

III ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL

Survey of the Economic and Social Council

The Economic and Social Council held its usual two sessions during the period under review. At the sixteenth session, held June 30 - August 5 and November 30 - December 7, 1953, Mr. Raymond Scheyven of Belgium was still President; at the seventeenth, which lasted March 30 - April 30, Mr. Juan I. Cooke of Argentina was elected for the calendar year 1954. Canada has not been a member of the Council since December 31, 1952, and was therefore represented only by observers at both sessions.¹

The Council and a number of its subordinate and affiliated bodies continue to do a great deal of valuable but inconspicuous work, much of it technical or semi-technical, which seldom makes the headlines but contributes steadily to widening the area of international co-operation in these fields. A few examples of such work, which is described in more detail in the following section, are the preparatory work on the International Convention for the Prevention of the Pollution of the Sea by Oil, the study of a proposed single convention on narcotic drugs which would replace the eight existing multilateral agreements, and the work on the improvement and international standardization of statistical procedures. The countries of the Soviet bloc until recently took comparatively little part in this type of practical co-operation. During the past year, however, they have been somewhat more active in the Economic Commission for Europe and opened or renewed relations with several Specialized Agencies. This change of front is consistent with the present communist stress on peaceful co-existence and extended international co-operation, but it is as yet too early to say whether it really means the abandonment of economic and social isolationism and the full acceptance of international obligations in these constructive fields.

The more controversial matters before the Council, in which considerations of policy or of economic interest have greater weight, fall broadly into the two categories of the economic development of under-developed countries (to which all economic questions tend more and more to be related) and of human rights and self-determination, which have become the point of reference in most social problems. Though the discussions have run on familiar lines and the established groups — broadly speaking, the economically mature, metropolitan and administering powers on one side, the economically under-developed, and anti-colonial on the other — have not changed, there have been some important developments during the year.

In the economic field, two developments might be particularly singled out. First, must be noted the continued progress and strengthening of the programme of technical assistance for under-

¹For a list of members, see Appendix I.