

The Inter-Parliamentary Union

FIFTY-SECOND CONFERENCE, BELGRADE

THE FIFTY-SECOND conference of the Inter-Parliamentary Union met in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, from September 12 to 20, 1963.

Stemming from a modest origin in 1889 following an initiative taken by French and British parliamentarians to get to know one another and one another's problems better, the Inter-Parliamentary Union now boasts member groups in the assemblies of 70 states, including a national group composed of members of the Canadian Senate and House of Commons. A permanent Bureau in Geneva assures the continuity of the Union between conferences under the direction of the Inter-Parliamentary Council (two representatives from each national group) and the Executive Committee elected by the Council. Shortly to be established is an International Centre on Parliamentary Research and Documentation. Although it is hoped that this Centre will be of particular service to young countries with new parliaments, it will also serve as a reference source for interested students and scholars, for all national groups and for members of the Association of Secretaries-General of Parliaments. This group is a subsidiary body of the Inter-Parliamentary Union composed of clerks or officers of the various national parliaments; the separate meetings it holds during the annual conferences of the Union are more specifically oriented to the techniques and organization of parliament.

The heart of the Inter-Parliamentary Union's work lies in the annual conferences. This year's conference was attended by over 600 parliamentary representatives and delegates from 58 countries. Although a country may send as many parliamentary delegates as it wishes, its voting representation is strictly limited according to a system based on the size of national populations. The debates of the conference are facilitated by all the paraphernalia of the modern international conference — the steering committee, plenary and committee sessions, the prompt circulation of documents, summaries and verbatim reports by the secretariat, and the simultaneous translation of speeches into several languages (French and English have remained since the inception of the Union as its two working languages). The debates centre on draft resolutions prepared and circulated well in advance of the Conference by five standing study groups appointed by the Council, which meet independently during the year between conferences.

Work of Committees

For the Belgrade conference, the Economic and Social Committee (one of the five standing study groups) submitted a draft resolution urging governments to help developing countries through aid and trade to achieve standards of living