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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA

WORKING GROUP

CONSIDERATIONS AFFECTING COMMISSION'S FUTURE WORK

(Note by Acting Executive Secretary)

This may be an appropriate time to offer the members of the Working Group certain comments relating to the problems which may be expected to come up for discussion.

Members are doubtless aware that the Commission's budget, as established and agreed by the Economic and Social Council is \$250,000 for the current year. After providing for the cost of meetings, travel, equipment and supplies, this would permit the recruitment of a staff of economists numbering, at a maximum, 14 or 15. This is not a large staff, although it is larger than the staff of the related commission for Asia and the Far East. In 1949 a budget based on a full year of operation will, it may be hoped, continue to provide similar resources for approximately the same services to the Commission.

Behind this proposed staff, of course, is the support and assistance of staffs at Lake Success in the Division of Economic Stability and Development, of which I am a Director. The Commission may be assured of this Division's aid in its work. But they will appreciate, of course, that the Division must also serve the other regional commissions and three functional Commissions, namely, the Economic and Employment Commission, and the Sub-Commissions on Economic Stability and on Economic Development, as well as the Council itself.

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In planning the Secretariat work therefore, it would seem essential to bear in mind that the probable staff of the Secretariat would in no sense imply a large research institute, capable of undertaking a variety of investigations. The Secretariat will be, rather, a small group of economists in contact with governments, Specialized Agencies, and the Inter-American Economic and Social Council, whose work it will have to utilize and bring to bear upon the problems of the Commission.

Members will notice, on reference to the Secretariat paper on an Economic Survey (Document E/CN.12/4) that it refers to the impossibility of completing from the resources of the United Nations alone, and in a short time, a full survey of Latin America. It was therefore suggested that Member Governments themselves should agree to prepare reports which the staff of the Economic Commission for Latin America would arrange and co-ordinate for publication. To this report would be added a regional report which would bring together the main trends and factors as they appear after all the available material has been examined.

To achieve even this limited objective, the Secretariat would need to rely heavily upon the appropriate specialized agencies. There are already assurances from those Agencies that within their resources they will be willing to help.

May I therefore suggest that in considering the topics to be taken up for study between the First and Second Sessions of the Economic Commission for Latin America, members should have regard for the severe but unavoidable limitations of staff, as suggested above, and look as far as possible for aid to come from interested governments and from other agencies.

The attention of members is also drawn to a further point of importance, namely, the use of working groups. Bringing together groups of experts from time to time between this and the next session to study given problems must inevitably make inroads upon the available

finances. The Commission's budget does not provide for the travel of Delegates or for the servicing of such groups. Travel expenses would therefore have to be met by governments. With a limited staff, moreover, the time required for meetings of such groups would necessarily be taken from other work projects.

It is hoped, however, to be able to engage a small number of consultants to work on special subjects and these consultants could be assigned to topics of importance, thereby enabling the regular staff to continue with the main body of their work.

Such are the limitations of the Economic Commission for Latin America in its early stages, which I have ventured to place before members in this Note. The conclusion is, I think, clear: namely, that the working group should be as selective as possible in dealing with the many interesting and valuable proposals put forward by Delegations.

It may well seem advisable for an order of priority to be established in planning your work as the President of the Economic and Social Council has suggested in his letter (Document E/CN.12/19).

A further point members may wish to stress is that wherever other agencies are able and willing to undertake the preparation of studies, their services should be used as fully as possible.

Lastly, as members are aware, certain governments have proposed particular topics for further study and subsequent consideration by the Commission. Members might consider, perhaps, whether in certain cases these governments could themselves undertake to submit in advance of the Second Session of the Commission reports which would present the main issues arising from these topics. In this way, the Commission could undertake the discussion of such questions at its next session without loss of time. Where several governments are interested, it might be advantageous to request them to prepare a joint report.

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In putting forward the above information and suggestions for members' consideration, I feel certain that members will maintain, in their discussions of the various projects, a practical view both of the possibilities and of the limitations with which the Economic Commission for Latin America is endowed. To demand or to expect too wide a scope of work to be encompassed before the Second Session of the Economic Commission for Latin America might well prove an unfortunate policy. On the other hand, a programme of work which could reasonably be expected to be achieved would be a source of encouragement and stimulation to the Executive-Secretary and his staff.