Permanent Committee of the Inter-American Conference of Social Security

Nineteen countries were represented at the second meeting of the Permanent Committee of the Inter-American Conference of Social Security, held in Mexico City July 23-28. This was the first meeting of the Committee since it was established in July 1942 at the First Inter-American Conference in Santiago, Chile, to provide a continuing organization between the regular sessions of the general Conference, to carry out the Conference decisions, and to promote cooperation among the social security institutions of the various countries.

The delegate from the United States was Arthur J. Altmeyer, Chairman of the Social Security Board and Chairman of the Inter-American Committee. Wilbur J. Cohen, Assistant Director of the Bureau of Research and Statistics of the Social Security Board, attended as technical adviser to the United States delegate. Robert Watt, member of the American Federation of Labor, attended as the labor representative on the tripartite delegation of the International Labor Organization.

The other countries represented were: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela. Representatives of the International Labor Organization, the Pan American Union, and the Pan American Sanitary Commission also attended as members of the Committee.

Opening Session

Some 5,000 persons crowded the Hall of Honor of the Palace of Fine Arts for the first plenary session, which was formally opened by Mr. Altmeyer as Chairman of the Committee. The President of Mexico, Manuel Avila Camacho, was guest of honor and delivered the principal address. Other guests included officials of the Mexican Government and representatives of employer, labor, and scientific organizations. In his opening speech Mr. Altmeyer referred briefly to the developments in the field of social security in the Western Hemisphere during the past few years and spoke of the responsibility with which the Committee was charged by the Inter-American Conference and the recent Conference on the Problems of War and Peace, not only to encourage the creation of new systems of social security and improvement of those already established but also to watch that, in building or rebuilding the systems, the principles of a sane economy, a permanent financial stability, and a just and modern social viewpoint shall be maintained. "We also have," he concluded, "a grave responsibility to our own countries, which we can fulfill only if we here reaffirm our faith in the inter-American organization of social security and if we give the tools it must have to accomplish its objectives."

The task of the United Nations, President Avila Camacho declared in his address, did not end with the overthrow of the Axis armies. Universal and lasting peace can be achieved only in a society based on a stable foundation in which man does not live to conquer his fellowman or to exploit him but, rather, to encourage, help, and work with him in mutual helpfulness and hope. To guarantee freedom from anxiety, ignorance, the scourge of illness, and the uncertainties of the future, collective political security must be based on comprehensive social security. That security must be a right in which all share, without distinctions of race, sex, age, country, or religion; it must benefit alike wage earners, women and children, mothers and widows—in a word, all elements of society.

The President concluded by saying that the hopes of Mexico would not be limited to the action which could be taken in the field of social security in his country. It was his hope that the Committee's deliberations would help advance and perfect the existing systems in the hemisphere and that its activities would make possible the establishment in the Americas of "the groundwork of a new life, founded on a continental solidarity free from the anguish of exploitation, from the baseness of selfishness, and from the ignominy of injustice."

In the name of the delegates, G. Monrroy Block, Bolivian Minister of Labor, Health, and Social Insurance, responded to the Presidential address and predicted the success of the deliberations about to be inaugurated. Jef Rens, Assistant Director of the International Labor Office, spoke in behalf of that organization, and Pedro de Alba, Assistant Director of the Pan American Union, spoke for the Union.

Regular Sessions

The work of the Committee, which centered mainly on planning for the next meeting of the Inter-American Conference, election of officers, and adoption of a budget for 1946 operations, went forward in the eight sessions following the inaugural gathering.

Committee regulations.—Regulations governing the work of the Permanent Committee were unanimously adopted. They included the decision that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman should be elected from the members of the Committee by a majority vote; that the Committee should decide the order of business for the meetings of the general Conference, as well as the place and date; that it should name whatever technical commissions were considered necessary and fix the number of members, the composition, and the field of action of each commission; that the annual budget should be approved by a majority vote of the Committee members; and that the Executive Committee, created by statute of the Conference, should consist of the Chairman, Vice-Chairman, and four other members of the Permanent Committee, and a representative of the country in which the next meeting of the Conference is to be held, if that country is not already included among the members named. During the course of the debate on the last point it was made clear that, though these representatives would be appointed by the government of each country, consideration should be given in the appointment to officials of existing social security institutions.

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The proposal to establish a commis­sion on medical problems pointed out
that the commission had a practically
unlimited field for its labors. As a
first step, it should study the ques­tion of a nationally organized medical
service—the agency to direct and con­trol the program; the unification or
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these problems at the local level.

Budget for 1946.—It was voted that
the participation of each country in
financing the work of the Committee
would be based on a system of bud­getary units, such as is in effect for
membership in the ILO, and that each
country would pay on the basis of the
units assigned for ILO participation.
A budget of $30,000 was adopted for
1946. More than half of this sum will
be used to pay the costs of the meet­
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budget will be devoted to publications.
It was voted to drop the provisional
designation of the Committee’s Provi­sional Bulletin, of which seven issues
have already been published, and con­tinue it as a regular, official publica­tion.

In the course of the budget discus­sion, it was made clear that the Com­mittee and the Conference have been
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Conference have been held.

Next Inter-American Conference.—
The invitation from the Brazilian
Government, extended by Pioravanti
A. di Piero, to hold the next meeting of
the Inter-American Conference in Rio de Janeiro was accepted by the
Executive Committee. The meeting
will be held toward the end of 1946, at
which time the Permanent Committee
will also have its next meeting. Sev­eral topics were proposed for the agenda of the Conference, including
social security statistics, insurance of
occupational risks, and unemploy­
ment insurance and related matters.

In accordance with the practice estab­lished for the Santiago meeting,
when Chile, Peru, and the United
States prepared reports for presenta­tion at the Conference, the Executive
Committee requested the Canadian
dlegation to develop a report on un­employment and related problems and
the most efficacious means of achiev­ing and maintaining full employment;
the Mexican delegation was asked
similarly to prepare a report on insur­ing occupational risks through social
rather than commercial insurance.

The Permanent Committee also ap­proved the proposal of the Central
American delegations that a meeting
be held in Central America, under the
auspices and technical direction of the
Committee. The purpose of the meet­ing would be to discuss common prob­lems, stimulate the creation of social
security systems, and so far as pos­
sible unify the plans and structures of
the programs already established or
proposed.

Other Committee action.—During
these sessions, reports on social secu­rity developments in their own coun­
tries were made by various members
of the Committee, including Edgardo
Rebagliati, Technical Adviser of the
Social Security Fund of Peru; Oscar
Pacheco, Adviser to the Embassy of
the Dominican Republic in Mexico;
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data, which are not uniformly
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commission, the recommendation de­clared, should have as its objectives
the determination of the minimum
data necessary for each social
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