

International Social Security Organizations: United States Participation

THE FIFTEENTH General Assembly of the International Social Security Association, being held in Washington in September 1964, is an appropriate occasion to review the participation of the United States, and especially that of the Social Security Administration, in the various international agencies dealing with social security matters. It is now 30 years since the United States began this participation and about that long since it began actively to develop the Federal social security program as we know it today.

Most nations of the world have some type of social security program in operation. How these programs differ from country to country in the coverage of specific risks and persons and in benefit provisions, techniques of administration, and methods of financing is reported in another article in this issue of the BULLETIN. Despite their differences, the programs—including the old-age, survivors, and disability insurance program in the United States—have much in common in the way of problems and objectives. International organizations dealing with social security matters

have provided a useful medium for the exchange of ideas and experience, stimulated the development of improved program standards and administrative methods, and served as a mechanism for transmitting the experience of the older programs to new social security plans.

The Social Security Administration has collaborated with at least four international bodies that have been active in the social security field during recent decades—the International Social Security Association, the International Labor Organization, the Inter-American Conference on Social Security, and the United Nations Social Commission. Through its participation with other agencies, such as the Organization of American States, the United States has also encouraged their work on social security problems. This article describes the four bodies with which principal collaboration has taken place, their activities in the social security field, and the nature of the collaboration by the Social Security Administration in their work.

International Issue

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The first three reports in the issue were developed in the International Social Security Branch, Division of Research and Statistics. "International Social Security Organizations: United States Participation" was written by William Yoffee; "Technical Cooperation Activities of the Social Security Administration" by Joseph Kessler; and "Social Security Programs of Foreign Countries" by Daniel S. Gerig.

The fourth article, "U.S. Social Security Programs: Their Application to Nonnationals and Beneficiaries Living Abroad," represents a joint effort of the Division of the Actuary, the Division of Claims Control, the Division of Program Evaluation and Planning, the Division of Claims Policy, and the Division of Research and Statistics. The Bureau of Employment Security and the Bureau of Labor Standards, of the Department of Labor, also provided data for this article.

INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL SECURITY ASSOCIATION

The International Social Security Association (ISSA) is an organization of more than 200 social security agencies in 89 countries that are engaged in administering public social security programs. The programs administered by its members cover more than half a billion persons. The membership of the Association includes government agencies, such as the Social Security Administration, that have responsibility for one or more branches of social security, quasi-autonomous central institutions or funds administering social security programs, national unions of such institutions, and mutual benefit societies. There are also some associate members that deal with only limited aspects of social security programs, such as accident prevention. The Social Security Administration has been a member of ISSA since 1957, and the Railroad Retirement Board and the State Insurance Fund of Puerto Rico (which administers a workmen's compensation program) are also United States members.

The purpose of ISSA is to "facilitate cooperation at the international level in the protection, promotion, and development of social security throughout the world, by means of its technical and administrative improvement." This aim is translated into action through various types of meetings and through the exchange of documentation and information, comparison of experience, and mutual technical assistance among its members. In carrying out its work, the Association maintains close ties with other government and nongovernment international organizations. Chief among them is the International Labor Organization (ILO), which—like ISSA—has its headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland. The ILO makes a substantial annual grant to ISSA, and its Director-General is consulted in the appointment of the Association's Secretary-General.

Background and Organization

The principal organs of ISSA are a Bureau, a Council, and the General Assembly. The Bureau serves as the managing board and meets at least once a year. The U.S. Commissioner of Social Security has been a member of the Bureau since shortly after the Social Security Administration joined the organization.

The Council contains one delegate from each country represented in ISSA and meets only when the General Assembly meets. Its main functions are to see that the decisions of the General Assembly are put into effect, to fix dates and agendas of future meetings, to elect the Association's officers, and to admit new members.

The General Assembly, which consists of delegates (a maximum of five) from each member organization, now meets every 3 years to review ISSA's substantive work and to conduct technical discussions on numerous aspects of social security. The 1964 meeting of the General Assembly in Washington is the fifteenth such meeting, and it is the eighth since the end of World War II. Meetings of the General Assembly since the war have been held at Geneva (1947), Rome (1949), Vienna (1951), Paris (1953), Mexico City (1955), London (1958), and Istanbul (1961).

The present organization, when it was established in 1927 at Brussels, was called the International Conference of National Unions of

Mutual Benefit Societies and Sickness Insurance Funds. Its purpose was to coordinate the efforts of sickness funds and mutual benefit societies in developing and improving sickness insurance, through regular exchange of information and periodic meetings where delegates could discuss common problems. Its original membership consisted of 17 funds and societies in nine European countries that administered programs for 20 million covered persons. Among ISSA's principal sponsors were Albert Thomas, the first Director-General of the International Labor Office, and Senator Arthur Jouniaux, of Belgium. As was to be expected, the subjects discussed at General Assemblies in the early years were primarily in the field of sickness insurance.

At the meeting in 1936, the last one before World War II, the organization broadened its sphere of interest. The constitution was amended to permit any institutions responsible for administering sickness, old-age, invalidity, or survivor insurance to become a member. Its name was appropriately changed to the International Social Insurance Conference.

The war forced a suspension of ISSA's work. It produced, at the same time, a major change in the direction and emphasis of social security throughout the world. These changes were due in considerable measure to the influence of (1) the Beveridge Plan in the United Kingdom for a national program of social insurance and allied services and (2) the Declaration of Philadelphia enunciated at the 1944 Conference of the ILO, as well as the recommendations adopted there. The changes also reflect the increased interest and activity of many governments in developing new social security legislation and new administrative structures for existing programs.

In 1947 the organization was renamed the International Social Security Association, its constitution was appropriately amended, and it began to take on its present character. In that year, ISSA began the practice of having topics discussed by committees of experts before consideration at the general meetings. The first expert committee dealt with problems of collecting social insurance contributions and financing the systems. Subsequently a number of permanent committees were established, including a committee on medico-social problems, an unemployment insurance committee, a committee on family

allowances, a committee on mutual benefit societies, and a committee on actuarial and statistical questions. More recently, permanent committees on organization and methods, on old-age, invalidity, and survivor insurance, and on employment accident and occupational disease insurance have been set up. Working groups on such subjects as appeals procedures, social security and social services, and the evaluation of invalidity have also been established.

Regional committees dealing with various aspects of social security have also been established by ISSA in recent years. Such committees have thus far been established for Africa, Asia, and the American Continent. The American regional committees are operated jointly by the Association and the Permanent Inter-American Committee for Social Security, which is described below. In March 1963, the two organizations formally agreed to collaborate in the work of four different regional committees—on organization and methods, prevention of occupational risks, medico-social problems, and actuarial and statistical questions.

ISSA publishes, in addition to special studies and monographs, a number of periodicals. Among them are the monthly *Bulletin of the International Social Security Association*, containing articles on recent developments in social security throughout the world; the quarterly *World Bibliography on Social Security*, a comprehensive list of recent published material in the field; and the annual *International Review on Actuarial and Statistical Problems of Social Security*. It is now contemplated that beginning in late 1964 or in early 1965 the Association will inaugurate a *Social Security Abstracting Service* that will publish in several languages, including English, abstracts of important articles appearing in various countries. This project is being encouraged and assisted by the Social Security Administration.

Relationship With the Social Security Administration

The Social Security Administration had taken an active part in the work of ISSA for many years before 1957, when it formally became a member. Administration staff contributed articles

on national and international social security developments to the monthly *ISSA Bulletin*. Attendance by officials of the Social Security Administration as observers at ISSA General Assemblies began in 1951, and the Administration has long assisted ISSA in carrying out some of its technical studies.

At the General Assembly held in London in 1958, the first at which the Social Security Administration was represented as a member, United States delegates played an active role in the work of the old-age insurance committee and the newly organized committee of actuaries and statisticians, and the Commissioner of Social Security was elected to serve on the Bureau of the Association. In 1961, at the General Assembly in Istanbul, a United States delegate delivered a major report on the relationship of social security and social services.

The Social Security Administration has also taken an active part in the work of the joint American regional committees of ISSA and the Permanent Inter-American Committee for Social Security. The most recent meetings of these committees were held in May 1964 at Asunción, Paraguay, preceding the seventh meeting of the Inter-American Conference on Social Security. At these meetings, a representative of the Social Security Administration acted as reporter for the American Regional Committee on Organization and Methods when it considered the administrative problems of mechanization. Another representative acted in a similar capacity for the American Regional Committee of Actuaries and Statisticians, with respect to protection of the value of old-age pensions in the event of rising price levels.

ISSA Today

The work of ISSA today is centering on such subjects as the relationship of social security and social services, the evaluation of invalidity, retirement ages, the use of automation in the administration of social security, and appeals procedures available to claimants for benefits—all of which are being discussed this September at the General Assembly in Washington. The recently established regional committees for Africa and Asia are meeting there at the same time to discuss matters of regional concern.

The Social Security Administration has benefited from membership in the Association because of the forum that it provides for the interchange of ideas and experience, and this relationship will undoubtedly continue.

INTERNATIONAL LABOR ORGANIZATION

The ILO is the United Nations agency responsible for dealing with the general field of social security. Established in 1919, it now has a membership of more than 110 countries. The ILO is intergovernmental in character but is organized on a tripartite basis, with employer and labor organizations of member countries also participating. Its activity in connection with social security, as in the other fields with which it deals, takes three main forms: the development of international standards through the adoption of Conventions and Recommendations, the provision of expert advice and technical assistance to governments on policies and program, and research.

The U.S. Government became a member of the ILO in 1934, and the Social Security Administration, since its establishment as the Social Security Board under the Social Security Act of 1935, has participated in many of the social security activities carried on by the ILO. This participation has included representation on United States delegations to ILO meetings where social security questions have been discussed, sharing in the formulation of United States policy with respect to various ILO questions, collaboration in technical assistance activities of the ILO in the social security field, and contributing to ILO research activities.

The earliest efforts of the ILO in the social security field concerned the development of international instruments providing standards for various kinds of social security programs. The first International Labor Conference, which was held in Washington in 1919, adopted a Convention relating to unemployment and unemployment insurance. Conventions dealing with workmen's compensation were adopted in 1921 and 1925, and one dealing with sickness insurance in 1927. In 1933 the Conference also adopted a series of six separate Conventions dealing with old-age, invalidity, and survivor insurance.

The Declaration of Philadelphia

At the International Labor Conference held in Philadelphia in 1944, near the end of World War II, the ILO gave major attention to social security in the context of planning for the economic security of workers in the postwar world. The United States was an active participant in this Conference, as well as its host, and the Social Security Board was represented on the U.S. Government delegation by its Chairman. The Declaration of Philadelphia, which embodied the principles agreed to at the Conference, represented what President Franklin D. Roosevelt called "a landmark in world thinking." By calling for "world programs which will achieve . . . the extension of social security measures to provide a basic income to all in need of such protection," the Declaration set the tone of postwar concern with comprehensive social security protection.

The Income Security Recommendation, also adopted at the Philadelphia Conference, formulated the guiding principles to implement the Atlantic Charter's call for social security for all. Contained in this Recommendation were the principles that income security should relieve want and prevent destitution by restoring lost income up to a reasonable level; that income security should be based on compulsory contributory programs with prescribed qualifying conditions; that needs not covered compulsorily should be met by social assistance; and that persons not covered compulsorily should have social assistance available. This Recommendation also enumerated eight desirable categories of social insurance benefits: sickness, maternity, invalidity, old-age, death of breadwinner (survivor), unemployment, emergency expense, and employment injury, and it left the door open for providing family allowances.

Postwar Conventions on Social Security

After the Philadelphia meeting, the next ILO action in the social security field took place at the maritime conference that it held in Seattle in 1946. A new Convention on social security for seafarers was adopted. Among other things, it provided for medical benefits, invalidity benefits, dependent benefits and survivor benefits not less

favorable than those for industrial workers, and equality of treatment of foreign seamen under programs of compensation for employment injury.

In 1952 the International Labor Conference adopted ILO Convention No. 102 on Minimum Standards of Social Security. The United States delegation to this Conference included the Commissioner and another representative from the Social Security Administration. The Convention formulated minimum standards for nine types of social security benefits: medical care, sickness, unemployment, old-age, employment injury, family allowance, maternity, invalidity, and survivor.

The standards deal with, among other things, the contingencies to be covered in each benefit category, the classes of persons to be protected, the scope of the benefits to be provided, methods of financing, and rights of appeal. The Convention also provides for equality of treatment of nonnationals. Furthermore, it permits certain exceptions to be made for a developing country, as long as its economy and medical facilities are not sufficiently developed to meet the Convention's standards.

The problem of equal treatment of nationals and nonnationals was the next social security subject to be considered by the International Labor Conference, in 1961 and 1962. In 1962 a Convention was adopted that contains international standards for dealing with this problem. The principal features are sections calling for equal treatment of nationals and aliens within a country, provisions calling for payment of benefits outside the country to both nationals and nonnationals, and procedures for combining wage credits earned in two or more countries in determining rights to benefits. The Social Security Administration was again represented on the United States delegation to the Conference at which this Convention was drafted.

To reflect the trends in thinking and practice that have emerged since World War II, the International Labor Conference is currently engaged in a 10-year program of revising many of its social security Conventions drawn up before the war. At the 1963 and 1964 ILO Conferences, attention was given to developing a new Convention and Recommendation on industrial injury and occupational disease benefits, which are intended to revise existing ones dealing with workmen's compensation. Consideration is also being

given to placing on the agenda of the 1966 Conference a revision of the old-age, invalidity, and survivor insurance Conventions of 1933. The Social Security Administration has already expressed its interest and expects to take an active part in the discussion.

Technical Assistance

Technical assistance has been an activity of the ILO in the social security field since 1930. One principal form of this assistance has been to provide outside experts or teams of experts to countries engaged in establishing various social security measures for the first time or in modifying measures already in operation. During the period from 1954 to 1964, the services of such experts were provided to 48 countries—16 in Africa, 14 in Asia, and 18 in Latin America.

The ILO in this connection has provided numerous fellowships in the field of social security and has held various training courses and seminars. The Social Security Administration has collaborated with the ILO in its technical assistance work by providing American experts for service abroad and by receiving for training in the United States various ILO fellows.

Research and Reporting

The third major social security activity of the ILO has been to conduct research on social security problems, as well as to report on social security developments in many countries. In this connection, the ILO has published special reports on the cost of social security, administration of social security measures, medical care services, and related subjects. The *International Labor Review*, published monthly, contains information on new legislation as well as articles on various aspects of social security. The ILO also publishes a bimonthly *Legislative Series*, which contains the texts of new social security laws from all over the world, translated into the language of publication. The Social Security Administration regularly exchanges information and documentation with the ILO in connection with these activities and has maintained close relationships between its own research program and that of the ILO.

Committee of Social Security Experts

In carrying out these activities, the ILO has for a number of years sought advice from recognized social security experts of different countries in preparing for the formulation of new conventions, giving technical assistance to developing countries, and conducting research studies. For this purpose, it established a Committee of Social Security Experts in 1948. The Commissioner of Social Security has been a member of the Committee since its inception, and the Chief Actuary of the Social Security Administration is a member of the Committee's Actuarial Sub-Committee.

INTER-AMERICAN CONFERENCE ON SOCIAL SECURITY

In December 1940, social security officials from a number of American countries attended the inauguration of the Workers Hospital of the Peruvian National Social Insurance Fund at Lima. These officials, among whom was the Chairman of the U.S. Social Security Board, adopted a resolution calling for the formation of a committee whose objective would be to make possible a systematic exchange of information among social security institutions of the American countries, looking toward the organization of an inter-American conference on social security. The committee was later formed, and its work led to the establishment in the Western Hemisphere of a new organization—the Inter-American Conference on Social Security.

The first Inter-American Conference on Social Security was held at Santiago, Chile, in September 1942. Twenty-one countries and a number of interested organizations were represented. The resolutions adopted by the Conference looked toward the development of a continental program of basic security in order to “promote personal effort and initiative and improve the structure of society by the elimination of the causes of social insecurity.”

Permanent Inter-American Committee for Social Security

The Chairman of the Social Security Board was elected by the 1942 Conference to head the

newly formed Permanent Inter-American Committee for Social Security and served in that capacity until 1952. This Committee was created to provide a continuing organization between conferences and to promote cooperation between the social security institutions of the various countries. Since it was expected that until the war's end no further conferences could be held, the Permanent Committee in collaboration with the ILO was entrusted with the work of developing ideas for the improvement of social security legislation and administration in the Western Hemisphere.

The Second Inter-American Conference on Social Security was held at Rio de Janeiro in late 1947. The United States delegation was again headed by the Commissioner of Social Security. In his opening address as Chairman of the Permanent Committee, he called for recognition of the necessity of relating social insurance to social assistance and to social services generally, as well as recognition of the role of the newly created UN agencies that would be sharing the responsibility for progress in the social field.

The Social Security Administration was again represented at the Third Inter-American Conference on Social Security held in 1951 at Buenos Aires and at the Fourth Conference in 1952 at Mexico City. Between the two meetings the United States ratified the Charter of the new Organization of American States, which in effect recognized the ILO as the sole specialized agency in the social security field. In line with this action the United States, at the Mexico City Conference, proposed that the functions of the Permanent Committee and of the Inter-American Conference be transferred to a joint committee of the ILO and the Organization of American States. Since the Conference and the Permanent Committee decided instead to continue their autonomous status, the United States withdrew from membership but continued, in the interest of inter-American cooperation, to send observers to subsequent Conferences and to meetings of the Permanent Committee.

The most recent sessions of the Conference and Committee were held in Paraguay in June 1964; the United States delegation was headed by an official from the Social Security Administration. There the future status of the Conference and the Committee was again discussed, but no decision

was reached. The Conference urged that greater attention be given to social security systems and their relation to economic and social development in the work of the Alliance for Progress, and it reemphasized the importance of inter-American cooperation in social security matters.

Inter-American Center for Social Security Studies

A new Inter-American Center for Social Security Studies in Mexico City was inaugurated in March 1963 under the joint auspices of the Permanent Inter-American Committee for Social Security and the Mexican Social Security Institute, in conformity with a resolution of the Sixth Inter-American Conference on Social Security, held in 1960. The main purpose of the Center is to prepare and train the technical personnel needed by American social security institutions in their administrative services, by means of theoretical and practical courses for students at various levels.

The building in which the Center is located houses the headquarters of the Permanent Committee and, in addition to training facilities, has facilities for holding international and regional conferences, including those requiring simultaneous language translations. Students at the Center receive scholarships to study there from their governments and from the Inter-American Conference on Social Security, and after graduation they are placed in suitable posts and special fields.

At the first session of the training course given at the Center in April 1963, an official of the Social Security Administration lectured on "Problems of Registration and the Maintenance of Individual Accounts in the U.S. Social Security Administration." During the summer of 1964, three other officials of the Administration conducted courses on various phases of personnel and general administration and on the use of electronic machinery in administration.

UNITED NATIONS SOCIAL COMMISSION

When the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC) was created in 1946, a temporary social commission was established to

formulate a plan for the work of the Council in the social field. Various approaches were considered by this commission, including a proposal by the National Social Welfare Assembly of the United States. The one ultimately adopted was based on a broad concept of modern social policy that, in effect, embraced social security in its broader sense as well as a number of related fields. The establishment of a permanent social commission to advise ECOSOC on social questions that were outside the realm of other international agencies was recommended. It would advise on practical measures and coordination needed in the social field, international agreements that might be required and the methods of executing them, and the extent to which UN recommendations in the field of social policy are carried out.

The Commissioner of Social Security was the first permanent United States representative to the UN Social Commission and served in that capacity until 1953. In subsequent years, other officials of the Social Security Administration have participated in the work of the Social Commission and have frequently served as advisers to the United States representatives to this body.

In its consideration of questions of social policy, the Social Commission deals with various aspects of social welfare, including to a limited extent social insurance. The Social Security Administration, before its reorganization in 1963, was concerned with a number of the social welfare fields. Since the reorganization and the transfer of various social welfare programs from the Social Security Administration to the newly established Welfare Administration, the latter has assumed much of the responsibility connected with United States participation in the work of the Commission in the social welfare field. The Social Security Administration nevertheless continues to have an interest in the general work of the Commission in the field of international social policy, including any of its activities dealing with social insurance.

World Outlook for Social Security

A 1955 survey conducted by the Social Commission pointed up three problems that tend to arise in connection with practically all types of social programs—obtaining adequate personnel to exe-

cute the programs, obtaining adequate information on which to base program policies, and obtaining adequate resources to finance the programs. The survey emphasized that, although these problems loom largest in the economically underdeveloped countries, nowhere have they been solved to the satisfaction of all concerned and that they are, in fact, inevitable accompaniments of efforts to expand government social action.

A gradual broadening of social security benefits and coverage was revealed in a 1959 survey by the Social Commission. A later (1961) *Report on the World Social Situation* indicated that this trend was continuing but cited as an almost universal problem the need for constant review of contribution and benefit rates to keep them in line with rising levels of living costs and wages. The report concluded that it was difficult to measure the impact of social security programs on general development and on establishing a favorable climate for it, or to do more than provide data, without firm guidelines, on which each country can base its decisions as to the amount it should invest in advancing such programs.

The most recent *Report on the World Social Situation*, considered by the Social Commission in 1963, refers to the encouraging developments in social security and welfare fields during the preceding decade but indicates that much remains to be done if developing countries are to derive full advantage from such progress. During the Commission's consideration of this report, the United States in cooperation with several other countries introduced three resolutions that were adopted. Their purpose is to enable the Social Commission to discharge more effectively its responsibilities as the UN body concerned with overall social policy and with the determination of program priorities and objectives in various social fields.

The first resolution is designed to stimulate

the collection of further data on expenditures for present social development projects, on which plans for future projects could be based. The second recommends increased participation of social experts and greater attention to the social aspects of planning and executing development projects in regional economic commissions. The third calls for the establishment of an *ad hoc* group on social welfare that would help strengthen the UN social welfare program in the UN Development Decade. (The current decade was designated by resolution of the UN General Assembly in 1961 as the Development Decade—a period of intensified efforts to accelerate progress toward self-sustaining economic and social advancement of individual nations.) These resolutions will help to set the tone of UN participation in all fields of social development activity, especially during the Decade, and the Social Security Administration will assist the UN agencies in their implementation.

CONCLUSION

Such in brief has been the character of the participation by the Social Security Administration in the international social security field. The experience of the past suggests that, although progress toward the goal of adequate social security may be slow in a world of relatively fixed national policies, widespread participation in the international forum indicates a sincere willingness on the part of most nations to find, in the ideas and experiences of others, new ways to solve their own problems of social insecurity. Since the United States, and the Social Security Administration in particular, has had much to gain from this participation and, we hope, much to offer, the participation will undoubtedly continue and increase.