

Memorandum on the British proposal for a Council of Europe (Paris, 26 November 1948)

Caption: On 26 November 1948, the British delegation on the Committee for the Study of European Unity, chaired in Paris by Édouard Herriot, proposes the creation of a Council of Europe which would consist of a Consultative Assembly and a Council of Ministers.

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Memorandum on the British Proposal for a Council of Europe

It is common ground that through the various organs established by the Brussels Treaty Powers, great progress has been made in the direction of effective Western European co-operation. What appears to be necessary now, is to complete this framework. To this end, the U.K. Delegation proposes the formation of a new body, to be called the "Council of Europe", on the following basis:

- (a) This Council of Europe would be established, in the first instance, for a period of five years and would meet at stated intervals for the discussion of all matters of common concern.
- (b) The Powers represented in the initial stage would be the five Brussels Powers. Eventually, the Council might be extended to comprise delegations from other States members of O.E.E.C. At a comparatively early stage, Italy might be included. Later, subject to necessary safeguards, it might be thought appropriate to include Western Germany.
- (c) The States would be represented in the Council of Europe by delegations appointed by the Governments and headed by Ministers. These Delegations would be composed on lines similar to national delegations to the U.N. or to the old League of Nations Assembly, i.e. they might include political figures outside the government and other persons with special qualifications.
- (d) The Council of Europe would be served by a strong permanent international secretariat. It would operate with a minimum of formality and rigid procedure. Decisions would be taken by agreement and not by a majority vote.
- (e) Defence matters are now the responsibility of the Brussels powers and may later be covered by the projected Atlantic Pact. Economic matters will be mainly the responsibility of O.E.E.C. until 1952.
- (f) Each government represented in the Council of Europe would report to its own parliament. This would afford opportunity for the full expression of public opinion in each country.

In framing these proposals, the U.K. Delegation has been influenced by the following considerations. What is most needed at the present time is to set up an organisation which would enable the governments of Western Europe to work together more effectively. The U.K. Delegation consider that the energies of Western Europe should be directed to this end and that it would be unrealistic and impracticable to attempt to give executive or legislative power to any non-governmental body.

This proposal also has the merit of simplicity. On the one hand, it leaves open the possibility of associating with the Council of Europe overseas countries having special relations with member governments. On the other hand, it avoids the difficulties which might arise through differences of constitutional procedure.

Paris, 25 November 1948