

Occasionally, proposals advanced by committees are reversed and too often much of what has been said in committee is repeated in plenary.

Most meetings both of the full Assembly and of the main committees are open to the public. Plenary meetings take place in the General Assembly Hall at Flushing Meadow, Long Island, pending completion of the United Nations Permanent Headquarters. Delegations are seated according to an alphabetical arrangement, facing a speaker's rostrum behind which the President of the Assembly, seated on a high dais, presides. Speakers deliver their statements formally from the rostrum after they have been "recognized" by the President. Speeches are delivered into a microphone and are simultaneously translated into the five official languages—Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish. Delegates, members of the Press, and public alike are equipped with adjustable receiving sets and earphones.

While the Assembly in plenary session tends to conduct its business through a series of formal statements, the main committees, which like the Security Council meet at Lake Success, work in a more informal, matter-of-fact atmosphere. Each delegate occupies a seat behind the name plate of his country around an oval-shaped table in the centre of the room. He speaks, in the name of his government, into a table microphone rather than from a rostrum. Directly behind him sit one or more advisers. The duties of advisers vary from one delegation to another. Normally, however, advisers are expected to have a detailed knowledge of the item under discussion, to understand the possible significance of the various proposals advanced, to have ideas on what their delegation should do on each subject before the Committee, to produce the right document or paper at the right time, and above all to have a clear understanding of the position which their representative has been authorized to take on the item being debated. Frequently, too, an adviser may be required to assist in the preparation of statements to be given by his delegation.

Much of the preparation which each delegation is required to undertake in order to follow and participate in the committee debates might not be readily apparent to a casual visitor. Almost certainly, however, he would be impressed by the variety of topics under discussion on any one day during Assembly sessions in the committee debates. If, for instance, he had visited the most recent session of the Assembly in the autumn of 1949, he might have heard in one conference room a contentious discussion on the conflicting proposals for the international control of atomic energy; and next door a scholarly dissertation in the Legal Committee on the rights and duties of states. In another room, he might have listened to delegates discussing measures to help the underdeveloped countries of the world to become economically self-sustaining; or plans for improving the lot of the peoples in non-self-governing territories; or ideas on what to do about the thousands of refugees and displaced persons who still have not found a permanent home. As in the plenary meetings, discussions in committee are translated into the five official languages by interpreters whose simultaneous translation is one of the most impressive and valuable features of United Nations debates.

Canadian Delegations to the General Assembly

This sketch of the various bodies of the General Assembly in action may be extended to include a brief explanation of how the Canadian Delegation fits into the framework which has been previously described.