

International Union of Geodesy and Geophysics

GENERAL ASSEMBLY AT EDINBURGH

THE sixth General Assembly of the International Union for Geodesy and Geophysics was held at Edinburgh during the period September 17-25, under the presidency of Dr. William Bowie (U.S.A.). Of the thirty-two countries that adhere to the Union, twenty-one sent delegates, and in addition thirty guests attended from ten countries (including Germany, Austria, Russia, India, Australia) that are not at present members of the Union. The delegates, guests and those accompanying them numbered in all 378, of whom 261 came from overseas.

At the opening meeting, held on September 17 in the McEwan Hall, the Union was welcomed by the president of the Royal Society, the Lord Provost of Edinburgh, the principal of the University of Edinburgh, and the president of the Royal Society of Edinburgh. The University of Edinburgh conferred its honorary doctorate on the president of the Union, Dr. William Bowie, in the course of the proceedings.

The scientific work of the Union is done by the seven international associations included in it, dealing respectively with geodesy, seismology, meteorology, terrestrial magnetism and electricity, oceanography, vulcanology and hydrology. Each of these held many meetings during the Assembly, some of them commencing their proceedings so early as September 14. Two evening lectures, by Dr. A. L. Day (U.S.A.) on volcanoes, and by Dr. Vening Meinesz (Holland) on gravity measurements in submarines, were given for the public of Edinburgh, and were largely attended.

Social hospitality was accorded to the Union by H.M. Government and the City of Edinburgh, both of which gave evening receptions; the City also gave a garden party. The British National Committee for Geodesy and Geophysics, which organized the meeting, with the aid of Government funds provided through the Royal Society, arranged a Sunday all-day train excursion to the Highlands, and an afternoon party on the closing day of the Assembly. Other afternoon parties were held at the Royal Scottish Museum, where an exhibition of geodetic and geophysical instruments, arranged in connexion with the Union meetings, was opened by Sir William Bragg; and at the Royal Society of Edinburgh, and the Castle. Excursions were also made in connexion with several of the Associations.

The scientific work of the Associations covered too wide and varied a field even to be summarized here. International co-operation is of special importance in the earth sciences, and many useful schemes of international work were initiated or continued. Co-operation between the different Associations is also of importance, and one step taken in this direction at Edinburgh was to set up a special joint commission of the Associations to investigate problems of the earth crust under the oceans.

Among the special papers discussed by the Association of Geodesy were two on pendulum and crystal clocks, by Sampson and Rayner respectively, and one by Bullard on gravity work in East Africa.

The Association of Seismology continued its support of the International Seismological Summary. Among

the papers discussed by this Association were one on deep-focus earthquakes, by Gutenberg and Richter, and one on a new type of vertical seismograph, by Somville. On the proposal of Prof. Ishimoto it was recommended that seismic observatories should communicate, for the International Seismological Summary, the direction of the initial displacements in earthquakes.

At the Association of Meteorology about thirty papers were read, and in conjunction with the Association of Oceanography resolutions were adopted urging a more effective collection than heretofore of meteorological data over the oceans; they recommended (1) the creation, with the aid of merchant ships, of an ocean network of upper air soundings, (2) the stationing of a ship near 55° N., 30° W., the region where cyclones most often form, to make meteorological, aerological and oceanographic observations and to collect and re-transmit observations of merchant ships, and (3) an increase in meteorological (particularly upper air) observations in Iceland and the Azores.

Among the decisions made by the Association of Terrestrial Magnetism and Electricity was one to organize temporary observatories to take quick-run records of long-continued magnetic pulsations in Iceland, where they appear to be specially frequent.

Under the auspices of the Hydrology Association many meetings were held, including what appears to have been the first International Commission on Snow, which was largely attended. This Association, like those of Vulcanology, Magnetism, Meteorology and Oceanography, took part in special scientific excursions, in addition to the social excursions arranged for the whole Union.

The administration of the Union will continue to be in the charge of Brigadier H. St. J. Winterbotham as general secretary. The Executive Committee includes the presidents of the Associations, who were as follows: names in brackets indicate new elections for the forthcoming three years: Geodesy, Vening Meinesz, Holland; Seismology, Oddone, Italy (Heck, U.S.A.); Meteorology, V. Bjerknes, Norway (Chapman, Great Britain); Oceanography, Knudsen, Denmark (Helland-Hansen, Norway); Vulcanology, Michel-Lévy, France; Hydrology, Smetana, Czechoslovakia (Luetschg, Switzerland). The secretaries of Associations, in the same order (with new elections indicated in brackets), were: Perrier, France; Rothé, France; Wehrlé, France (J. Bjerknes, Norway); la Cour, Norway; Proudman, England; Malladra, Italy (Signore, Italy); Dienert, France (Frolow, France).

The administrative business of the Union included the election of Dr. D. la Cour (Denmark) as its next president; the continuance of the national subscriptions to the Union at the same rate as for the period 1933-36 (about £160 to £800 per annum according to the national population) and substantially the same division as before of the Union funds between the seven Associations; the adoption of new statutes together with new by-laws, in place of the existing statutes, and the acceptance of an invitation from the United States of America to hold the next General Assembly in Washington in 1939.