

of strategic materials cannot be based on commercial considerations alone. No producer on his own can assess all the facts and determine the proper course. There must be a balancing of his own interests and national interests which may or may not coincide. What is true of the individual producer in his relations to the country as a whole is also true of the country in its relations with its partners. Canada cannot in isolation consider all the many facets of these difficult problems. The situation calls for international discussion.

It was to meet this need that the International Materials Conference was set up. This is essentially a consultative and recommending body rather than a super international authority. For example, there is what is known as the Central Group of the Conference, composed of representatives from eight countries, as well as representatives of both the Organization of American States and the Organization for European Economic Co-operation--the OEEC it is generally called. This Central Group concerns itself primarily with decisions as to what commodities shall be the subject of special study. Individual commodity committees are then established and membership on such committees is composed of representatives of the countries that are the principal suppliers and users of the commodity in question. These committees are autonomous bodies within the I.M.C., meeting together to consider the situation and to make recommendations directly to the governments concerned.

Under difficult circumstances, the I.M.C. has already done some very useful work. It has effected some redistribution of materials in short world supply, as well as contributing to generalization of knowledge on possible conservation measures. It is not necessarily the ideal organizational structure for dealing with these matters, but it is working, and providing a forum where the problems can be aired. Sometimes we are prone to compare its operation with the very efficient distribution system that was developed by the Combined Raw Materials Board of the last war. We must remember, however, that the situation we are in today is very different. In the first place, many things can be done under the stress of all-out war that would be unacceptable under present conditions. Furthermore, in wartime there are ultimate sanctions such as control of shipping by which the decisions of a central body can be enforced. The great advantage of the present I.M.C. set-up is its flexibility. It has not attempted to set too rigid rules and regulations, nor has it attempted to establish fixed criteria which would apply equally to all the commodity committees. So long as it is necessary to maintain such an organization, it is to be hoped that it will avoid any stereotyped approach to problems that by their very nature are continually changing.

International discussion, however, is useful not only in trying to achieve the best possible division between member countries of strategic materials that are in short supply. It can be useful in the more positive role of assisting an increase in the supply of these materials. The I.M.C. can shape its policies in such a way as to encourage greater production, or it could, by too much concentration on the short-term problems--the problem of cutting up the existing cake--