

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

ORGANISATION MONDIALE DE LA SANTÉ

EXECUTIVE BOARD

EB7/AF/Min/11 Rev.1
31 March 1951

Seventh Session

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

RESTRICTED

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE
MINUTES OF THE ELEVENTH MEETING

Palais des Nations, Geneva

Thursday, 18 January 1951, at 9.30 a.m.

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1. PREPARATION OF THE REPORT OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE TO THE SEVENTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

Dr. BRADY, Rapporteur, presented for the committee's consideration a draft table of contents of the committee's report to the Executive Board and explained briefly how the items under the headings enumerated would be drafted.

The table of contents was approved and it was agreed that, as the draft report could not be prepared for examination on Saturday morning, the committee should meet during the following week, by arrangement between the Chairman of the Standing Committee and the Chairman of the Executive Board.

2. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND ADMINISTRATIVE EFFICIENCY OF THE ORGANIZATION

The CHAIRMAN wondered whether the committee was willing to include in the report some reference to the relationship existing among the administration and the technical and advisory services of the Organization, which he had been given to understand was not a happy one. He did not like to hear any criticism not based on real facts. It was therefore right, in his opinion, that the committee should recommend to the Executive Board the establishment of some machinery for following up the earlier study of the administrative efficiency of the Organization. In saying that, he did not mean that he was dissatisfied with the conclusions reached by the Standing Committee at its previous session.

Dr. MACKENZIE agreed with the Chairman, but stressed that a large committee was not suitable for such a study, as it would entail spending some months in Geneva, and probably would not produce any information of concrete value.

The DIRECTOR-GENERAL said that the point raised by the Chairman was extremely

important for the welfare of the Organization. There had in the past been criticisms, without any actual study of the facts, of the relative size of parts of the Secretariat at headquarters. The only basis on which comparison could be made was that furnished by experience in national administrations, in which conditions differed entirely from those of WHO, where even the language difficulties made a difference. That kind of criticism was not constructive but purely destructive and he hoped that the committee would support the Secretariat until it had been demonstrated that there was something wrong which needed to be changed. He did not believe there was any foundation for criticism of the size of any part of the Secretariat unless it was based on an actual study of the working conditions.

The CHAIRMAN said he had raised the matter only because of the criticisms which had been made. He was strongly opposed to the forming of hasty conclusions and thought that the committee should suggest the appointment of a small group of people experienced in management problems to make a detailed and prolonged study of the matter.

Dr. van den BERG said that last year, when the Standing Committee had studied the organizational structure of the Secretariat, he had felt that insufficient time had been given to consideration of administration, but the committee had decided otherwise. He agreed with the Director-General that criticisms could not justly be made without detailed study and that the work of the Organization could not be compared with that of national organizations. On the other hand, he also agreed with the Chairman regarding the establishment of some machinery for further studying the matter.

Mr. SIEGEL, Secretary, recalled that the Standing Committee, after making a careful study last year - and he wished to underline "careful study" - of some, but not all, aspects of the work at headquarters, had reported that, in the committee's view, the operations were being carried out efficiently and the number of staff employed was appropriate for the then existing stage of development.

Discussions had also taken place during the sixth session of the Executive Board regarding the employment of an additional person in the Management Section. The Standing Committee had made recommendations underlining the usefulness to the Organization of such work, but the Board had decided against authorizing the expense at that time. Certain management studies, however, which had been undertaken with the small staff available in the section, had proved valuable, showing in one case where a reduction could be made and in another where there was actual understaffing. A reduction of five persons had been made in the Department of Administration and Finance in 1951 as compared to 1950.

He added that, in his opinion, the suggestion made by Mr. Roseman at the previous day's meeting - that certain case studies should be undertaken, by the Secretariat to serve as material for consideration by a sub-committee - had great merit, would be the proper approach to the problem, and would fit into the Chairman's proposal.

The Secretariat would like the Executive Board to decide which parts of the administrative work they wished to be studied first, as there was not sufficient staff available to provide material for a study of the whole organizational structure of the Organization at one time, nor would the best results be obtained by attempting to do so.

M. FOESSEL asked if, during the last year, the Organization had employed a management expert and, if so, whether he had reported on his conclusions.

The SECRETARY replied that the Chief of the Management Section had been employed since 1 November last but there had been insufficient time for him to make any major studies.

To the CHAIRMAN's suggestion that studies could only be made by good health administrators, the DIRECTOR-GENERAL replied that the number of persons who had had experience in large international health organizations was very small, since WHO was actually pioneering in the type of work which it did. There were, however, people with experience in the science of general management, the principles and techniques of which could be applied to any type of organization, regardless of the functions and subject matter with which the organization dealt.

The CHAIRMAN agreed but maintained that such management experts must be assisted by health experts. The administration of international health organizations was not very different from that of well-established national health administrations.

Dr. van den BERG supported the Director-General's statement.

The CHAIRMAN asked the committee to agree to a recommendation being included in the report, that the Executive Board should appoint a small group to make a study of the administrative structure and efficiency of the Organization, such group to spend a long period at headquarters or at a regional office and report to the Standing Committee or the Executive Board.

Dr. BRADY was reluctant to agree to the establishment of a sub-committee for

a long period. He would rather suggest concentration on the examination of certain parts of the organizational structure.

Dr. MACKENZIE preferred a recommendation to the Executive Board without any suggestion in regard to a sub-committee.

The DIRECTOR-GENERAL said that the employment of a person with specialized training in management methods could provide a committee with factual material for an effective study.

Regarding the Chairman's suggestion, he wished to make it clear that the Secretariat would welcome any number of members of the committee spending a long time at headquarters to examine all aspects of its work: that would help towards an understanding of the problems of the Secretariat.

Mr. ROSEMAN, adviser to Dr. Brady, referring to studies he had made for the United States Government, said that two points to be considered were that the persons making the study must be familiar with the technical work of the Organization and especially trained in the processes and techniques of management study. If the material for such a study were prepared by the Secretariat, a body of health experts - a sub-committee of the Standing Committee, for instance - would need only a short time for review. If the Executive Board were to set a time limit for such a study, satisfactory and fairly conclusive results would be obtained.

This suggestion was supported by Dr. van den BERG, Dr. BOIDE and Dr. MACKENZIE.

It was agreed that the Rapporteur should draft a recommendation for inclusion in the Committee's report, on the lines of the recommendation of Mr. Roseman.

The meeting rose at 10.30 a.m.

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Note: Corrections to these provisional minutes should be submitted in writing to Mr. Richards, Room A.213, within 48 hours of their distribution or as soon as possible thereafter.

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