES

From May 25 to June 3, 1948, the United Nations Advisory Committee of Information Experts met at Lake Success, New York, to consider the activities of the United Nations Department of Public Information and world-wide needs for information about the United Nations.

The following experts attended: Chairman: Raul Noriega (Mexico); Vice-Chairman: Jhiri Hronek (Czechoslovakia); Rapporteur: Vernon Bartlett (United Kingdom); Elmano Cardim (Brazil); F.M. De Mello (India); Davidson Dunton (Canada); Georges Huisman (France); Simon Koster (Netherlands); Charles Malik (Lebanon); F.A. Mendieta (Nicaragua); Finn Moe (Norway); Whitelaw Reid (United States); and T.C. T'ang (China).

Ten consultants were present. Eight specialized agencies were represented by observers.

## WIDESPREAD SCEPTICISM

The Committee, in the preamble to its report, notes widespread public scepticism about the United Nations arising from the world situation, from the lack of encouraging political progress and from the consequent emphasis on disagreements in news reports. This scepticism places great obstacles in the way of the development of "an informed understanding of the work and purposes of the United Nations among the peoples of the world". The Committee believes that this scepticism would be lessened and a more effective public understanding of the work and purposes of the United Nations achieved if, in addition to present activities, more emphasis were laid on information work on:

a) Constructive economic, social and humanitarian achievements of the United Nations and related agencies;

b) Public clarification of the functions and limitations of the United Nations and the Charter; and

c) The fact that under present circumstances the United Nations is the only form of world-wide international machinery that the Governments have agreed to use and that the workability of the organization has been evidenced by recent developments.

The Committee had also to face the fact that many people in large areas of the world are still without physical means of access to regular and accurate information about the United Nations. Post-war difficulties, including the severe scarcity of international shortwave broadcasting frequencies, the grave shortage of newsprint in Europe and Asia and the continuing lack of many technical facilities in most countries, create many barriers to an adequate flow of news and information about the United Nations.

## GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee, in its report, makes the following general recommendations:

(1) The Committee recognizes that the Department of Public Information (DPI), like all information services, can operate at maximum efficiency only if it is in close touch with the people and organizations which it serves. The importance of the work of the Information Centres is emphasized in this connection as well as the continuous evaluation of the state of public knowledge and opinion about the United Nations in all parts of the world.

(2) The report of the London Advisory Committee recommended that the DPI "should primarily assist and rely upon the co-operation of the established governmental and non-governmental agencies of in-

formation to provide the public with information about the United Nations". The Advisory Committee reaffirms this principle and notes with satisfaction the manner in which this policy is being implemented by the DPI.

(3) It is especially important to find additional means to assist and encourage representatives of all media of public information to visit U.N. Headquarters so that they may be in a better position to write, speak and teach about its work.

(4) To this, the necessary and logical complement is the further development of United Nations Information Centres in scope and number throughout the world.

(5) The United Nations system - the U.N. and the Specialized Agencies - should be presented to the public as a unity. Indeed whenever references are made in the following recommendations to the "United Nations", the Committee has in mind the U.N. System - the U.N. and the Specialized Agencies. The Committee therefore recommends the extension and strengthening of the present system of co-ordination of information programmes of the United Nations and the Specialized Agencies, on principle as well as on grounds of economy. This will also serve to provide a more balanced picture of the United Nations as a whole.

## EXPERT ADVICE

(6) The Committee considers it essential that the Department of Public Information make the fullest possible use of expert advice from representatives of information media in member countries in the planning and execution of its programmes. For this purpose it endorses the suggestion of the first Technical Advisory Committee on Public Information to the Secretary-