

To assist this end the Australian and New Zealand Governments took the initiative, at the Canberra Conference of January, 1944, in proposing the establishment of a South Seas Regional Commission, and at the Wellington Conference in November, 1944, of proposing the convening of periodic South Pacific conferences. Further steps could not be taken until the end of hostilities. At the Conference of Dominion Prime Ministers at London in April, 1946, the need for regional co-operation was recognized, and it was agreed that the Australian and New Zealand Governments should set in motion the machinery which resulted in the assembly at Canberra on 28th January, 1947, of the South Seas Conference. New Zealand and Australia, the sponsoring Powers, invited representatives from the United Kingdom, the United States of America, France, and the Netherlands—the States with territories in the region—who signed an agreement which, upon ratification by the Governments concerned, will bring into being a South Pacific Commission controlling a Secretariat and a Research Council.

All those non-self-governing territories which lie south of the equator and east from and including Netherlands New Guinea will be included within the territorial scope of the Commission.

The objective of the six Powers is “to encourage and strengthen international co-operation in promoting the economic and social welfare and development of the peoples of the non-self-governing territories in the South Pacific region administered by them.” The Commission has been established—

- “(i) To study, formulate, and recommend measures for the development of, and, where necessary, the co-ordination of measures affecting, the economic and social rights and welfare of the inhabitants of the territories within the scope of the Commission, particularly in respect of agriculture (including animal husbandry), communications, transport, agriculture, fisheries, forestry, industry, labour, marketing, production, trade and finance, public works, education, health, housing, and social welfare;
- “(ii) To provide for and facilitate research in technical, scientific, economic, and social fields in the territories within the scope of the Commission and to ensure the maximum co-operation and co-ordination of the activities of research bodies;
- “(iii) To provide technical assistance, advice, and information (including statistical and other material) for the participating Governments.”

The exclusion of political and security matters from the jurisdiction of the Commission, and the decision to make the body purely advisory and consultative, was supported by New Zealand and arises from the realization that the prime consideration was the economic and social welfare of the peoples involved. The imposition of another layer of administrative authority and the introduction of a potential source of political contention were thereby avoided. It is clear from the nature of the Commission that it has no organic connection with the Trusteeship Council or other organs of the United Nations, though in practice it is likely to co-operate with them.

Periodic South Pacific Conferences will be arranged by the Commission to discuss such matters of common interest as fall within the competence of the Commission. Not merely Government representatives will be invited to these Conferences, but also missionaries and representatives from each island territory in the South Pacific area.

The site of the headquarters of the Commission is to be selected within six months of the ratification of the Agreement. The salaries and expenses of the Commissioners and their immediate staff are to be paid by the Governments appointing them; expenses of the Commission, the Research Council, and the Conferences will be met from the funds of the Commission, of which the initial working fund is £40,000 sterling. Contributions to the Commission's funds are apportioned as follows: Australia, 30 per cent.; France, 12½ per cent.; the Netherlands 15 per cent.; New Zealand, 15 per cent.; the United Kingdom, 15 per cent.; the United States of America, 12½ per cent.

A full report upon the Conference, to which the senior New Zealand delegates were Rt Hon. W. Nash, Mr A. G. Osborne, and Mr J. G. Barclay, will be presented to Parliament.