

The Economic and Social Council

The third important body of the United Nations is the Economic and Social Council, which holds two sessions of approximately five or six weeks' duration each year. During 1948 and 1949 one session each year was held in New York and one in Geneva. Although Canada was not a member of the Economic and Social Council during 1949, it was important, nevertheless, that the Canadian Government keep in touch with the work of the Council. For this reason a Canadian observer from the staff of the New York Delegation in the spring, and from the staff of the Geneva office in the summer, attended the sessions of the Council. Even though Canada was absent from the Council itself during the year, Canadians continued to work on some of its various Commissions.* Most of these Commissions meet in New York, and those on which Canada is represented are attended by appropriate experts from government departments in Ottawa.

The United Nations Secretariat

After the conclusion of each session of the Assembly or the Economic and Social Council, member delegations disperse and leave their permanent representatives to resume their normal responsibilities. At the same time the United Nations Secretariat must begin work under the terms of fresh directives and recommendations which have been handed down by the General Assembly. The Secretariat consists of that body of some 4000 international civil servants of all grades who form the permanent staff of the United Nations. Members of the Secretariat are taken on strength by the Secretary-General, who is bound by the United Nations Charter to recruit suitable personnel, bearing in mind that the paramount consideration is the necessity of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity, and at the same time paying due regard to the importance of wide geographical distribution. Employees of the Secretariat are obliged to take an oath that they will not seek or receive instructions from any national government or from any other authority outside the United Nations. In addition, they must swear to refrain from any action which might reflect on their position as international officials responsible only to the Organization. The ultimate responsibility for the actions of members of the Secretariat rests with the Secretary-General, who presides over the work of the eight departments as follows: Security Council Affairs, Economic Affairs, Social Affairs, Trusteeship and Information from Non Self-Governing Territories, Public Information, Legal, Conference and General Services, and Administrative and Financial Services.

The members of the United Nations Secretariat, among whom are some 150 Canadians, perform a wide range of functions. They keep records of every meeting which takes place under the auspices of the United Nations. They prepare reports which are sent to member delegations in the name of the Secretary-General. They translate statements, speeches, and records from one language into another, and they prepare detailed studies on a multitude of subjects.

*See "Commissions of the Economic and Social Council, Introduction", pp. 105-107.