



CO-OPERATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL HYDROGRAPHIC BUREAU WITH OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS.

by the

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As has been previously pointed out in this Review, there were some 350, or more, International Organisations in existence before the Covenant of the League of Nations was drawn up, and since then others have sprung into existence, while the League, itself, besides its Assembly and Council, divides up its technical work amongst numerous committees and organisations, some eighteen in number, not counting the sections of its Secretariat, nor the Labour Organisation. The work of some of these committees overlaps that of existing International Organisations but, from the nature of things, accomplishes it more efficiently, being better organised, semi-permanent, and reasonably well documented.

The purpose of these numerous International Organisations is to act as a medium of exchange of ideas, of technical information, of collaboration of data, of reforming abuses, of protecting the weak, or of advancing the special interests of economic groups (such as trades unions organisations) or of guilds, or of professions, or of various religious and political agencies. About five per cent deal with agriculture, commerce and industry; five per cent with communications and transportation; thirteen per cent with labour; eight per cent with medicine and hygiene; five per cent with economics and finance; eight per cent with jurisprudence, civil rights, and forms of government; twenty-eight per cent with arts and sciences; twenty per cent with humanitarianism, religions, morals and education; five per cent with sports and tourism; two per cent with feminist movements; one-and-a-half per cent with proposed international languages; one per cent with armanemts, etc., etc. Of all these, about sixty-five per cent are supported by the voluntary contributions of their members, while about twenty per cent are federations or organisations of active groups in all countries, such as Chambers of Commerce or Trades Unions Committees. Some of these organisations are semi-public, in that Governments often appoint representatives to be present and participate in their meetings.

There is a third class which is composed of public organisations created by collective treaties or covenants, or, like the International Hydrographic Bureau, organised by the agreement of the countries concerned. This class represents about five per cent of the total, and the States Members contribute from their budgets for their maintenance, or upkeep. These are such as the Permanent Court of Arbitration, with 42 States members; the Bureau of Weights and Measures, 29; Statistics, 29; Universal Postal Union, 176; Telegraphic Union, 77, etc., etc.

There is a fourth class, some eighteen in number, to which, together with the third class, the remarks herein made do not apply, in any sense. These are the committees or organisations, previously noted, which have grown out of the League of Nations, through which is distributed and organised the technical work of the League. Within the League itself, there is also the great Labour Organisation, of which about 57 countries are members, and which inhabits an imposing palace separate from the head-quarters of the League.

Many of the first class of these organisations meet only at stated intervals, often as much as five or six years apart, and have only a permanent secretary who has to draft the report of proceedings after these conferences, and carry on a desultory correspondence until the time to call another conference. Naturally the other classes of organisations have a more permanent and adequate secretariat, which is able to keep better track of new or existing international agreements and the need for further action by the periodic conferences when they next meet. The success of this Bureau, in having a permanent Directing Committee and organised staff, has led other international organisations to adopt somewhat similar arrangements, as it enables the special interests to be continuously advanced and furthers timely co-operation with the directors and secretariat of other permanent organisations.

This Bureau, in conformity with its mission "to make navigation easier and safer in all the seas of the world" has documented certain International Maritime Organisations in the mutual endeavour to secure international agreement on subjects of importance to the maritime interests of its States Members.

Of course it is the special business of this Bureau to document its own periodic Hydrographic Conferences. This, it does thoroughly, at least six months before the Conference meets, sending full information together with the questions and proposals which are to be considered by the Conference. The work of the Bureau is presented to the delegates to show the status of questions which should be settled, and which are still pending. No stone is left unturned in order to prepare in advance for all questions under consideration, thus saving an enormous amount of time when the Conferences meet. New proposals arising during a Conference must be endorsed by at least three members, and submitted in writing at least twenty-four hours before their consideration in open session.

This Bureau owes its origin to the generosity and initiative of the British Government in inviting delegates of the maritime countries to a Hydrographic Conference in London, in June 1919, for the purpose of advancing the science

of hydrography in general, and the practice of Hydrographic Surveying in particular, especially in those parts of the world where accurate charts are lacking; to co-ordinate the world's hydrographic work yet to be done; to bring about such international uniformity as may be possible in the character and substance of hydrographic publications; and in the adoption, by the various maritime governments, of as much uniformity as practicable in all aids to navigation of whatever character. At the suggestion of this London Conference, the International Hydrographic Bureau was created to sit permanently as a consultative committee, to co-ordinate international work and co-operate with other international organisations with which hydrography is affiliated.

This Bureau, organised in 1921, has, therefore, endeavoured to carry out its mission, as prescribed by its Statutes, and, incidentally, has tabulated at great expense and for all the maritime countries of the world, both as an argument for and as an aid to international uniformity (1) all the signs, symbols, and abbreviations used on hydrographic charts; (2) the same for coastal (hydrographic) aviation charts; (3) all the various systems of storm warning signals (some 26 in number) and the location of their signal stations; (4) all the life-saving stations and their equipment and the variegated signals they use; (5) all the buoyage and buoy-lighting systems of the world (some 26 in number); (6) the proposed limits of oceans and seas to prevent overlapping in publications; (7) the terminology in use in every maritime country for the forms of the ocean bottom; (8) the tidal harmonic constants of the various ports of the world; (9) lists of doubtful shoals and dangers in all the seas of the world, with a view to their further investigation; (10) a list of accurately determined geographical positions on the coasts of the world, for use in further surveying or in navigation; (11) new and improved instruments and aids to navigation; (12) observed range and visibility of the lights of lighthouses; (13) methods of surveying by air-craft; (14) echo sounding; (15) a catalogue of original charts; (16) improved methods of chart printing; (17) standards for meteorological observations at sea; (18) lists of all the coastal signals in use and of the stations at which they are exhibited; (19) the various and multitudinous signals used in the ports of the world; (20) ocean currents; (21) sound ranging in air and sea-water; (22) tables of meridional parts for chart making, and, (23) the illusive question of an international datum plane for determining levels above international low-water, or mean tide-level of the sea. This is only a partial list at that.

The technical questions in the above list are for solution by Hydrographers, but there is need of several international conferences, much wider in their scope than any existing international organisation, to deal with the appalling differences in maritime regulations, storm warning signals, buoyage and buoy-lighting, and coastal and port signals, which, intended as aids to navigation, create, by their multiplicity, a menace rather than a help to shipping, through the doubts and misunderstandings which they create, thereby requiring the use of pilots and the infliction of port dues on shipping, while adequate return is not made for these dues, through lack of reasonable international uniformity.

This Bureau sells its publications, which are available, for the proper preparation of such conferences, and gives lists and prices of all its publications on the covers of its publications, but it has not hesitated to document certain conferences free of charge, where occasion has seemed to require it. The prices asked for these publications are merely enough to cover the expenses of printing, as the mission of the Bureau is to aid in bringing about as much international uniformity as may be possible in the interests of those who have the responsibility for the safe navigation of ships.

This Bureau, in 1925 and 1926, generously documented the Technical Sub-Committee of the Committee on Communications and Transit, of the League of Nations, at several of its conferences, and the personnel of this Bureau also participated in its deliberations, in an advisory capacity, but there is urgent need of the Section of the Secretariat of the League, which deals with International Bureaux in general, to specialise in the business of sending a representative of the League to each important international conference of a technical character, to offer advice, if needed, as to existing international agreements on questions which the conference proposes to discuss or act upon. There is needed some central control or authority, to which international conferences may look for help in this respect when the need is felt. The Labour Organisation of the League sees to it always, that it has a representative at every international conference where labour problems might be discussed even incidentally, and there are ample funds for the purpose, since it is allotted quite one-third of all the revenues of the League of Nations to further the interests of labour. It is a pity that ship-masters, and those who have the actual responsibility for safety of life and property at sea, have not equally assiduous representatives of their interests; but, in a modest way, this Bureau's interests do not differ widely from theirs, nor from the really best interests of ship owners, shippers, and marine insurance companies. It is much to be desired that the monied interests involved in shipping recognise the existence of this Bureau and its determined efforts to prevent needless loss of life and property, not only at sea, but in navigable waters throughout the world. It is merely and incidentally seeking to properly document Maritime Conferences with existing facts, and with existing international agreements. This Bureau also documented the International Conference on Maritime Meteorology, of the International Meteorological Committee, in September 1926, at its meeting in Zurich, with full data as to both international storm warning signals and maritime opinion as to wind velocities with the equivalents of the Beaufort scale, and, through the attendance of one of its Directors at its Conference, secured the active co-operation of the Meteorological Committee in much needed international uniformity with amended proposals therefor.

The U. S. Government called an International Radio Conference to meet in Washington, in Oct.-Nov. 1927, and, at the request of the British Government, invited an International Sub-Committee to sit at the same time to co-ordinate its revision of the International Code of Visual Signals, with the Radio Code Book, a revision of which was part of the purpose of the Conference. Mr. Herbert HOOVER was President of this Radio Conference, and, unofficially, invited this Bureau thoroughly to document the Sub-Committee, which it did,

besides loaning it twelve copies of the International Code Books of Signals, as published by twelve different maritime countries in their own language. Some of the Bureau's proposals will be incorporated in the revised edition of the International Code of Signals; but the major part were left to the consideration of the International Conference on "Safety of Life at Sea", which the British Government has called to meet in London, in April, 1929, to revise the "Convention on Safety of Life at Sea", which was proposed by the London Conference, in 1914, but, on account of the World War, was adopted by only five maritime countries.

An International Collisions Committee, in preparation for this coming Conference, met in London, on June 6th, 1928, to formulate a proposed revision of "The Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea", and invited the President and Secretary-General of the Directing Committee of this Bureau to attend as delegates, which was, unfortunately, impossible at the time; but, the Collisions Committee was nevertheless thoroughly documented by the Bureau, while the Committee itself bought besides, 150 copies of the Bureau's Special Publication N^o 17, on "Safety of Life at Sea and Life Saving".

In its report it states that it "endeavoured to avoid, so far as possible, adding to the subject matter of the existing Regulations". It even declined to recommend to the Conference the consideration of the Bureau's proposal that it recommend that "Laws should be passed in all maritime countries, requiring all mast-head and side-lights to be tested by a Government Agency, when newly installed, to verify the range, angular visibility of the light, and the quality of the lenses, in compliance with the foregoing Regulations. All ships' magnetic compasses should be likewise compulsorily submitted to Government test before installation, and during subsequent intervals of one or more years, to determine their continued efficiency". Some countries have these laws, but those which do not have them endanger the ships which have complied with them. If an International Conference to revise the International Code of Signals should not feel authorised to adopt international uniformity in important signals, and if a Conference on "Safety of Life at Sea" should limit its interests in such matters to material rather than to the prevention of collisions, then there remains only the hope that the League of Nations will later on call such a general Conference.

At the invitation of Secretary of State Kellogg, this Bureau sent to Washington 100 copies of its tabulation "Symbols, Signs, Abbreviations, and Ground Marks on Aviation Charts, as adopted Internationally, or in General Use», (with a memorandum explaining same) for the information of the delegates of 49 countries which the U. S. Government had invited to the International Conference on Civil Aviation, which met in Washington, on December 12-14, 1928.

This Bureau is co-operating with the "International Exhibition of Instruments of Oceanography, Marine Hydrography, and Continental Hydrology", which is meeting in Seville, Spain, from the 15th of March to the 15th of June, 1929. The Bureau's Special Publication N^o 19, on "Ocean Currents in Relation to Oceanography, Marine Biology, Meteorology, and Hydrography"

has resulted in the receipt by this Bureau of many valuable photographs and drawings of newly invented instruments for work in oceanography, and these have been contributed to the Exhibition.

The responsibility for the sound construction and thorough equipment of a ship rests with the ship owners while the ship master is held responsible for its disciplined management and its safe navigation. It is his great task to study, to co-ordinate, and to utilise all the aids provided for him for safe navigation, the avoidance of collisions, and the laying of safe courses to be steered. The Hydrographic Offices of the maritime countries, which have associated themselves with this Bureau, in order to co-ordinate and advance the work they are all doing, furnish the ship master with all the information and publications necessary in the discharge of his duties in this respect, in all the seas and navigable waters of the world, viz : — Charts, Sailing Directions, Tide Tables, Light and Buoy Lists, Monthly Pilot Charts, (giving ocean currents, storm warnings, average weather conditions, iceberg, and other temporary dangers) and, of course, in addition to all the previous information, printed *Notices to Mariners* issued daily, weekly and monthly. The corrections notified by the latter should be added in ink by the ship masters on all charts and lists and in all publications which concern the regions to be traversed, and *Notices to Mariners* are also broadcast by radio, at the same time as the daily weather reports are sent out.

This Bureau is equipped with adequate personnel to further the interests of the various Hydrographic Offices of its States Members, in all their work, and it is hoped it is doing so. It seeks publicity but only in the public's best interests.

