

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND EMPLOYMENT

Department of Public Information

Havana, Cuba

Press Release ITO/205
22 March 1948

Advance Text
Hold for Release
Check against delivery

Speech by Mr. Guillermo Gutierrez Vea Murguía, Head
of the Bolivian Delegation, before the Final Plenary
Session

Mr. President, Gentlemen:

Four months of unceasing work now lie between us and the day the Conference opened. The delegations have frequently been divided by conflicting points of view arising from their dissimilar economic situations, but in defending our various national interests we have never lost the friendly spirit with which we set out, nor our desire to reach an understanding.

The delegation of Bolivia wishes to take this opportunity of expressing its sincere gratitude for the hospitality of the Cuban Government and people, and of acknowledging the invaluable co-operation afforded by CACNUTE whose efficient work I should like to single out for praise.

Although there were, no doubt, very good reasons for its adoption, the decision to discuss matters of world interest in private deprived public opinion of more detailed information and reduced the opportunities afforded to the press of publicizing the Conference's vast task and the significance of our deliberations.

Nevertheless, deprived though they were of free and direct access to the sources of information, the correspondents of the great news agencies and in particular those of Havana's excellent newspapers have, without departing from high ethical standards, fulfilled their duty as journalists and richly deserve my public tribute.

The views of the countries of Latin America have very frequently coincided and although sometimes diametrically opposed to those of the great industrial countries, the delegates of those countries received them with respect and sympathy, because of the incontrovertible grounds on which they were based.

/In company

In company with the other delegations of Latin America, the Bolivian delegation has co-operated fully, loyally and effectively in drafting the Charter of Havana.

It is safe to say that none of the Latin American delegations has been fully satisfied in its demands. In our own case we regard as inadequate the provisions of the Charter which deal with the economic development of nations that are primarily producers of raw materials.

The economic difficulties of today and the critical supply situation with which we were faced during the war have taught us what an urgent problem the diversification of our economy is. At the same time, we feel that the task of raising the standards of living of our people cannot be indefinitely postponed.

Can it be said that the provisions of the Charter protect our legitimate rights and aspirations to all-round economic development? The reply to that question will be given by our respective parliaments and it can only be said that there would be more reservations in the body of the Charter had it not been for the work of the Co-ordinating Committee. It was hoped that the Co-ordinating Committee would produce results which would effectively reconcile the differences of opinion which threatened the success of the Conference. Nevertheless, as the solution put forward by the Committee was a compromise and based on common consent, intransigence was out of place.

In the present circumstances, it is not feasible to extend the most-favoured-nation clause to every Member of the Organization. An irrefutable proof of this is provided by the numerous exceptions claimed by both great and small countries. In spite of our goodwill, the delegation of Bolivia cannot see its way to withdrawing its reservation regarding Article 16.

The Charter contains many provisos guaranteeing that its provisions will not be applied so as substantially to injure the economies of Members of the Organization.

We hope that this will be the criterion applied in practice to inter-governmental commodity arrangements. We also trust that, without losing sight of the far-reaching effects of the Organization's decisions on the life of the countries concerned, agreements on this important matter will be based on equity, the foundation of any freely contracting commercial commitment.

The economic life of Bolivia is almost wholly conditioned by its exports of tin. In this connection my Government will have difficulty in accepting commitments which are not offset by a guarantee of equitable treatment. Only on that basis would we be able to participate confidently in the work of the future body and have an incentive for collaborating effectively in the work of regulating world trade.

/The Charter

The Charter of Havana advocates equality of opportunity in international trade for all nations and establishes in this connection that the difficulties of each state are of common concern to every Member of the Organization. In view of these principles, my delegation wishes specially to mention a problem which vitally affects Bolivia and which is one of the subjects dealt with by this Conference. I am referring to the unavoidable "encirclement" of Bolivia.

The code of commerce proposed by this Conference is defective in this respect, because of the omission of any Article dealing with unrestricted transit.

The friendly co-operation afforded Bolivia by her neighbours and the provisions regarding freedom of transit included in the Charter do not remove the necessity for this important clause.

My delegation expresses its hope that a spirit of understanding and justice will lead to the removal of the misgivings to which this situation gives rise.

Fully conscious of the real importance of reservations still outstanding, the delegation of Bolivia takes this opportunity to place on record those which it has entered in order to protect the legitimate interests of Bolivia.

In other meetings we have explained our standpoint as regards the Final Act and the Interim Commission. We sincerely regret that our amendment was not accepted. It is an expression of the loyal adherence of the Government which I have the honour of representing, to the principles of our Constitution.

The delegation of Bolivia therefore wishes formally to state that its participation in the work of the Conference does not imply any undertaking on the part of the Republic of Bolivia so long as the Government and legislature of Bolivia shall not have approved the Trade Charter in accordance with our Constitution.
