

Clayton, Herter Head
Commission Organizing Atlantic Convention
Freedom & Union, May, 1961



Appointed on March 21-22, the U.S. Citizens Commission on NATO got off to a promising start in its first meeting, April 8. It then elected as co-chairman its two most eminent members, W.L. Clayton, President Truman's Under Secretary of State who inspired the Marshall Plan, and President Eisenhower's recent Secretary of State, Christian A. Herter. Elmo Roper, public opinion surveyor, was elected vice chairman, and Richard J. Wallace Jr., Senator Kefauver's former Administrative Assistant, was named executive director.

The Commission authorized the three officers to draft and send a letter to the officers of parliaments in the other NATO nations, announcing that the Commission had been established by act of Congress last year (P.L. 86-719) to organize and participate in a convention to explore greater unification of the Atlantic Community, and inviting them to name similar citizens commissions for this purpose.

Under the law, only the U.S. Commission can invite the others, and consequently they could take no action until it was appointed and had organized itself. Apart from the darkening world situation, several factors made the Commission feel it needed to act with urgency. Its term of office expires Jan. 31, 1962, and the 7-months delay in appointing its members has left it only 10 months in which to do its immense task. Since it is not responsible for this delay, there is hope that Congress before adjourning this summer will extend its mandate.

The Atlantic Convention approach, moreover, is a novel one to most of the NATO nations and this is expected to cause some delay on their part. They are accustomed to leading international meetings to which they name delegates to diplomats or to members of parliament. The proposed convention is patterned on the federal convention in Philadelphia in 1787. Most of the commissions composing it were named by their State Legislature and composed of citizens who were free from official instructions and could speak and vote according to their individual convictions.

The law creating the present Commission specifies that all its members are to be private citizens and that they are not authorized to speak for the U.S. government. Its supporters desired that it be thus limited, so as to ensure that its members could explore the problem freely, as can only citizens acting individually. They hoped that when doubting Europeans understand that this method produced in 1787 the most enduring success in the history of inter-state conferences—the drafting of the U.S.

Federal Constitution—they will cooperate fully in trying it out now.

Co-chairman Clayton and Herter plan to visit the capitals of various NATO nations soon and explain to their parliamentary leaders the advantages of this approach and the need of eminent, experienced citizens to attend it, if the recommendations resulting from the Convention's explorations are to have the soundness and weight needed for approval thereafter by the participating nations. The first informal European reactions to the project make Commission leaders hopeful of full cooperation, in time for the Convention to meet this Autumn.

The written invitation was sent out a week before the Commission's second meeting, which is set for April 29 at its first session. The invitation indicates that the number of citizens appointed is expected to be in rough proportion to their population, with the total number attending the Convention not to exceed 100. In the Commission it is hoped that the others will agree to representation being apportioned by the formula adopted by the NATO Parliamentarians Association, with minor modifications. If adopted, this formula would result in a total of 98 members of the Convention, those divided: U.S., 20; Britain, France, Italy and West Germany, 10 each; Canada, 7; Turkey, 6; Belgium, Greece and the Netherlands, 4 each; Denmark, Norway, Portugal, 3 each; Iceland and Luxembourg, 2 each.

The Commission's first meeting was brief and devoted solely to organizing itself. It was called by Mr. Clayton at the request a Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson. It was opened with a welcoming speech by Mr. Johnson, who was escorted by Montana's to Senators, Mike Mansfield, the Majority Leader, and Lee Metcalf. The Vice President—just back from Paris where he had delivered the message to SHAPE—stressed the importance and urgency of the Commission's work. After the meeting, which was held in private in the Senate Appropriations Committee room in the Capital, the Commissioners—most of whom had never met before—began to get acquainted at a luncheon in the Vandenberg Room in the Capital. Despite the short notice, the meeting was attended by all but 4 of the 20 Commissioners.

The law provided that 10 of the 20 members of the Commission should be appointed by the Vice President, as President of the Senate, and the other 10 by the Speaker of the House, and that not more than half should be of one party. Speaker Rayburn announced his list on March 21, and Vice President Johnson his the next day. Neither made any effort to call attention to the Commission in making public their appointments but did this in such way that reporters, to learn this news, had to be actively interested. This helps explain why the press ignored the news.

Although the members of the Commission serve without pay—only their expenses being paid—there were many candidates for appointment to it. The selection among them was made in the usual Congressional political way, the Republicans being those nominated by the two Minority Leaders, Senator Dirksen of Illinois and Representative Halleck of Indiana, and the two Majority Leaders each having a voice in the choice of the Democratic members.

David Rockefeller, president of the Chase Manhattan Bank in New York, who was on the list appointed by the Vice President, resigned. He explained that his name had been included through confusion for, prior to the appointment, he had indicated that, much to his regret, his heavy commitments did not permit him to give "this important Commission" the "time and serious thought it so clearly deserves." Vice President Johnson announced on April 24 that he had appointed to replace him another Republican, William A. M. Burden, in New York financier who was recently ambassador to Belgium.

The Commission

Co-Chairman

William L. Clayton

Vice Chairman

Elmo Roper, Jr.

Executive Director

Richard J. Wallace

Christian A. Herter



Vice Chairman Elmo Roper



Eric Johnston

Members

Donald S. Agger, American Nord-Aviation; Charles William Engelhard Jr, president of Engelhard Industries (precious metals); George J. Feldman, New York attorney; Morris Forgash, president, United Freight Company; Dr. Francis S. Hutchins, President of Berea College; Eric Johnston, president of the Motion Picture Association of American; William F. Knowland, former Republican Majority Leader in the Senate; Hugh Moore, founder of Dixie Cup; Ralph D. Pittman, Washington, D.C. attorney; Ben Regan, president, Nationwide Food Service; Mrs. Edith S. Sampson, attorney; Adolph Schmidt, financial and foundation executive; Oliver C. Schroeder Jr, Law Medicine Center at Western Reserve University; Burr S. Swezey, chairman, Lafayette National Bank; Alexander Warden, publisher; and Douglas Wynn, attorney.



Agger Burden Engelhard Forgash Hutchins Moore



Pittman Regan Schmidt Schroeder Swezey Warden