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ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL

Survey of the Economic and Social Council

The Economic and Social Council, as one of the principal organs of the United Nations, is broadly responsible for United Nations activities in the economic, social and humanitarian fields. Its functions are to encourage international collaboration for economic and social progress throughout the world and to attempt to find solutions for those international economic and social problems which threaten peace or the enjoyment of peace. The Council is also responsible for the promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms and for international cultural and educational co-operation.

Canada's second term of membership in the Council began January 1, 1950 and will end at the close of 1952. Canadian delegations have attended the two Council sessions in 1951 and one session in 1952. These delegations have tried to give practical evidence of the importance which Canada attaches to the work of international economic and social co-operation which the United Nations carries out through the Economic and Social Council.

The twelfth session of the Council met during February and March 1951, in Santiago, Chile. The four-week meeting dealt largely with routine questions or items of a continuing nature. The Delegations of the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and Poland, which had "walked out" of the Council in 1950, returned at this session. The ensuing debates were characterized by bitter propaganda battles, largely the result of political attacks against the United States by the delegations of the Soviet group. One of the positive achievements of the session was to establish a joint United Nations-International Labour Organization commission of enquiry to determine the nature and extent of large-scale forced labour systems, particularly in the Soviet Union and other Eastern European countries. On the economic side the important achievements were resolutions designed to ease the problems of under-developed countries in importing commodities in short supply and to emphasize the need for further study of means to finance the economic development of under-developed countries.

At the thirteenth session of the Council, held in Geneva from July 30 to September 21, 1951, the political differences between the Cominform nations and the Western world found expression again in a series of long, repetitive propaganda exchanges. Despite the time and energy spent in political argument, the session had a number of accomplishments to its credit. Much of the Council's work consists of long-term projects in which it is hard to point to specific achievements; the thirteenth session nevertheless brought a number of projects of this kind notably closer to their goals. Other problems were attacked for the first time. A few projects — and