

involved in dam-construction and generator installation; reached agreement to standardize freight wagons, overcoming a problem of forty years' standing; brought about agreements which simplify and liberalize Customs formalities; facilitated (in collaboration with ILO) the greater mobility of labour and encouraged improved organizational techniques in industry in order to raise productivity standards; helped substantially in raising steel output to a point where all European steel-producing countries outside Germany were, by the end of 1948, producing steel at a rate never attained in the past; taken steps (in collaboration with FAO) to maximize the use of timber by publicising technological advances and by getting countries to agree on fixed buying limits to avoid inflated prices; and so on. Besides including Eastern as well as Western Europe within its scope, the Commission collaborates with ten countries not members of the United Nations (Albania, Austria, Bulgaria, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Roumania, and Switzerland).

As explained more fully in a separate note, the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE) has developed more slowly than ECE and along somewhat different lines, the success of the European Commission having been inherent in the greater interdependence and maturity of the European economy.

The establishment of ECE and ECAFE to deal with emergency problems of post-war reconstruction focused attention on the value of the regional approach to other international problems. During the past year FAO, ILO, WHO, and other specialized agencies have given increasing attention to regional activities, while the Economic Commission for Latin America has held its first meeting and an Economic Commission for the Middle East has been discussed by the Economic and Social Council, though it has not yet been established. This trend towards regional activity (enabling a more intimate approach towards problems shared by a group of countries in common) has developed side by side with a growing concern to raise standards of living in under-developed countries, and the importance of this problem has been underlined by the recognition that political instability breeds on economic instability.

The economic development of under-developed areas is one of the major concerns of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, but it has also been promoted by the other specialized agencies and the United Nations, particularly through the provision of technical assistance, a field in which the ILO operated for many years before the war. The idea of providing technical assistance to promote economic development has in recent years been progressively extended by the specialized agencies as well as by the United Nations