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I. L. O.

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Letter from D.H. — to Wilhelm Björk (1988- ), Dir. Gen.,  
Kungl. Statskontoret, Sweden.

10 August 1956

I thank you for your letter concerning the situation which developed in the ILO. I knew about it beforehand. In due time I shall give you a full reply. However, I want already now to make a few observations.

Reading the memorandum I am, frankly, surprised by the stand and, even more so, by the tone. I take objection especially to paragraph 13 which reflects an attitude both to the United Nations and to the ILO which I did not expect from this side.

The fact of the matter is that the question raised by the Scandinavian delegations, undoubtedly is outside the formal competence of the ILO, and, also, that, in my view, it would be most unwise for the ILO which lacks the necessary political background to enter a field where the Organization is likely at every step to trip on land-mines. Do not believe that it is any pleasure for the United Nations to handle the aspect of human rights raised by the Scandinavian delegations; not even the wildest empire builder could wish to have sovereignty over this territory. But it so happens that the United Nations cannot shirk its responsibility and has much greater possibilities to handle the issue in a way which politically makes sense. Under such circumstances, I, personally and independently, regret the initiative taken. I can understand the reasons to demonstrate interest in

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the matter, but I do not think that it was a very good idea to press it. On the other hand it seems that Mr. Jenks did not handle the matter in a very adequate way. The Kenya speculation is one of those corridor rumours of which we have thirteen in a dozen on the outer fringes of every international assembly.

Now the matter will, of course, be transmitted to me through normal channels, but I wish to give you right away this explanation of my firm conviction. From what I have said, you will have seen that this is not a simple question of formal competence, with prestige aspects, but a problem where and how best to tackle the issue, in full recognition of the rather different character of the United Nations and the technically specialized agencies.

With a matter of this kind I think that it would have been a good idea - in consultation with the Foreign Office - to bring it up with me before the ball was thrown into the field. Or, at least, when the trouble started.