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SUB-COMMITTEE II CONTINUES DEBATE ON NEW HEBRIDES

Sub-Committee II* of the Special Committee of 24 on decolonization, which is concerned with matters relating to small Territories, the question of visiting missions to Trust Territories and with Territories in the Pacific, yesterday afternoon, 1 June, continued its debate on the question of New Hebrides.

It heard statements by the representatives of Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Czechoslovakia, Indonesia and India.

The Sub-Committee decided that, at its next meeting scheduled for 3 p.m. on 7 June, it would complete the debate, and take up the questions of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands, and Pitcairn and the Solomon Islands.

Views Expressed in Debate

YILMA TADESSE (Ethiopia) said that as in the past years, the Sub-Committee continued to be confronted by the intransigence of the Administering Powers, France and the United Kingdom, who persisted in their regrettable refusal to participate in the Sub-Committee's work.

In the period under review, he observed, no substantive change had occurred in the New Hebrides in the very important field of political and constitutional development. Likewise, the situation on the Territory with respect to educational development had virtually remained the same.

It was obvious, he felt, that the numerous recommendations made by the Sub-Committee in the past years regarding the need for the Administering Powers to undertake intensive and concerted efforts in various fields had gone unheeded. In view of this, the Sub-Committee must once again formulate its recommendations, taking into account the "glaring absence of appreciable and vital developments in the Territory".

MOHAMMAD H. ARYUBI (Afghanistan) expressed regret at the absence of the Administering Power in the Sub-Committee's deliberations.

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* Members of the Sub-Committee are Afghanistan, Czechoslovakia, Ethiopia, Fiji, India, Indonesia and Iraq.

He noted that about 500 international companies had registered in the Territory following reports which had described it as the world's "newest tax haven". The situation deserved serious consideration by the Committee, he stated.

He expressed "deep anxiety" over the policy of the Administering Powers, and urged them to co-operate fully with the Sub-Committee.

STANISLAV SUJA (Czechoslovakia) said the Sub-Committee was dealing, on this question, with a classical example of colonialism. The system of condominium was still in existence, and no marked progress had been achieved in the political and constitutional fields.

He thought, though, that information submitted to the Secretary-General did not completely reflect the real state of affairs in the Territory.

His delegation was inclined to ask whether it was not time for the Secretariat to try to gather as much precise information as possible from other available sources, particularly from the national liberation movement. Many useful reports and information of this kind, he said, could not be to the liking of the Administering Powers. But the fact that these Powers did not fulfil all of their obligations did not in the least help the work of the Sub-Committee either.

Concerning the Secretariat working paper on the Territory, (document A/AC.109/L.777), Mr. Suja felt it very useful to find ways of reflecting in more detail the petitions of national liberation movements.

He said the economy of the New Hebrides was being developed in one-sided fashion.

In conclusion, he said that lack of full and satisfactory information on the situation in the New Hebrides was once again underscoring the importance of a Visiting Mission to the Territory, to gather adequate information on political, economic and social conditions there.

MOHAMAD SIDIK (Indonesia) said he wanted to underline the importance of the Territory's economy and its close influence on political independence.

The pattern that emerged from the economic information on the New Hebrides, he said, was a familiar one: an economy overly dependent on the export of one raw material, copra; and the fact that the modern sector of the economy was largely in the hands of foreigners, a fact which was perhaps inevitable, given the Territory's stage of development. It was important that the Administering Powers took action to mitigate these unhealthy trends, he added.

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He said his delegation fully shared views expressed by the representative of Iraq concerning land speculation by aliens. Steps taken by the Administration, as well as by the Government of Hawaii, were positive. However, the stewardship of the Administering Powers must be judged also on whether these Powers had enough foresight to prevent such problems before they arose, rather than whether they merely attempted to eliminate them after they had done damage.

He expressed hope that the people of the New Hebrides had moved closer to the reclaiming of their right to freedom and self-determination.

The Chairman, BARAKAT AHMAD, speaking as the representative of India, expressed his disappointment at the fact that the Administering Powers had taken an attitude of non-co-operation with the Sub-Committee. He added that he had not lost hope and was sure that the United Kingdom would still co-operate.

Gilbert and Ellice Islands

Touching upon the Gilbert and Ellice Islands, he said he noted with satisfaction that certain political and administrative changes had taken place in the Islands. He was surprised to note, however, that there had been no political parties in the 1971 election and no candidate had had any particular platform. He wished there had been more information on the subject in the working papers.

Concerning the power given to the Legislative Council, Mr. Ahmad noted that the power was only advisory, and expressed hope that the Administering Power would interfere as little as possible with the working of the Council.

With respect to the educational conditions in the Territories he felt they were not very encouraging. He noted, in particular, that in the Solomon Islands, education remained largely in church hands, which was not a satisfactory situation. He hoped the Administering Power realized that without an educational programme, no Territory could be prepared for self-determination.