



A CENTURY OF PARLIAMENTARY DIPLOMACY

**A Short History of the British Group
of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, 1889-1989**

JAMES DOUGLAS

The author has an intimate knowledge of the Inter-Parliamentary Union having served as its Assistant Secretary General for ten years (1960-70). His history of the Union: "Parliaments Across Frontiers" (HMSO 1975) has now run into two editions. Other publications include "World Communications" and "Rowing on the Cam".

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PREFACE

This short history covering the past century clearly illustrates the vital role which a radical group of Members, drawn from both Houses of Parliament, played in the formation and foundation, and later, in the vast international growth, of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

The original basic idea of the British Group was that through contact, debate and agreed solutions among legislators coming from different Parliaments throughout the world, peace and international unity could be achieved. This view has, of course, been somewhat eroded by events, and also by the greatly increased powers of Governments. Two world wars have taken place and their after effects have changed the history of the modern world.

Nevertheless, as will be seen from the text, during the inter-war years from 1919 to 1939 the IPU, and one of its most important components, the British Group, exercised a considerable influence on international affairs. Famous political figures of the past such as Randal Cremer, Philip Stanhope, Herbert Asquith, Ramsay Macdonald, Lloyd George, Wedgwood Benn, Ernest Bevin and Winston Churchill all played their parts in the inter-parliamentary movement.

Naturally enough many other National Groups of the Union also find mention in the narrative, as also do the Conferences which have been held in every part of the world.

The book has been compiled from original sources, some only available at the IPU's International Centre for Parliamentary Documentation in Geneva. The author wishes to thank the IPU Secretary General, Pierre Cornillon for his welcome cooperation and the Centre's Librarian, Daniele Kordon, for her valuable help. Finally the author would wish to express his appreciation and thanks to the Chairman of the British Group, Michael Marshall and the Secretary, Peter Shaw.

JAMES DOUGLAS
December 1988

ORIGINS AND EARLY AIMS

In the latter years of Queen Victoria's reign, when British power and prestige stretched omnipresent throughout the world, some Members of the House of Commons were turning their thoughts towards a new form of international collaboration: personal contacts and discussion among members of differing Parliaments so as to promote common legislative action and exchange ideas. This, then revolutionary, proposal grew out of the various peace movements and societies which flourished throughout Western Europe in the second half of the nineteenth century and which included among their members a number of British, French and German parliamentarians.

The man who had at that time founded the Workmen's Peace Association in Britain and later the International Arbitration League was deserted by his father, left school at the age of twelve and started his working life as a journeyman carpenter. But despite his humble origins William Randal Cremer had other dreams in his head and one of these was that of inter-parliamentary cooperation to promote peace. Elected as a Liberal M.P. for the constituency of Haggerston (Hackney) in 1885, he was the real founder of the British Group and in concert with the French M.P., Frederic Passy, of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Cremer is by no means forgotten today. His bust stands within the precincts of the Palace of Westminster: the four almshouses in Fareham, Hampshire which he caused to be built in memory of his mother, and for which he bought the land for three hundred and fifty pounds, still exist; the street in Hackney named after him still bears his name; and the Library at I.P.U. headquarters in Geneva is dedicated to him.

The Cremer bust has some history attached to it. Commissioned by the Arbitration League, it was executed by Paul Mountford, and the cost was met by public subscription. Andrew Carnegie, a great admirer of Cremer, donated twenty pounds and the British Group a more modest five. Once completed it was decided to offer the bust to the new Peace Palace at the Hague. For a short time it rested in one of the Lobbies of the House of Commons before being shipped to Holland. It was officially unveiled by Andrew Carnegie at the Peace Palace on 29th August 1913 before a distinguished gathering of government ministers and parliamentarians, shortly after the opening of the Palace by Queen Wilhelmina. A replica of the original was unveiled in 1957

at a short ceremony before a gathering of I.P.U. delegates outside Church House.

It was during the summer of 1888 that Cremer and Passy met in Paris and took what was to turn out to be a momentous decision: to convene a meeting of British and French Members of Parliament that coming autumn in Paris. This session took place on 31 October 1888 in the Grand Hotel and it was the first time that members of the two Parliaments had convened together for a common purpose. Twenty-five French M.P.s attended the meeting. The British party consisted of nine Members of the House of Commons and it is of no little interest to record their names: Thomas Burt, Sir George Campbell, W. Randal Cremer, C. Fenwick, J.T. Agg Gardner, W.S.B. McLaren, A. Provand and C.E. Schwann.

It was at this October meeting that the decision was taken to hold a larger conference in Paris the following year to which members of other Parliaments (that is to say other than the British and French) would be invited. Although a parliamentary committee had been set up to convene the meeting in the end this dealt only with European Parliaments while Cremer's Arbitration League Council issued convocation notices to Britain and the United States Congress. One point of considerable historical significance regarding the arrangements for the 1889 meeting was that all circulars of invitation were to be signed by the British and French members appointed at the preliminary session held in October. Thus, the British signatories in a way constituted themselves as the first members of the British Group and we may safely take the date of despatch of this most significant convocation circular, March of 1889, as the foundation date of the Group.

It was intended to hold this first large conference in the Town Hall of the 7th Paris arrondissement, Place St. Sulpice, but Cremer with his usual dynamism had been attending a peace meeting in this same Town Hall and thought that conditions were not satisfactory so he promptly hired rooms in the Hotel Continental and changed the conference venue. Presumably his friend Passy was in agreement as there is no record of any French objection to this sudden change of plan.

The British delegation numbered twenty-eight, all Members of the House of Commons. One name in the delegation is of particular interest: Philip Stanhope. He was the fourth son of the fifth Earl of Stanhope, a noted historian whose uncle was William Pitt. Philip Stanhope, who later became Lord Weardale, worked in close harmony with Cremer and between them they organised and ran the British Group in those early days. Stanhope was later elected the first British

President of the Inter-Parliamentary Council.

The meeting in the Hotel Continental attracted 96 Members of Parliament and the following countries were represented: Belgium, Denmark, France, Great Britain, Hungary, Italy, Liberia, Spain and the United States. These countries are considered the founder members of the I.P.U. The inter-parliamentary session attracted quite a lot of attention in Paris, and official recognition, indeed approval, was signified by the French President who invited all delegates to a garden party at the Elysée.

One of the final acts of the Conference was to set up a multi-national Committee of 16 members to make plans for the next meeting. Stanhope was elected President of this Committee and Cremer one of the five secretaries who were drawn from France, USA, Belgium, Italy and, of course, Britain. The Group even at this early stage was already making its presence felt on the inter-parliamentary scene.

The decision had been taken in Paris to hold the forthcoming conference in London, so early in 1890 Stanhope presided over a meeting of a nine member organising committee of the Group. At the meeting members promised the sum of one hundred and ten pounds to go towards meeting conference costs. Indeed this may well have been the entire budget as there is no mention of any other financial help. It was also agreed to despatch a convocation circular and it was sent out at the end of May. This was the first invitation to be sent out for a London conference and it read as follows:

THE INTERNATIONAL PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE

The following is a copy of the invitation which is being addressed either in English, French, or German, to Members of the following Parliaments: American, British, Belgian, Danish, Dutch, French, German, Hungarian, Italian, Norwegian, Swiss, Spanish, and Sweedish. To this number it is hoped to add the Austrian, Greek, Luxembourg, and Portuguese Parliaments. Wherever it is possible, a copy of the invitation will be posted from this country to every Member of the above-mentioned Parliaments :—

“23, Bedford Street, Strand,

“London, W.C., May 29th, 1890.

“INTERNATIONAL PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE.

“ In June last year a Conference to which nearly four hundred Members of the different Legislatures of Europe and America were assenting parties, and of whom not less than 100 Members took an active part in the deliberations, met in Paris, under the presidency

of M. Jules Simon, to consider the best means of 'Promoting Treaties of Arbitration between Nations, which shall stipulate that whatever disputes arise between the contracting parties which cannot be adjusted by diplomacy, shall be referred to Arbitration.'

"The final resolution adopted by the Conference was that similar gatherings should be held annually, in the capitals of different countries, and that the Conference for this year should assemble in London, a Committee consisting of the undersigned being appointed, charged with the duty of convening it, and inviting the attendance of Members of other Parliaments besides those then represented.

"We therefore cordially invite you to attend the Conference, which will be held at the Hotel Metropole, London, on the 22nd and 23rd of July, commencing each day at 10 a.m. Lord Herschel, ex-Lord Chancellor of England, has promised to preside at the opening of the proceedings, and on the evening of the 23rd July the British Members of Parliament will entertain the Foreign Members at a banquet.

"An early reply to this invitation will greatly oblige.

"Yours respectfully,

"THOS. BURT,	F. A. CHANNING,	<i>The Con- veners.</i>
G. B. CLARK,	C. FENWICK,	
WALTER JAMES,	WILFRED LAWSON,	
JAMES O'KELLY,	PETER McDONALD,	
	PHILIP STANHOPE, <i>Chairman.</i>	
	CHARLES E. SCHWANN, <i>Treasurer.</i>	
	W. RANDAL CREMER, <i>Secretary.</i>	

"P.S. — The Conference will be strictly confined to those who were present at the Paris Conference and to Members of existing Parliaments, and the deliberations will be restricted to the consideration of the best means of advancing the principle of Arbitration and cognate subjects. All resolutions to be proposed for discussion should be forwarded to the Committee not later than the 5th of July next."

The "*Arbitrator*", June 1890.

That first London conference of July 1890 was a great success for the London group. It was held in the banqueting hall of the Metropole Hotel — now no longer in existence — and attended by more than one hundred members of the Parliaments of Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Holland, Italy, Norway, Spain and Sweden. One hundred and fifty British M.P.s were there to meet and debate with them. Although the Americans were invited they did not attend probably by reason of the fact that Congress was in session. Liberia was not invited for some obscure reason.

The Conference was opened by Lord Herschell, a former Lord

Chancellor, in the banqueting hall which was, according to contemporary accounts, exquisitely decorated with palm trees, shrubs and flowers. A grand Victorian-style banquet was given at the conclusion of the session and this served to celebrate the constructive work which had been accomplished along the path of inter-parliamentary collaboration. It is not the intention of this short history to quote the texts of resolutions adopted by conferences, unless they have a direct bearing on the Group itself, but two actions taken in London are worthy of note as they did have a wider significance. One was a recommendation proposed by a Danish delegate Mr. Bajer that a permanent secretariat should be established. Although no actual vote was taken on this proposal — there were some British objections — nevertheless it went down on the record and so it might be said that the Inter-Parliamentary Bureau (or Secretariat as it is now termed) was born at the London meeting.

The second item of historic interest was the fifth resolution adopted. It read in part as follows: "As closer relations between the members of various Parliaments would make for peace, the Conference recommends the appointment of a Parliamentary Committee for each country with a view to the interchange of ideas and the consideration of disputes as they may arise." Cremer's hand can readily be seen in the wording of this resolution which held out for the first time the promise of an organisation of wider scope. In fact the terms of the resolution were implemented in some Parliaments and the whole idea was taken up in different forms at Rome the following year and at succeeding conferences.

Most of the organisational work for the London meeting had fallen on the shoulders of Cremer, and to a lesser extent Stanhope. Although the funds at their disposal were certainly extremely limited Press reports from France, Germany, Italy and elsewhere all agreed that the two-day meeting had been a great success. Thus it was not surprising that a few months later Cremer was on his way to Italy in order to have discussions with the Italian Group regarding the organisation of the 1891 Rome meeting. Poor Cremer had an uncomfortable journey to Rome as he did not have enough money for a *wagon lit* and so had to sit up on hard benches for two days and nights.

The British Group sent a delegation of fifteen to Rome including among its members David Lloyd George, who also attended the following year's meeting in Berne. Oddly enough he appeared to have taken little part in the proceedings, although he had the cause of the Group at heart as will be seen later. Fourteen countries were represented in Rome and British delegates took a leading role in the

debates. Much of the session was devoted to the pros and cons of setting up a permanent secretariat. Cremer argued against it in Rome as he may well have done the year before in London. At all events the "Battle of the Bureau" was fought out in Rome, and resurged again at Berne a year later when a British delegate Dr. Clark spoke against it. However, the majority — as Stanhope gracefully admitted at the Berne meeting — wanted a Secretariat and in Rome the Marquis Pandolfi of Italy was nominated as first Secretary General.

One interesting British contribution at Rome was the speech made by Thomas Burt, one of the founder members of the Group, who had just recently presided over a Trade Union Congress at Newcastle, where, as he said "1,400,000 workmen were represented". Burt had been charged to express the sympathy of the T.U.C. with the objects of the Conference. It is noteworthy that in those times the strongly pacifist element in the T.U.C. fully supported all forms of inter-parliamentary collaboration. Although at that date there were no Labour M.P.s the British Group did draw its support from all sides, Conservatives, Liberals and Radicals. Later on of course the Labour Party played a powerful role in the Group's affairs and this will be seen in subsequent chapters.

Britain sent a strong delegation to the Berne conference in that hot August of 1892 but the overall attendance was poor and only twelve Parliaments were represented. Delegates were however able to read Marquis Pandolfi's first report as the Union's Secretary General. Moreover, for the first time, meetings took place within a Parliament building. The Swiss have to be congratulated on this initiative which was appropriate and has carried on throughout the years until the present day. When the size of the chamber has been adequate the IPU has held some of its most successful conferences in Parliament buildings. It is of course impossible at Westminster although certain Union meetings have invariably taken place within the Palace during the course of IPU London conferences.

In an interesting report on the Berne session Cremer noted that wives were beginning to accompany their husbands to IPU conferences and in a comment on the banquet which the Swiss Group hosted at the Victoria Hotel at Interlaken, he says "invitations were not confined to members of the Conference but extended to their wives, sweethearts and friends". Needless to say the banquet was a huge success.

From Berne the inter-parliamentary scene moved to The Hague in 1894. In the preparations for this conference the principal members of the British Group, twenty-two in number, addressed a circular to all Members of the House of Commons enlisting their support for the forthcoming session in Holland. This appeal had the result of

attracting more members to join the Group and also ensured a very strong British delegation at the conference itself. This was particularly valuable as one of the principal speeches made at the session was delivered by Stanhope on the detailed requirements for the establishment of a Permanent Court of International Arbitration, a topic which was very much to the fore at that time. Even reading this speech eighty-four years later one can still appreciate its impact.

Before the Budapest Conference in 1896, when the IPU was to break new ground by meeting in Hungary, there was considerable Group activity at Westminster where a large meeting was held and afterwards ninety Members of the House of Commons gave their adherence to the IPU by signing the following declaration:

“The undersigned, regarding with satisfaction the success which has attended the Inter-Parliamentary Conferences at Paris, London, Rome, Berne, The Hague and Brussels, and in the belief that the meeting together from year to year of members of various Parliaments is a practical step in the direction of international peace, have given their adhesion to the movement and promised to assist in its development.”

Cremer's name does not appear on the list of ninety as he had shortly before lost his Haggerston seat by a mere 30 votes. However, he retained the Secretaryship of the British Group. The Group had now become an instrument of considerable power and influence within the House, including as it did such names as Haldane, Lloyd-George, Hoare, Lubbock, Stanhope, Whitely and others. At a Group meeting held that summer a “feeling of general satisfaction was expressed at the progress of the IPU movement”. Certainly, Members of the British Group in those times believed that they were in the process of launching a new world movement which would bind the world's legislatures together. But what perhaps they had not realised then was the ever-growing power of government which multiplied over the succeeding years. At the Budapest Conference, Cremer (taking the floor presumably as Secretary of the Group) delivered what might be termed a keynote speech on the progress made towards the establishment of a permanent arbitration tribunal. He was then looking forward to a British/American agreement on the plan but felt that more active steps should be taken within European Parliaments. Cremer, despite his pro-American views was a convinced European, in the mould of Monnet and Spaak. He also made the proposal in Budapest that the title “Inter-Parliamentary Conference” should be changed to “Inter-Parliamentary League”, but other delegates did not favour this and so the British Group yielded to their colleagues' views and thus the name “Inter-Parliamentary Union” was unanimously adopted.

One final comment on the Budapest meeting is of historical interest. Delegates, including the entire British delegation, were taken down the Danube by special steamer to the official ceremony of the opening of the Iron Gates by the Emperor of Austria-Hungary and "other Royal personages", actually the Kings of Rumania and Servia. The Hungarian Group was the first to issue an official conference report, thus starting a tradition which has continued to this day.

It was of course at Budapest that, thanks largely to the initiative shown by the British Group, and the fact that a Russian diplomat attended the meeting, that the Czar called for an international peace conference, and this in turn led to the famous Hague Conference of 1899. This was a significant step and was to a great extent due to the push and influence of the British — a really worthwhile achievement.

As we approach the end of the nineteenth century we come across an interesting letter from the President of the Norwegian Parliament addressed to Cremer. Speaking of the forthcoming Christiania (Oslo) session of 1899, Mr. Lund remarked "We hope to see many British members present as there is no nation with which the Norwegians sympathise so much as with Great Britain". Eventually the Group sent a delegation of thirteen to Oslo. There were two items of interest from the British point of view at this meeting. The first was that a distinguished British journalist and writer, Wickham Stead, wrote a full account of the session and this appeared in the *Review of Reviews*, at that time a famous monthly journal, and the second was that the Norwegian Group produced an ornate conference volume full of photographs and speeches. This was to be copied and improved upon by the British Group at the London Conference of 1906.

In the following spring at Brussels in 1900 those British M.P.s who had voiced their opposition to the war in South Africa were heartily thanked by their European colleagues on the Inter-Parliamentary Council. In fact the Boer War was very unpopular throughout Europe. An effort was made to pass a resolution thanking them officially — and one may well imagine the effect that this would have had on the Government — but fortunately wiser counsels prevailed, in the person of Stanhope, and it was withdrawn. Nevertheless the South African question was by no means finished and the year following at the Paris Conference — the first since the famous session of 1889 — the matter was aired yet again. The result was that the British Group became most unpopular and Cremer referred to "our war in S. Africa which the conference cannot understand and which everyone on the continent condemns".

At the Brussels council session of 1901 the British Group took

another useful step towards better administration and improved organisation of the IPU. The Group called upon the Secretary General to present a formal budget and balance sheet each year, and once again stressed the importance of ensuring that interpreters were available at all meetings. The proposals were adopted at a Group's meeting in Committee Room 16 on May 9, 1902 and further proposals were made regarding IPU organisation: lists of all Groups should be printed and supplied to all members; a treasurer to be appointed; three trustees to look after the Union's funds, etc. These housekeeping proposals are of some importance as they illustrate clearly that in those early days of the present century the Group had the cause of the Union very much at heart. One final suggestion from that May meeting is also of interest inasmuch as the same situation has occurred many times since. It read "as the British Group has been decimated by the last General Election and other causes, the Chairman and Secretary will take the necessary action to reconstitute and enlarge the Group".

In Vienna the following year the British Group was again to the fore with a draft resolution on disarmament moved by the mainstay of the Group Sir John Brunner. This was not the first time that efforts had been made by the Group to have IPU conferences adopt realistic resolutions on disarmament. It is sad to think that so many years have since elapsed and so little has been achieved. The Vienna meeting was also notable for the fact that on the final day the United States delegate invited the Union to meet in St Louis in 1904 during the Great Exhibition.

In December 1903 Cremer was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. It was a signal honour and well illustrated the influence of the IPU as in the two preceding years the Prize had gone to Passy, the other co-founder, and Gobat, the Secretary General. Immediately following the award Cremer donated practically the entire sum, seven out of eight thousand pounds, to the International Arbitration League for the cause of world peace. It was a gesture fully worthy of the man.

In the spring of 1904 the British Group held a large meeting to make preparations for the forthcoming St Louis Conference. In those days it was a major journey by ship and train to the American mid-west. The Group had at that time 156 members but few said that they would be prepared to travel to the States. However, the idea must have gained in popularity during succeeding months as in the event 24 made the long journey. Despite the ten thousand pounds which the U.S. Congress had appropriated for the conference expenses, incidentally the largest amount spent on an IPU Conference up to that time, attendance was not very large: 16 Parliaments were represented by 156 delegates.

But those that did go saw a lot of the United States in two luxuriously equipped trains which were put at the sole disposal of conference delegates. Cremer said that he travelled 10,000 miles.

After the Conference Fred Maddison, the Liberal M.P. who was later to become Secretary of the Group, wrote a rather critical account of it: "poor attendance at sessions, change of meeting rooms, picnic atmosphere, too many ladies" were only some of the objections. But other commentators thought that the US Group had done a good job with a conference held hundreds of miles from the seat of the US Congress. Also, and this has to be stressed, the St Louis meeting could boast one significant achievement: a deputation, in which British members played an important role, was received by Theodore Roosevelt, the US President, in the White House. In response to the resolution which had been adopted by the Conference he decided to convene a further international governmental conference on arbitration. It was a signal success for the British Group and for the Union.

After this achievement the Brussels session the year following, where the Group had a delegation of 19 members, was from the British viewpoint somewhat of a prelude to what Cremer was determined to make a magnificent occasion, this was the first conference to be held in London since 1890.

LONDON MARKS A NEW STEP FORWARD

The 1906 session was held in the Royal Gallery of the House of Lords after a "hall" originally offered by the Foreign Office had been politely rejected. The meeting was not in fact without its organisational difficulties, and as a contemporary writer remarked "of how the Royal Gallery was secured for the Conference and Westminster Hall for the déjeuner, Mr. Cremer could tell some interesting stories". But it is certain that the same comment could well apply to all three Group Secretaries who have organised London sessions of the IPU, even down to the most recent in 1975 when problems occurred which would not have been dreamt about in 1906: those calm and spacious days of peaceful London.

It was at the time of the 1906 Conference that the Group adopted for itself a Latin motto "Pro Patria per Orbis Concordiam" (for the country through world harmony). It was aptly chosen and might well be resuscitated today.

Invitations to the London Conference went out all over the world, including the USA, Canada, Japan, Australia, Mexico and of course all the European members including Russia. The Russian Duma did in fact send a delegation which was cheered by delegates in the Royal Gallery but they were only able to stay long enough for one speech to be made by Mr. Kovalevski and then they had to depart. Events in Russia were too pressing and the Duma had been closed down.

The attendance in London was very large, made up of 356 foreign M.P.s representing no less than 23 different Parliaments. In opening the session the Prime Minister, Campbell Bannerman, and the Group's Chairman, Lord Weardale (formerly Philip Stanhope), both spoke in French as a mark of courtesy towards the large number of French-speaking European parliamentarians who were present. Another innovation was that the Presidents and Secretaries of all Groups attending were formally presented to King Edward VII at Buckingham Palace. A commentator noted that there were no speeches and no formalities. Nevertheless, it was a signal mark of Royal interest in the Group and the Union, and was to establish a tradition which has continued to this day.

Although the acoustics in the Royal Gallery proved to be poor,

there were some useful debates. These culminated in the famous *déjeuner* in Westminster Hall (a photograph of which with the tables laid but empty is included in the Conference Report of which more anon). It must have been the first occasion that the Hall had been used for a function of this kind since the Middle Ages. The *déjeuner* was followed by an excursion to the Crystal Palace, then one of the most famous sights of London. Delegates went by car and a description of the scene is of the greatest interest as the following extract will reveal. "Thanks to the foresight of the AA our guests from abroad were able to cover the distance from the metropolis to Sydenham in record time. Starting from the Mall just before half past two many of the cars pulled up at the main entrance to the Palace at a quarter to three. It was a notable procession and a memorable ride. Never has such a long line of automobiles formed up in St. James's Park. There were open cars and covered-in cars, English made, foreign made, electric and petrol driven." Whatever the type of car it was certainly a very speedy journey. Twenty minutes from the Mall to Crystal Palace must have been a record.

The Crystal Palace visit on 25 July 1906 marked the conclusion of a well organised and spectacular conference. Cremer, on whose shoulders the bulk of the work had fallen, had achieved a great success. Sadly it was to be his last meeting. Both he and Weardale were busy after the session preparing the conference report. This was a lavish leather-bound volume, full of illustrations and printed by Carl Henschel of Fleet Street. It included all the speeches made at the session, in both English and in French, and pictures of the leading members of the Union and of the British Group. A presentation copy was accepted by the King. Although hundreds of copies must have been printed the author has only been able to locate one: this rests in the IPU Library in Geneva and was donated to it by the ILO who had received it only in 1927. Where other copies lie it would be interesting to know. The IPU was not to meet again in London until 1930, a gap of nearly a quarter of a century. Indeed as will be seen the Group in the 1920s fell into a decline.

In that same year, 1906, Cremer was offered a knighthood but he did not feel that he could accept it by reason of his radical principles. However, a year later the offer was renewed and this time he felt his way clear to accept. Unfortunately he did not live long to enjoy his new rank as on 22 July 1908 he died suddenly from an attack of pneumonia. His funeral was a parliamentary event. Mourners included the Prime Minister, Mr. Asquith, other Government Ministers and many senior Members of both the Lords and Commons. At the Berlin Conference that year Count Apponyi of Hungary referred to "that great

man who is no longer among us in order to inspire us". Cremer was indeed a remarkable personality, and when the British Group met after his death they passed the following resolution "That this meeting expresses deep regret at the death of Sir William Randal Cremer and admiration for his lifelong work in the cause of peace".

At the same Berlin session Duncan Pirie and Fred Maddison, both M.P.s, were elected joint secretaries of the British Group. Its offices were transferred from 111 Lincoln's Inn Fields where they had been since the inauguration of the Group, to St. Stephen's House, Victoria Embankment. At the same time the Group decided to publish a Year Book, and the first issue of this well printed hard-bound little volume appeared in June 1909. Included in it was a detailed report of the Berlin Conference of 1908 at which 19 Parliaments had been represented. The final page of the book consisted of a tear-out page on which Members of either House who were not already members of the Group could apply. Each new member "will pay an entrance fee of two shillings and sixpence and subscribe annually not less than two shillings and sixpence to the expenses of the Group".

This first edition of the British Year Book was sent to all other Groups and the suggestion was made that others might care to follow the British example. This proposal had the support of the IPU Secretary General and many other Groups commenced the production of printed annual reports.

In order not to lose touch with the growth of the Union while concentrating on the development of the British Group, it should be mentioned that at the Berlin Conference a general re-organisation was agreed upon. An Executive Committee of five members elected by the Conference was set up to control a new Inter-Parliamentary Bureau of salaried officials under the leadership of a paid Secretary General nominated by the Council. One requirement was that the Secretary General should NOT be a member of any Parliament. It was also envisaged that the seat of the Bureau would be transferred, and this occurred in the year following when it moved from Berne to Brussels.

The second edition of the Year Book in 1910 records an interesting new initiative by the Group: this was the entertainment in the House of Commons of two visiting delegations, one from Russia, and the other from Turkey. The luncheon given for the Russians was attended by the Prime Minister, Mr. Asquith, and the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Balfour.

During 1909 the Group held four well attended meetings and membership rose to 175 from both Houses. One of the joint Secretaries,

Fred Maddison lost his seat in the House but maintained his post with the Group. It was at this time, presumably through the initiative shown by Lord Weardale and its three treasurers, one of whom was Ramsay Macdonald, and the help of the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, David Lloyd George, who had remained a firm friend and member of the Group, that the British Government agreed to appropriate a sum of three hundred pounds to be paid annually to the central funds of the Union. In those days this was the largest National contribution to the Union's funds with the possible exception of the USA, though payments by that country were erratic.

However, if the financial situation of the Union was very satisfactory in 1910 – they had a credit balance of some two thousand pounds at the end of that year – the same could not be said of the British Group which merely had a credit of thirty five pounds, ten pounds down on the year preceding.

In 1911 the Group took up a strong stance on the Italo-Turkish war then raging in Tripoli. A resolution was adopted by the Group calling for Anglo-German mediation and a delegation was received by the Prime Minister, Asquith, and the Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey. Promises were given and at the IPU Council meeting held that autumn in the Luxembourg Palace in Paris the British point of view was upheld in the terms of the resolution adopted.

At the end of the year, December 1911, a ceremony took place in Parliament when the Speaker received the bust of Cremer from Lord Weardale. Before a large gathering the bust was placed temporarily in the Library of the House of Commons pending transfer to The Hague. Reference has already been made to the history of this bust.

The Year Book for 1912, the last to be published, although a vague reference is made to a Book for 1913, reveals that the British Group had 200 members in the Commons but only 19 from the Lords. However, the Consultative Committee of the Group boasted some distinguished names, notable among them being: Noel Buxton, Lord Kinnaird, T.P. O'Connor, Lionel de Rothschild, Arnold Rowntree and F.E. Smith (later Lord Birkenhead).

The 1912 Conference was held in Geneva with a formal opening ceremony in the Great Hall of the University. It was the first IPU session not to be held in a European capital city, although of course the 1904 Conference took place in the Exhibition Hall at St. Louis. It was also the first time for many years that the IPU had not met in a Parliament. The reason for this was the state of tension in Europe and this obliged the IPU Council to vote a credit of 10,000 francs (Swiss apparently although it is not stated) for the organisation of the

1912 Conference "in a city to be chosen by the Bureau outside the large capitals". Whether this action taken by the Bureau in picking Geneva presaged the choice of the same city by the League of Nations in later years it is difficult to say.

The British Group sent a delegation of 15 to Geneva including one member, Agg-Gardner, who had attended the first conference of 1889. At the time of the Geneva session Weardale was Chairman of the IPU's Organisation Committee, then the most important of the six in existence. However, the Council's President, Mr. Beernaert of Belgium, was to die that year and Weardale was to take over the post in 1913.

In that year, immediately preceding the outbreak of World War One, the British Group at its meeting in March adopted a most interesting resolution, This spoke *inter alia*, of the "increasing cordiality of the British and German Governments and people, the signal advantages of which had been shown in the recent crisis in the Near East". Historically interesting is the fact that the German Group, meeting in Berlin at the same time, passed a resolution in identical terms. It is sufficiently obvious that the timing and the wording had been agreed beforehand, and this only a year before the two countries were to be at war.

In 1913 the British Group decided to send a representative parliamentary delegation to visit what were then termed "the dominions and self-governing colonies" in order to urge the formation of new Groups. The visits had a certain amount of success as Australia and Canada organised their Groups in a more definite form, although of course both Groups had been represented at IPU sessions before. South Africa, with its strong and well established Parliament, might well have come forward but perhaps memories of the Boer War were too close. The Hague Conference was the last to be held before the War. The British Group was represented by a large delegation of 21, and by then Weardale was Council President, a post which he held for some years.

Just before the outbreak of War the IPU had 23 member Groups and its meetings and conferences had become an important part of European political life. As has been seen a lot of the drive to increase the powers and prestige of the Union had originated in Westminster; indeed the British Group had played a distinguished role in the formative years of the Organisation. But the War ended practically all inter-parliamentary collaboration and very little is known of British Group activities between 1914 and 1918. However, regular payments continued to be made on a voluntary basis to the Union's funds. Also Weardale must have had contacts with the Union's Secretary General, Dr. Lange, who had moved the Bureau's headquarters from Brussels to neutral Oslo. Little else however, can be found in the records.

By reason of the fact that there had been no IPU meetings during the 1914-18 period Lord Weardale retained his position as President of the IPU Council. In November of 1917 he was asked by the Press to comment, in his capacity of Council President, on the Russian revolution. His reply is still worthy of quotation today. He stated that "he hoped the new regime would give to the one hundred and sixty million Russians those popular measures of freedom to which they are entitled under conditions guaranteeing ordered progress and above all widespread administration of reform".

The Group also held a general meeting in that November of 1917 but little is known of it; the year following however, the Group's officers: Weardale, Agg-Gardner, Collins and Maddison, put out a statement on the relations between the IPU and the soon-to-be-born League of Nations. It looked forward to a period of close collaboration. This was the first stand to be taken by any IPU Group on an important question which was to be the cause of long and heated debates at IPU meetings in the twenties.

Although there had been practically no Group activity during the War it is interesting to note that in 1919 the Secretary was able to report a "largely augmented membership" and in that same year the Group gave a lunch in the House of Commons for the IPU Secretary General at which Lord Robert Cecil spoke. Activity was renewing itself at Westminster and in 1921 the Group held three meetings and sent a delegation of twelve to the Stockholm Conference, the first to be held by the IPU since before the War. Only 12 countries were represented at that Conference with a mere 112 delegates. The French and Belgians were absent as they could not stomach the presence of a delegation from the Central Powers, i.e. Germany and her Allies. With this reduced participation there was little or no opposition to Lord Weardale's re-election as the Council's President. However, he had to resign through illness in the following year and died in 1923 at the age of 75. As the Group's report for that year stated "we suffered a heavy blow by the death of Lord Weardale whose tact and enthusiasm for the work of the Union did much to promote its interest amongst British parliamentarians".

Following Weardale's death, Lord Treowen was elected President of the British Group and Maddison continued as Secretary, although not for long as he resigned in 1925 having been Secretary since Cremer's death, in 1908. In the latter years of Maddison's secretaryship it is obvious that the Group was in decline. The yearly reports to Geneva amounted many times to no more than a one page letter. No details were given of what had transpired at Group meetings; there were no

accounts of delegations visiting Westminster or going abroad, and, finally, the reports on IPU meetings were to say the least sparse. Indeed, a report published in the *Arbitrator* mentions a visit paid to Geneva by the President and Secretary of the British Group to attend a League of Nations meeting, and to contact the International Peace Bureau, a body with which Maddison had close relations. No mention at all was made of visiting the IPU headquarters.

It is not surprising therefore that, after Maddison's resignation, the new Secretary (Hon), Colonel Vaughan Morgan, a member of the House of Commons, noted in his annual report for 1925 that it had been agreed that the British Group should be more closely identified than it had been recently with the Houses of Parliament. It was accordingly decided that "a measure of re-organisation should be entered upon". His report also noted that membership amounted to 286 in both Houses, a large number considering the inactivity. But the new Secretary looked forward to a "period of increased activity and usefulness". Indeed, reports for the next two or three years do show more signs of Group work. There were frequent meetings of the Executive Committee and detailed reports were written on the IPU Conferences in Paris and Berlin.

The Berlin meeting of 1928 attracted 475 delegates representing 38 Parliaments throughout the world. It was a record attendance.

At that time the contribution of the British Group to the Union's funds amounted to the same three hundred pounds which had originally been allocated before the War. But pressure had been exerted from Geneva to have this amount increased. No extra money was forthcoming from the Government so the Group added one hundred pounds from its own funds. But this had to be dropped in 1927 and so the Chancellor was asked, in a memorial signed by a large number of Group members, to have the grant made up to five hundred pounds. This was eventually done and then Britain was paying much the same as France and Germany.

While the 1906 London Conference had been a spectacular success for Cremer and the British Group, the invitation to return to London in 1930 presented to the Council by Commander Kenworthy did not result in a very good session. The first difficulty was the place of meeting. The Foreign Office had once again offered its "hall" (apparently the same which had been suggested in 1906). The Royal Gallery of the House of Lords was again available and a final suggestion was that the Conference should meet in the new LCC building across the river. Eventually, for reasons which are unclear, the Royal Gallery was again chosen. As a result the delegates were again faced with bad

acoustics and many could not even hear the speeches being made. Consequently, a number of delegates walked out and attendance throughout the Conference was sparse. In fact only 32 Parliaments were represented in London and the total number of delegates came to 439, very much less than the 1906 number of 617, which included British delegates. The British Empire was naturally enough well represented: South Africa had a delegation of six including, interestingly enough, Major Van der Byl, a name well-known in South Africa and Zimbabwe politics. Australia had four delegates, Canada and New Zealand only one each for some reason unexplained, and India four, one with an English name! The organisation of the 1930 Conference lay in the hands of Rennie Smith, who had succeeded Vaughan Morgan as Hon. Secretary of the Group. Another Smith, by name Gerard, was Secretary of the Organising Committee.

The session was opened on the morning of 16 July 1930 by Monsieur Fernand Bouisson, the Council President, and also the President of the French Chamber of Deputies. The Duke of Sutherland was immediately elected President of the Conference. Unfortunately the Duke had a death in his family during the course of the meetings and had to yield the Chair. However, he hospitably entertained delegations on the Sunday afternoon at his country house, Sutton Place, as there was no full day excursion arranged. But the Irish Group, one of whose delegates to the session was The McGillicuddy of the Reeks, invited delegates to Dublin after the end of the session.

One or two surprising details emerge from the circulars issued by the British Group for the Conference. Imperial Airways, an ancestor of British Airways, offered delegates a 10% reduction on the price of air tickets. Interpreters who met delegates at the various ports and London stations were dressed in the uniform of Messrs. Thomas Cook. Finally, as the session was held at the height of the London season – a fact to which reference was frequently made – delegates were warned that the particular hotel rooms which they had requested could not be guaranteed!

During the Conference parliamentarians were entertained by the Government at Lancaster House, visited Windsor Castle, attended a reception at the Guildhall and were given a banquet by the Government at the close of the session. Heads of delegations were also received by King George the Fifth. Lady Astor and Mr. Samuel Samuel entertained large numbers of delegates privately. From all contemporary accounts Lady Astor's reception was particularly well arranged and for the first time at an IPU social event there were a number of Press and London personalities present.

The Foreign Secretary, Mr. Arthur Henderson, spoke shortly after the opening of the Conference and the Prime Minister, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, took the floor at the closing session. He delivered an eloquent and witty speech which was interrupted half-way through by the sound of the division bells. Maintaining his *sang-froid* the Prime Minister remarked "Perhaps some Conservative Member would be good enough to pair with me". He then continued his speech which received a very warm welcome from delegates.

The subjects which were discussed at that London meeting were of some interest. They were: Control of International Trusts and Cartels; Security Problems: Implications of the Paris Pact of August 1928; Present Evolution of the Parliamentary System; The Problem of National Minorities. Most of these questions, usually under somewhat different names, are still today the concern of international conferences.

But the 1930 Conference could not be accounted a great success and this was primarily due to the lack of good technical facilities. The decision to meet in the Royal Gallery jeopardised the success of the meeting. The *Arbitrator* in its issue of September/October 1930 included a caustic article stating that "although the British delegation number 77 in the official list, in the meetings they were conspicuous by their absence. Attendance was deplorably slack. We had been promised the texts of the resolutions adopted but they came too late to be of use.". There were other remarks in similar vein. Perhaps the London Season had something to do with it.

Documentation on the activities of the British Group in the thirties is very limited. While the Union was itself increasing its political stature, the Group seemed moribund.

The only political figure in those days who apparently took a keen interest in Group activities was Sir Arthur Shirley Benn, later to become Lord Glenravel. He it was in 1933, as Chairman of the Group's Executive Committee who received the IPU Secretary General in London and entertained him to dinner at the House of Commons. The Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden, was at the dinner and made a speech. Leopold Boissier, a Swiss from an old Geneva family, had just succeeded Dr. Lange as Secretary General. It was the first and only occasion in the history of the Union that the Deputy had taken over the top post.

During the early thirties the Duke of Sutherland continued as President, but the impression is left that he was merely a rather glamorous figurehead. The Secretaryship was jointly held by Lord Scone and Victor Raikes, both members of the House of Commons.

At a Group meeting held in November 1934 it was decided to undertake an active campaign for increased membership. Little seems to have resulted as a year or so later membership stood at an all-time low: 76 Members of the House of Commons and 18 from the Lords. In 1936 Lord Glenravel took over the Presidency and R.A. Carey, M.P., the Secretaryship. He only lasted a year however as Capt. Leonard Plugge was appointed in 1937. Glenravel and Plugge put new life into the Group and membership increased to over 200. The new Secretary commenced the preparation of reports on the work accomplished by British delegations at IPU Conferences, and these were sent regularly to Geneva. He also paid a more or less official visit to Egypt which received a lot of favourable publicity. Lord Glenravel died early in 1938 and the Group invited Winston Churchill to be the new President. He gave the matter some consideration but eventually declined the offer.

In 1939, the year of the outbreak of World War Two, there was a further change in Group leadership as Colonel Arthur Evans was elected Chairman. At the Oslo Conference of 1939 he gained a seat on the Executive Committee of the Union and this election was to prove very important as will now be seen.

The Council's President, Count Carton de Wiart of Belgium was in poor health and remained in his country after it had been occupied. And after Baron Lange's death, Arthur Evans as the sole remaining member of the Executive with any freedom of movement thus became the Acting Council President and with commendable foresight agreed with Boissier, the IPU Secretary General, to set up a parallel IPU office in London. It was entitled "Office of the President of the Council and the Executive Committee (ad interim)" and was located at 46 Brook Street.

Surprisingly enough the IPU decided to go ahead with a Council and Committee session in March 1940 and the British Group sent a delegation of five. The members prepared a detailed report on the meetings and this was duly sent to Boissier in Geneva by the indefatigable Captain Plugge. However, a note in the Inter-Parliamentary Bulletin for May/December 1940 says that "postal communications with London have become slow and difficult". No doubt true as in early 1942 we find a "Note for information of the Censor" appended to one of Arthur Evans' letters to Boissier. But this same letter indicated that the Group was far from inactive. There was a meeting, well attended according to the letter, in February and some new officers were elected. Lord Cranbourne became President, Evans remaining Chairman, and Mr. Rhys Davies was made joint Hon. Secretary with Plugge. The

Group had given a dinner for General Sikorski and Polish parliamentarians in Britain, and the Chinese Ambassador addressed the Group on the situation in the Far East. Peterborough wrote about the Group's efforts in the *Daily Telegraph* of 26 February 1942 as follows, "In spite of the War the IPU is struggling to maintain an active existence. Colonel Arthur Evans, the Chairman of the British Group is the only member of the international executive free to act. He tells me that the Union's headquarters in Geneva, cut to the bone because of the need for economy, has been encouraged by the receipt of the 1942 subscriptions from the American and British Governments."

The luncheon given for General Sikorski and the Polish parliamentarians was held at Claridges and there were 156 people present. The meal cost ten shillings and sixpence per person and as there had been an underestimate of the number of guests the Group made a small loss. However, the function was accounted a success and it was decided to go ahead with further luncheons of this nature to draw together members of the British Group and their colleagues from European Parliaments then exiled in London. Arrangements were quickly made to invite the Dutch and Belgians, but this time at the Dorchester where the meal was only eight shillings and sixpence, and these efforts led to further initiatives as we see in a letter from Evans to Geneva on 5 August 1942 when he says "The British Group is very anxious to arrange a Conference of all the different Groups whose Governments are now domiciled in this country, plus the Americans". Evans certainly had the cause of the Union at heart as on the 11th September of that same year he made a long speech on the motion for the adjournment in the Commons going over in some detail the entire history of the Union and urging that a delegation from the US Congress should visit Britain, and combine this visit with his conference suggestion.

At the end of 1942 the Secretary of the Group, Captain Plugge, who had rendered yeoman service, was reported to have left the country, presumably on war service. Not so long afterwards, however, he was appointed Evans' Liaison Officer to the new European Sub-Committee (see below).

The vacancy for joint secretary, Rhys Davies was still in office, was filled by Sir Adam Maitland, also an M.P. It is to be noted that up to this time all the Hon. Secretaries of the Group had been Members of the House of Commons with the sole exception of Fred Maddison who had been a Member and had then lost his seat. This state of affairs was to change within the next few years.

Throughout 1943 the Acting President of the Council, Colonel Evans was constant in maintaining Union presence in London. In

October he convened a meeting of representatives of all National Groups with members in London. The *Times*, in reporting the meeting, mentions the following countries as being represented: Belgium, Norway, Czechoslovakia, France, Netherlands, Yugoslavia, Luxembourg and Poland. Few could cavil that this was not a fairly representative European gathering, and such a meeting could not have taken place anywhere else in the world at that time. The meeting decided to set up a European Sub-Committee which was to "aid by its actions and, eventually by its advice, the Governments of all the countries represented in the work of reconstruction to be undertaken after victory had been achieved". The Chairman of this new committee was Mr. Robert Gillon, the President of the Belgian Senate.

However, Geneva was not too happy about the very considerable activities of Evans and the British Group and Boissier might have felt that the direction of the Union was slipping away from him, isolated as he was, in Geneva. For his part Evans was continually trying to get Boissier over to London where he hoped that he would head up the IPU office. However, it was very difficult for Boissier to leave Switzerland, especially as he had been mobilised into the Swiss Army. He was however, finally able to get to London towards the end of 1944 but then only for a brief visit.

One other interesting initiative that Evans took at this time was to pay a visit to the USA and there in the name of the British Group to present President Roosevelt with some mounted fragments of stone from the wreckage of the bombed Houses of Parliament. It was a dramatic gesture, and the visit to Washington was of the utmost value both for the Group and the Union.

At the end of 1943 the joint Secretaries of the Group, Rhys Davies and Maitland drew up a report for the preceding two years which, although produced in the middle of a war, was a model of its kind. Membership at that time came to more than 250, and to give some idea of the importance of the role of the British Group in the life of the Union one has to look no further than the following Press report of a reception given at the Admiralty. "A reception by H.M.G. was held at the Admiralty on 14 June 1944 in honour of the 'Occupied Countries Sub-Committee of the IPU' (Chairman: Mr. Robert Gillon, President of the Belgian Senate). Guests were received by the First Lord, the Secretary for the Dominions and Colonel Sir Arthur Evans, M.P., the Acting President of the IPU. There were some 400 guests, and Members of the British War Cabinet and other Ministers attended. Members of foreign Parliaments now domiciled in London were introduced to them by members of the British Group."

As the War drew to its end Evans was engaged in trying to improve the standing of the Group with regard to offices and accommodation in the Houses of Parliament. On 15 January 1945 he presented a strongly-worded but reasonable minute which stated *inter alia* "The Group has for a very long time felt at a disadvantage in having no definite office at the Palace of Westminster where the daily work of administration can be discharged and visitors from foreign Parliaments received, thereby returning the courtesies received abroad . . . Our present work has to be done in the Plan Room of the House of Commons . . . with no privacy or facilities for keeping records." One might add as a footnote to this heartfelt plea that the primary reason why no exact and precise archives of the British Group exist at Westminster is precisely because the Group always lacked a permanent office within the Houses of Parliament. It is gratifying to record that the following year two rooms in the Palace were placed at the disposal of the Group. It was a significant victory, and those same two rooms, with others, are still in use by the Group today.

At the Annual General Meeting of the Group in 1944 Evans expressed the wish to retire from the Chairmanship. But, in response to a unanimous appeal by the Group's Executive, reinforced by a special call from Boissier in Geneva, he withdrew his resignation. In the event it proved unfortunate since with the decimation of the Conservatives at the July 1945 General Election he lost his seat (Cardiff South) to a future Prime Minister, Mr. James Callaghan, and with that of course all his posts in the IPU. He did attend the Copenhagen meetings of April 1946 but merely to say adieu. There, at Copenhagen, he was most warmly thanked by the President of the Council, Count Carton de Wiart, who stated that "he had acted as his, the President's, substitute with such conspicuous success". All he received in thanks from the British Group for the really enormous amount of work he had accomplished during the war years was a letter from his successor as Chairman, Rhys Davis, saying that the Executive had placed on record their very sincere thanks for the excellent work he had done for the Group and the Union.

Since one Joint Secretary had been appointed Chairman, namely Rhys Davies, and the other, Adam Maitland, had lost his seat, two new appointments were needed. Peter Macdonald and V. McEntee, both M.P.s were elected. Macdonald only lasted a year and was replaced by Captain Marsden, another M.P. in 1946. But in the Group's Report for that year a new name is officially listed as "Secretary", as distinct from Honorary Secretary, by which the various Members of Parliament had been known. This was Lt. Commander Christopher Powell. His business

associate, Mr. Charles Watney had for some years acted as Secretary of the Group although he did not have the title. Thus this was the first time since the far off days of Maddison that somebody outside Parliament was to be in a position to play a major role in the workings of the Group. It was a significant appointment, as once it had been made, and later renewed, the powers of the Joint Hon. Secretaries dwindled until their posts disappeared completely in 1955.

Whether or not it was on Powell's initiative — he was reported to be a young and forceful personality — the fact remains that the Group's Report for the year 1946 was well edited and prepared and, historically, the first printed Report since 1913, a gap of thirty three years. The Report in question was printed by Heffers of Cambridge as were all subsequent Reports until Powell resigned unexpectedly in 1949.

The 1946 Report starts off with a pregnant phrase: "The membership just prior to the General Election of 1945 was approximately 270 in both Houses of Parliament. The present membership stands at 475, of whom 395 are Peers or M.P.s and 80 are former members of Parliament and Honorary Members only of the Group". As will be seen numbers had increased considerably, although the figure of 80 Honorary Members appears rather large.

At the beginning of the year the first part of the first session of the General Assembly of the United Nations was being held at Central Hall, Westminster. At the end of January 1946 the Group entertained about fifty parliamentarians who were members of their delegations to the UN Assembly, in the House of Commons. The Prime Minister and Lord Cranbourne, the British Group's President both made short speeches. This was the only occasion when representatives of UN delegations to the Assembly were entertained within the precincts of Westminster. But the Group was now also active in a new direction, namely, developing closer relations with the Government. In February a deputation from the Group waited on the Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, to put forward the following points, that in view of the Group's subsequent history are worth quoting in full. They were:

- (1) That the Government and especially the Foreign Office, take a closer interest in the IPU and the British Group in particular;
- (2) That increased financial aid should be forthcoming from the Government for the work of the Group;
- (3) That assistance from Government hospitality should be at the disposal of the Group on appropriate occasions,
- (4) That transport and other facilities be provided by the Government for delegates from the Group attending IPU Conferences abroad.

In reply Bevin expressed his strong sense of the value of the IPU and the Group which "while consisting of all parties and being independent of the Government had a useful part to play in international relations".

THE GROUP AS MARKET LEADER

Before taking up the theme of this chapter it is perhaps of interest to digress a little and examine how Boissier in Geneva, and Carton de Wiart in Belgium, picked up the IPU at the end of the war and put it into operation once again. Boissier with courage and determination, but with very little money — his staff were then being paid at minimal rates, little more than what Geneva shop assistants were receiving — went ahead with a convocation circular as early as June 1945 for a Council session that September. Fortunately he had persuaded the Geneva authorities to place the Palais Eynard at the disposal of the Union. Only ten countries were represented but nevertheless Council and Committee meetings were held, and first steps were taken towards a new programme of work for the IPU. The British delegation at this first post-war session consisted of Mr. Rhys Davies, the Chairman, Major J. Milner, the Vice Chairman, Mr. Vernon Bartlett and Capt. J. Marsden.

After this session the Union was again on the way forward and the year following, 1946, a normal Spring Session of the Council and Study Committees was held at the invitation of the Danish Group in the Copenhagen Parliament. Sixteen countries were represented in what was a lively and interesting session. Sir Arthur Evans who was there, as he said, “as a displaced person”, made a felicitous speech of thanks to the Danish Group. The Council President, de Wiart, expressed the hope that Evans would soon return to the ranks of the Union. It was a pleasant swan song for the Colonel.

Boissier, who had been unanimously re-elected at the Geneva meetings for a further four-year term of office, had achieved his objective of putting the Union on its feet again. Copenhagen was followed by the Cairo Conference the following year and that, in its turn, brings us back to the theme of this chapter.

The chairmanship of the Group changed at the end of 1946 and Rhys Davies was succeeded by Major Milner whose name had been becoming increasingly important in Group activities. At the Committee meetings held at St. Moritz in the Spring of 1947 he made a powerful speech on the future organisation of the Union, and the points which he brought up are still of interest today. He urged that the Statutes of the IPU should be brought up to date; that there should be more

National Groups and those that were in existence should be reinforced; that useful resolutions should be submitted in advance of Conferences so as to give opportunities for prior consideration; that personal contacts between Members of Parliament belonging to the Union should be improved. All these points have been taken up and acted upon over the past thirty years.

Before passing to activities at Westminster in 1947 reference must be made to the political achievement of the British Group at the Cairo Conference (not to be repeated with such style until the Madrid Conference of 1976). This was the unanimous election of Viscount Stansgate to the Presidency of the IPU Council. The sequence of events was remarkable. In 1945, and even early in 1946, there is no mention in the records of Viscount Stansgate as a member of the British Group. Suddenly his name appears as a "must" for membership of the delegation which would represent the Group at the Cairo Conference. Actually the IPU Secretary General had hinted at the Copenhagen meetings in 1946 that a British candidate to succeed the Belgian, Count Carton de Wiart, who was retiring, would be acceptable. The Group made its first approach to Lord Cranbourne with Boissier's full approval. However, Cranbourne was doubtful and eventually declined. Then, in October 1946 it was decided at a somewhat sparsely attended meeting of the British Group's Executive Committee, to make an informal approach to Lord Stansgate who agreed to become the Group's candidate. No doubt the Labour Government with its large majority in the Commons at that time had taken a hand in his sudden projection on the Inter-Parliamentary scene. Perhaps by reason of age he was given no post in the Labour administration formed after the 1945 election and his sudden appearance as the British candidate for the Council presidency could have been a quid pro quo.

Stansgate had been a Member of Parliament for more than thirty years and had known Randal Cremer personally. He had been a good House of Commons man and a Member of the Labour Government in the inter-war years. He was also a dedicated internationalist, though at this stage he knew little about the Union. He had a gift for languages and had been educated in Paris; his wife spoke Hebrew and one of his sons Russian. Thus, he seemed ideally qualified to be President of the IPU.

Stansgate was duly elected and received very good notices in the British and European Press. He quickly established a close relationship with the IPU Secretary General, Leopold Boissier, and from then on took the Union to his heart. Perhaps it might be more realistic to say that he made the Organisation his political vehicle, a remark made in

no disparaging sense. In fact he became so involved with the Union that he did not relinquish office until the London Conference of 1957.

After his election Stansgate became somewhat distanced from the British Group, despite the fact that the strict international objectivity of the Council President was not so closely enforced then as it was to be in later years. Nevertheless, the valuable contacts which he made had, naturally enough, a direct influence on the Group and helped it to achieve its predominant position in the post-war years and well into the fifties.

The new President took up his duties with verve and determination. In June of 1947 he went to Geneva to acquaint himself with the workings of the Bureau, and at the same time endeared himself to the staff as those who are still alive can recall. After Geneva he went to the Swiss capital where he was the guest of the Government, a signal mark of appreciation at that time. Later he went to Paris to meet Alben Barkley, the President of the United States Group, and also to entertain Julian Huxley, then Director General of UNESCO. But it was in England above all, with the entrée which he had to the diplomatic world and London society, that he went to work with contacts at all levels to ensure that the Union was better known and its international standing improved.

But, to return to the very important work which the Group accomplished in 1947. Early in the year the Council President, Carton de Wiart, and the Secretary General were guests of the Group. The Speaker's dinner for the Union guests was attended by the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Shortly after this visit the Group received delegations from the Supreme Soviet — the first time a Russian delegation had visited Britain — and the Czech Parliament. Later in the year there were delegations from Turkey, Belgium and France. In addition small groups of Members visited Finland, Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Romania and Austria. It must have been the busiest year for visits in the Group's history. Bi-lateral Committees had also commenced work and four were then in operation, with France, Belgium, Czechoslovakia and Italy.

As the *Inter-Parliamentary Bulletin* remarked at this time "the British Group continues to be extremely active". The Group's contacts were not only confined to Europe. In the same year a goodwill mission was sent to visit the Latin American Parliaments. It had conspicuous success and was in a way directly responsible for the formation of National Groups in Brazil and Argentina. Indeed a letter from the Brazilian Senate stating that a Group was going to be formed was sent

first to London before the news was conveyed to IPU headquarters in Geneva.

In 1948 at the British Group's annual meeting the Foreign Secretary, Mr. Ernest Bevin, delivered a speech in which he underlined the peculiar strength of the Union in the following words: "It is essential to develop personal contact between the electors of different countries through their elected representatives who are not controlled nor given instructions; nor having any official policy to carry out, can speak with greater freedom and can establish more intimate and closer relations than official circles could possibly do". Bevin was a notable Foreign Secretary and he was of course speaking in the halcyon internationalist days of the immediate post-war era. One could well question whether any of his free-thinking ideas are still relevant in the world of today.

In that same year, 1948, the Group received visits from no fewer than seven European parliamentary delegations. In those post-war years everybody wanted to visit the Mother of Parliaments which, although bombed, had continued to conduct the affairs of the Nation until victory had been achieved.

At the Union's spring session of that year in Nice the Group had a delegation of ten present, including Mr. Elwyn Jones, later Lord Chancellor, who played a very active role in the work of the Union, and was one of the best Committee rapporteurs in the post-war years. In a letter to Sir Frank Sanderson, also a long-time friend, and who remained the Union's Financial Adviser for many years, Boissier, the Secretary General wrote, *inter alia*. "Allow me to say how greatly I appreciate the active part taken by British delegates to Nice . . . the British proposal relating to the development of the Union was adopted by the Council and will be the subject of a detailed exposé in the Bureau's Report. Further, the peace appeal, which was unanimously adopted by representatives of all the 24 Parliaments present was also due to British initiative."

There was little doubt that at that time the joint efforts of James Milner, the Chairman, Christopher Powell, the Secretary, and Stansgate on the sidelines, had placed the Group in a position of outstanding influence. This continued to be reflected in Union life up to the 1957 London Conference.

There was another field of parliamentary work in which the U.K. Parliament, as opposed specifically to the Group was very active. This was in the Association of Secretaries General of Parliament. This body, consisting of learned clerks from Parliaments in all parts of the world, had been holding their meetings at the same time as the Union and from 1948 had commenced the independent publication of their

journal *Constitutional and Parliamentary Information* chiefly containing the texts of New Constitutions adopted by National States. The first President of the Association after the war was the then Clerk of the House of Commons, Sir Gilbert Campion, who served until the 1949 Stockholm Conference. At that time the Association's meetings were attended by clerks of 15 different Parliaments. That number has at least tripled in the Association's sessions of the seventies.

Towards the end of 1949 the Group was to be hit by a severe blow, the resignation of their zealous and efficient Secretary, Commander Powell. He resigned for reasons which were parliamentary but not concerned with his work for the British Group. There was a statement, in fact two, by the Speaker in the House of Commons on the affair. In his first statement the Speaker confused the IPU in Geneva with the British Group. Indeed Boissier sitting quietly at the IPU headquarters in Geneva, must have been surprised to find that he was apparently resigning! However, the second statement on 15 December cleared this mistake up. Perhaps the fairest comment on this affair is to quote the substance of the remarks made by Mr. Speaker. He said, *inter alia*, "The members of the Group would wish him to say that Mr. Powell had served the Group with efficiency and zeal. The point of his statement was that undesirable or unfair results might arise from this post being held by anyone doing professional work for Members of the House and at the same time work for outside organizations or bodies who might be concerned with opposing or promoting various items of parliamentary business, and not that such undesirable or unfair results had in fact accrued." So Powell departed and was succeeded by Sir Drummond Shiels, a former Member of the House of Commons and a junior Minister at one time. He had also been Secretary of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and had a medical degree. He was an older man than Powell and the Group obviously wanted a solid figure. His letters to Geneva were full and informative without revealing anything of very great interest. The Group Annual Reports continued to be well edited and well printed and this, it might be added, continues up to the present day.

At this time a man who was to make a name for himself in the Union appears on the Group's stage as one of the Joint Honorary Secretaries. This was Col. Stoddart Scott M.P. who had seen service with the RAMC and had a Scottish background although he sat for a Yorkshire constituency. As we shall see he became a forceful chairman.

In 1950 the membership of the Group came to close on 600, with 360 from the Commons. The Group sent a delegation of some twenty to the Dublin Conference that year: a very active group among whom

were the Clerk of the Parliaments, the former Clerk of the House of Commons, Lord Campion, the Clerk Assistant, Edward Fellowes, and David Lidderdale, the last two of whom remained close friends and supporters of the Union for many years. During this same year the Marquess of Salisbury resigned from the Presidency of the Group and was succeeded for the first time in the Group's history, by the Speaker of the Commons, Col. Clifton Brown who, the year following went to the Lords as Viscount Ruffside.

Stansgate was re-elected at Dublin for a further term and, as usual presided over meetings of the Executive Committee and the Council. At about this time his most important work for the Union was in London where, through high level diplomatic contacts he was endeavouring to bring the East European countries into the Union. There can be little doubt that without the discreet persuasion exercised by Stansgate and his easy and close contacts with all East European parliamentarians and Government officials, these countries would not have joined the Union so soon. Indeed, Stansgate was informed, probably before Geneva had been told, by means of a personal 'phone call from the USSR Ambassador in London, that the Soviet Union intended to join the IPU. It is perhaps surprising to consider that in 1949, for example, Stansgate would be perhaps the only senior British politician attending an East European country's National Day party! No wonder, therefore, that he had their ear.

By reason of his activities on behalf of the Union the British Group itself became known better and benefited from the fact that the President of the Council was an active figure in London's political and diplomatic life. Of course, it must not be forgotten that the diplomatic and political round in London in the late forties and early fifties was vastly different from what it is today. At that time Britain was a Great Power and a number of overseas countries and territories depended to a large extent on British influence and support. Political ideas and expertise in London were of great importance to every Ambassador accredited to the Court of St. James.

In 1951 Col. Stoddart Scott took over the chairmanship which he retained until after the London Conference of 1957. In that year one of the Group's Vice Chairmen died, the Earl of Perth, who as Sir Eric Drummond had been the first Secretary General of the League of Nations. A significant departure in delegation visits was made in September 1951 when a group of eight went to the Bonn Parliament. It was the first visit paid to West Germany since the end of the war. The leader of the delegation, Arthur Woodburn, addressed members of the Bundeshaus in German.

The year following, the Group was to lose its Secretary, Sir Drummond Shiels, who died. In his place Mr. Michelson was appointed although he did not retain the post for very long, as early in 1954 a distinguished soldier, Major General Dimoline took over the position. As the combination of Milner and Powell in the immediate post-war years produced a strong British Group and first class delegations at IPU Conferences, so the partnership of Stoddart Scott and Dimoline had the same effect. Both were concerned to see a strong British presence in the IPU and they knew very well that big political names meant favourable publicity for the Group as a whole. IPU audiences listen attentively when there is somebody speaking with a well-known political reputation. One has only to think of Herbert Morrison at Rio, Peter Thorneycroft at Warsaw, Emmanuel Shinwell at Nice and Elwyn Jones at various meetings.

The advent of Stoddart Scott and Dimoline was preceded by a change in Geneva when Boissier, who had been with the Union for forty years, an extraordinary span, decided to resign. His place was taken by André de Blonay, also from Geneva, but of a distinguished Vaudois family. Blonay and his staff were to combine well with the British Group leadership and there was a good sense of contact between London and Geneva.

The first sign of a very slight crack in the power of the British Group came, oddly enough, at the 1957 London Conference. Stoddart Scott, or Malcolm as he was universally known in all Union circles, including Moscow, did not top the poll in the Council vote for recommending candidates for the Executive Committee. It was the first indication of the rise of the Third World plus Communist vote, which if, of course, predominant today not only in the Union but throughout practically all international organisations. With a little help from his friends, Austrians in particular, Malcolm was handsomely in the lead the day following in the Conference vote.

Having now mentioned the London session, events must be taken in their proper order. Both the Chairman and Secretary were anxious to have a Union conference in London once again. The last, as we have seen, was in 1930, and it was not a particularly auspicious occasion.

The invitation to the London Conference was presented to the President of the Council with more than a touch of parliamentary style by Stoddart Scott, at the session held at Nice in April 1956. The Conference was blessed with good weather in September and attracted no fewer than 48 Groups and 426 delegates, a post-war record for Union Conferences. The Queen and Prince Philip had, graciously interrupted their sojourn at Balmoral so that Her Majesty could be

present at the inaugural ceremony in Westminster Hall and declare the Conference open. The scene in the great Hall on that sunny September morning was spectacular and the whole ceremony was televised for the first time and described by Richard Dimbleby in his inimitable fashion.

The Queen opened her speech with the following remarks: "This great Hall of Westminster is the birthplace of British parliamentary institutions. The first Parliament was summoned here seven hundred years ago and many great events in the history of Parliament and the nation have taken place within these walls. This Hall bears witness to the durability of the system and it is therefore a most suitable choice for this meeting of the Inter-Parliamentary Union." Other speakers at the inaugural ceremony were Stansgate, briefly, and the Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan, who paid some pretty compliments to Her Majesty.

At the close of the ceremony the Queen received Heads of Delegations and their wives in the Speaker's rooms. It had been a memorable scene and was much in contrast to the rather drab and business-like affair in Church House across the road where all the plenary sessions were held. Council and Committee sessions took place in committee rooms of the House of Commons. While speaking of facilities it might be said that the 1957 London Conference was the last truly amateur — to use the word in its best sense — session held by the IPU. It was organized on a very small budget and costs were kept to the minimum. The Treasury Grant was for £12,000 and expenditure came to £11,848. All the information services were left in the capable hands of the WRVS. Some things went wrong but all was accepted by delegates with very good grace and they were all obviously very pleased to be in London. Stoddart Scott and Dimoline had worked very hard indeed on this Conference and their efforts had been rewarded. Stoddart Scott was President of the Conference and presided over every plenary session without exception in morning dress, the last time surely that this ever occurred in the Union.

Naturally enough a lavish series of receptions and excursions had been arranged. On the opening day there was a reception in the acoustically infamous Royal Gallery where the two previous London Conferences had been held. The Government invited delegates to St. James's Palace where Harold Macmillan received the guests, supported by the Chancellor, Peter Thorneycroft, and the Foreign Secretary, Selwyn Lloyd. A former Prime Minister was also present in the person of Clement Attlee. Among other events were a river trip on the Sunday from Westminster Pier to Greenwich where there was an alfresco lunch; the concert in Festival Hall, where the 1975 Con-

ference was to take place, with Isaac Stern as the soloist, and the Lord Mayor's reception in the Guildhall, an essential item for all major conferences in London. In addition to these general events Lord and Lady Davidson had organised an excellent programme for the ladies attending the Conference. This was one of the first occasions in IPU history when delegate's wives — they numbered over 200 — had been given their own part in the session. They visited the Tower, Westminster Abbey, Hampton Court, Syon house, had tea in Parliament with Lady Stansgate (unfortunately Stansgate himself had been taken ill shortly after the opening ceremony and took no further part in the Conference) and attended a fashion show and a Cinerama performance.

It was — all in all — a well-organised and successful session. Two happenings on the marge of the Conference are worthy of record. The first was the special conference message from Sir Winston Churchill which read as follows:

“Since the Inter-Parliamentary Conference last met in London, twenty-seven years ago, free parliamentary institutions have confronted and have triumphantly overcome the heaviest assault ever made upon them.

I rejoice that at this meeting the IPU is stronger than ever before, and particularly that it now contains representatives of the Parliaments of many nations which have recently achieved independence, as well as newcomers from older Assemblies which have decided to join the Union.

Our Parliament has survived because it made itself the spokesman not of government but of the people. In the fiercest clash of debate we have jealously guarded the right of every Member freely to speak for his constituents and for himself. If your Conference will follow this tradition, it can make a significant contribution to toleration between ideologies and understanding between nations. Thus alone can freedom endure and mankind live in peace.”

The other somewhat unusual conference ceremony was to lay a wreath on the bust of Sir William Randal Cremer. The bust in question, which is a replica of that standing in front of the Peace Palace at The Hague, was brought specially from the Geffrye Museum in Shoreditch for the purpose. All heads of delegations attended the brief but touching ceremony to honour the memory of the co-founder of the Union.

There was finally on the closing day of the conference a very special adieu for Viscount Stansgate. A year before he had announced his intention to resign the presidency and the London meeting was to be his last. Congressman Cooley, in making the presentation to Stans-

gate said that "the Union had never had a greater champion" and went on to propose him as Honorary President of the IPU. This suggestion was, interestingly enough, seconded by the head of the USSR delegation, J.I. Paletskis and carried by acclamation. The leave-taking gift to the outgoing President was a short wave radio with which, as Stansgate put it himself, "I can listen to the voices of my friends from all over the world." A plaque on the set bore some appropriate words which included the Tennyson quotation going back to the roots of IPU history: "In the Parliament of Man, the Federation of the World."

In describing the results of the Conference, General Dimoline felt that a large measure of its success lay in the British Group liaison officers attached to each delegation, and the excellent Ladies' programme. But there was also, one might stress, a lot of individual hard work done to a large extent on a voluntary basis, and it was this without any doubt which produced a very successful London session.

In London the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments were also meeting and had a record attendance. There were forty members representing thirty two different countries. The Association met under the chairmanship of Sir Edward Fellowes, the Clerk of the House of Commons, and it was of some interest that the Clerk of the Ghana National Assembly attended for the first time. He was the first African member, south of the Sahara.

In the latter years of the fifties the British Group continued to be very active. The chairmanship changed hands, John Tilney taking over from Stoddart Scott, who however continued to serve on the Union's Executive Committee. In the winter of 1959 the Group had invited the Executive and two Sub-Committees to hold their sessions at Westminster. Meetings were held in a committee room of the House of Lords and delegates were suitably impressed with the surroundings. The Speaker gave a dinner and the Government a lunch at Lancaster House, but what most impressed members of the Executive was the Doctors Day dinner given in the Hall of the Merchant Taylors Company in Threadneedle Street. Finally, the Chairman, Tilney entertained all delegates in his house. The Group had certainly gone out of its way to make members of the Union's Executive welcome in London, and it was not altogether surprising to find that the *Inter-Parliamentary Bulletin* in commenting on the work of the Group in general said "Thanks to the efforts of the British Group the activities of the IPU are being followed in London with increased interest".

The year 1959 was also important for the Group in another way as for the first time since before the War an IPU Conference was held in Eastern Europe at Warsaw. The Group sent a large delegation of 20

members, amongst whom were Thorneycroft, Shinwell, Elwyn Jones, Dodds Parker, Mervyn Pike and other well-known names in the House of Commons. The delegation played a forceful role in Warsaw and upheld the strength of the Group. One tragedy marred the session: this was the death of Douglas Gordon, one of the Clerks of the House of Commons and a Member of the Association. He died in a Warsaw hospital.

It was generally agreed by the British delegation that the Polish group had made a very good job of organising the Warsaw meeting and suitable compliments were paid, both personally and through the medium of the Group's Annual Report. Following Warsaw Stoddart Scott attended the Executive meeting in Moscow and during an official tour of the Supreme Soviet building asked the never-to-be-forgotten question "Where are the seats of the Opposition?" The quip was taken in good part by his Soviet hosts. Indeed Stoddart Scott was popular in Moscow, the more so as he went there with his wife and son.

At the end of the fifties it is perhaps worth noting the growth of the Affiliated Groups, or Bilateral Groups as they were referred to before. Their numbers had increased to just over 20, each having its own particular activities during the course of each year with the particular interested country. All these Groups maintained close contact with the Ambassador of the country concerned in London. It is certain that these bi-lateral contacts contributed, and still do, towards closer relations between Westminster and a large number of foreign Parliaments.

More changes were under way in the Group as in May 1962, Tilney's term of office expired and his place as Chairman was taken by Sir Herbert Butcher, who also held the thankless job of Chairman of the Kitchen Committee of the House of Commons. Tilney led the delegation to the Spring session held in Rome, and among the members was Peter Smithers who later became a Minister and subsequently Secretary-General of the European Assembly in Strasbourg.

However, later in the year Butcher was the head of the Group's delegation to the second conference to be held in Brazil within a space of four years. It had been intended to meet in Buenos Aires, and in fact the Union's Assistant Secretary General had mapped out in agreement with the Argentines a remarkable conference programme which included a dramatic opening ceremony in the famous Colon Opera House. But the Military intervened and the Argentine Congress was suspended.

The Brasilia Conference will never be forgotten by anyone who

attended, as it took place in the middle of the Cuban missile crisis. Many delegates spent long weary hours making international calls on telephones which, in the brand new capital, were not ultra efficient. The British delegation, in common with others of a like mind, worked hard to have the Conference adopt a resolution on the Cuban crisis, and that on the Sino-Indian frontier. A reasonably worded text was finally adopted unanimously. Before the session concluded its work there was a personal reply to the resolution from the US President, John Kennedy.

Another unforgettable moment at Brasilia was the lavish dinner given by the Brazilian Group in the Hotel Nacional. In the middle of the meal all the lights fused. British delegates, and all others, were taken aback but kept their *sang froid*. In the end candles were brought and no delegates moved. In a way it was a parliamentary occasion of calm and responsibility, difficult to see happening in the world of today.

The Group's Report for 1962 had this to say about the Brasilia meeting "It was an historic occasion in the parliamentary life of Brazil as, for the first time, the new Federal Buildings were being used for a meeting which gathered together parliamentarians from all parts of the world: there were 352 delegates representing 48 different Parliaments." At Brasilia Professor Codacci Pisanelli's term of office as Council President came to an end — he had succeeded Stansgate in London — and for the first time in the Union's history a Latin American was elected President. He was Ranieri Mazzilli, then President of the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies.

Throughout all these years there had been a constant stream of foreign parliamentarians arriving on visit at Westminster, and British M.P.s proceeding abroad. The foreword to the 1963 Report notes that there had been a 50% increase that year making a total of six inward and the same number of outward delegations. As a matter of interest the outward delegations went that year to Liberia, Bulgaria, Ireland, Mexico and Belgium. Those inward came from Romania, Netherlands, Colombia and Hungary (the first since the War). Membership of the Group at that time came to 802 and at the Annual General Meeting the Minister of State at the Foreign Office had this to say: "the Foreign Office was glad to help British Group delegations at Conferences and no assurance was needed of its continued strong interest and support. The FO was grateful for the admirable way in which British parliamentarians had helped at so many gatherings to reflect, lucidly and persuasively, the views held in this country by members of the various political parties." Encouraging words, one might say, from Whitehall.

The year following was another in which there were a large number of changes in the Group, owing mainly to elections. First the new Prime Minister, Sir Alec Douglas Home, had taken over the ex-officio presidency from Harold Macmillan. But he was not to hold the post for long as later in the year Harold Wilson took over. At the same time the Chairmanship changed and Edward Mallalieu succeeded Sir Herbert Butcher. Of course Dimoline remained and this illustrates the value of having the post of Secretary filled professionally by somebody not a member of Parliament. In this connection it is interesting to consider the methods of appointing Group Secretaries throughout the IPU. In Britain, as we have seen, for a number of years now a qualified man is appointed from outside Parliament and paid a salary for his work. This is a form of appointment found only in a few other Groups. Another method is to appoint one of the Parliament's Clerks to the post. His salary is, of course, paid by Parliament according to the salary scale in force. This method, although very common in IPU Groups has the disadvantage of leaving the Clerk in question rather high and dry if he wishes for promotion. The system works well with small Parliaments where the Secretary General or Clerk of the Parliament is usually the Secretary of the Group. Finally, there is the method, used by the British Group up to 1955, of appointing an M.P. to the post. Here there is no question of salary but there are all the disadvantages of elections, lack of time and a rather part-time atmosphere. Not many Parliaments now follow this system.

The Spring session of 1964 was held in Lucerne. Nothing of great moment occurred although the Council's President, Ranieri Mazzilli, had to leave the session as he was called back to Brazil to take over the Presidency of his country on an interim basis (he was President of the Brazilian Lower House). It was the first time any such occurrence had taken place in the Union's history.

During the following year the Group suffered the loss of its long-time Secretary, General Dimoline. The Conference held in Ottawa was his last, but at it — and this must have pleased the General — the Group achieved a small triumph. Faced with the practically impossible task of finding wording which would receive support from the two sides involved in the Indo-Pakistan war, Mallalieu, the Group's Chairman, came up with a two-line text which merely transmitted the Conference's most sincere wishes to the UN Secretary General in his efforts to effect peace between India and Pakistan in accordance with the UN Charter. It was adopted unanimously.

In that same year the new international centre for parliamentary documentation was formally opened at the IPU's new headquarters

in the Parc de Budé not far from the UN's Palais des Nations. The Speaker of the House of Commons was the principal guest and speaker. The Library of the centre had been named after Sir William Randal Cremer and Lord Maybray-King in an eloquent address took Cremer's life as his text. The Speaker was accompanied by the Clerk of the Commons, Sir Barnett Cocks, who later served as a member and Chairman of the Governing Board of the new centre.

The Group had some difficulty in choosing a new Secretary and first appointed a former British Ambassador, Sir Andrew Noble, to the post. However, he only attended the Spring session of 1966 in Canberra — which it might be noted was excellently organised by the Australian Group, as was that of 1977 — before he left. In his place Brigadier Maurice Patterson was nominated. He stayed with the Group for some years and proved a popular Secretary.

In 1967 the Group was faced with a certain amount of financial pressure as there was a reduction in its grant from the Treasury. The number of delegations going abroad was reduced to two, however the number of inward delegations was not affected. There was an unexpected further saving in 1967 as the Conference which was to have been held in Moscow was cancelled for the following reasons.

No satisfactory assurances had been received from the Soviet Group as regards invitations being issued and visas given, for every Member Group of the Union. Despite letters from Geneva and a visit to Moscow by the Assistant Secretary General to find some form of compromise solution, as had been achieved between the Greeks and Albanians in 1960, nothing concrete emerged and the Russians appeared adamant that they would not invite the Group from South Korea. Therefore, the British member of the Union's Executive, Mallalieu, together with his Belgian opposite number on the Executive, asked for a special session to consider the question. This took place in Geneva on 3 June 1967 and, on Mallalieu's proposal, a short resolution was adopted unanimously, with a Soviet abstention, insisting that "in conformity with the Union's principles an Inter-Parliamentary Conference can only be held if all National Groups are invited and are assured of receiving visas or authorisation necessary for participation."

This decision was confirmed by the Inter-Parliamentary Council in a postal ballot — one of the very few to be held by the Union — by a massive majority: 73 votes in favour, 1 against and 8 abstentions. For various reasons, not necessarily political, 19 Groups did not take part in the voting. At the Council's session held at Geneva in September, the Executive's decision and the Council's actions were unanimously confirmed on the proposal of the Chairman of the British Group who

by this time was Albert Roberts.

Although everyone was disappointed not to go to Moscow nevertheless the initiative taken by the British Group — as of course Mallalieu had acted with the authority and support of the Group's Executive — had been of the utmost importance in maintaining the Union's principles underlying participation in Conferences. It is perhaps significant that there have been no such incidents since that time, nor have there been any further invitations from the USSR although of course the Union has held many trouble free and successful sessions in Eastern European countries since 1967. As the British Group's Report for 1967 remarked: "It is the first time since the foundation of the Union that a Conference has had to be cancelled under such circumstances, and it is to be hoped that it will be the last."

In the year following, the Group's annual meeting became involved in alterations and amendments to the Rules. These had originally been adopted at the beginning of the century and in the course of years had constantly been amended and re-drafted. In the late sixties and early seventies it had become obvious that a thorough revision of all the Rules was necessary. Thus, in 1976 during the Secretaryship of Brigadier Ward arrangements were made with one of the Senior Clerks of the Commons, Mr. Kenneth Bradshaw, to codify, overhaul and re-print the Rules in proper form. The last time this had been done was in 1960.

During 1968 there was again a financial crisis in the British Group and the number of outward delegations had to be reduced. However, the number of bi-lateral groups continued to increase and amounted to no fewer than 41. The Group was also trying to negotiate a smaller contribution to the IPU budget since devaluation of sterling made the Swiss franc amount very large. This was a continuing problem.

The Lima Conference in 1968 was a disturbed one for various reasons. First, it took place just after the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia, and a condemnatory resolution was adopted after some argument. Then there was the somewhat controversial re-admission of the South Vietnamese Parliament. Finally, there was the hard-fought battle for the Presidency of the IPU Council. The British Group supported the French candidate, André Chandernagor, who eventually won. On his return to Europe the new President came to London on his first official visit. It was a nice gesture and much appreciated by all concerned.

At Lima the delegation was particularly active and had some well known names among its members: Albert Roberts, the Chairman, John Hall, who was later to play a very active role in IPU work, Douglas

Houghton, Boyd Carpenter, Walker Smith, Shirley Summerskill and finally, Tom Williams who was to become the President of the IPU Council. As can be seen it was a powerful delegation. A few weeks after the delegation left Lima there was a military coup d'état and the Parliament was dissolved. This fact did not altogether surprise many members of the delegation who had witnessed the overpowering display of military might on the opening day of the Conference.

At the 1969 Delhi Conference the British delegation had the opportunity for the first time to participate in a BBC radio programme. The "Westminster at Work" series covered the activities of the delegation in New Delhi and extracts were broadcast of some of the principal British speeches. This publicity was particularly welcome to the Group as press and radio publicity with regard to the work done by British delegations at IPU Conferences is very hard to obtain. The same situation holds today when a complete IPU Conference will take place in a European capital and not a word about it will appear in the British Press.

At New Delhi John Hall was elected to a seat on the Union's Executive. He was to have a fruitful term of office. In 1973 he ran for the Council presidency and was only narrowly beaten by Dr. Dhillon of India.

We find that at the end of the sixties the Group's membership came to 813, including 548 from the House of Commons.

THE SEVENTIES

At the opening of the new decade there was another change in the chairmanship when Albert Roberts, who had enjoyed a successful three year term, yielded to John Hall. The latter was to play an important role, not only in the British Group, but also in the IPU up to the time of his death.

Among the numerous inward delegations in 1970 one was of especial interest; namely, that from the Nepalese Parliament. It was the first time that a delegation of parliamentarians, one of whom, the Deputy Speaker, was a lady, had come to London from the mountain fastness of Kathmandu. The visit was a direct result of the contacts made between British and Nepalese M.P's the previous year at the New Delhi Conference.

Another interesting initiative undertaken by the Group in 1970 was the organisation of a ceremony in Westminster Hall on 25 June to celebrate the signing of the UN Charter a quarter of a century before in the city of San Francisco. The Queen graced the ceremony with her presence and made a short speech. She was accompanied by Prince Philip. A former Prime Minister of Canada, Mr Lester Pearson, addressed the large gathering of Members from both Houses on the aims and accomplishments of the UN.

This same year of 1970 saw changes at Geneva where the Secretary General, André de Blonay, retired and was succeeded by Pio-Carlo Terenzio of Italy, who had previously been with Unesco in Paris. There was also another change as the Assistant Secretary General resigned and, as a result, the British Group became somewhat more distanced from the inner workings of the Union for the first time since 1957. Early in the new year the British Group entertained the new IPU Secretary General and in the course of his visit Mr. Terenzio had the privilege of being given a personally conducted tour of Chequers by the Prime Minister, Edward Heath.

In 1971 the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments lost one of their long-time Joint Secretaries as Kenneth Bradshaw resigned after fourteen years of devoted service to the Association. The meeting held that year, at the time of the IPU Conference in Paris, attracted no fewer than sixty Secretaries General from thirty-five different Par-

liaments. The opening of the Conference was held for the first time in IPU history at the Palace of Versailles in the presence of the French President, Georges Pompidou.

The year of 1973 proved to be a tumultuous one in the life of the British Group. First, Brigadier Patterson resigned after seven years hard work as Secretary. He was succeeded by Brigadier Paul Ward, who had had a distinguished Army career and had also served with the UN forces in the Congo during 1960/61.

Sir John Hall, who was knighted that year, as was also another former chairman Sir John Tilney, relinquished the chairmanship to Sir Harwood Harrison, who had been for long intimately concerned with the Group's work in the Union.

In the Foreword to the Group's Report for that year there appeared an interesting, if somewhat controversial paragraph regarding the best means of bringing about genuine inter-parliamentary collaboration. It read as follows: "For many members and from a purely national point of view perhaps the most valuable part of the work of the Group continues to be the exchange of parliamentary delegations. The opportunities then given for frank and friendly discussion is in some contrast to the speechifying in formal sessions of the Union when too often it seems as though the speaker is using only the brief prepared by his Government — more to establish a political line than to search for a solution." The latter criticism has also been made in *Parliaments Across Frontiers* (page 87).

Finally, in 1973 the IPU Conference which was to have been held in Santiago, had to be cancelled following the overthrow of the Allende regime. Instead, a Council session took place at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, duplicating the Council meeting of 1967 after the cancellation of the Moscow Conference. In like manner a similar difficulty arose as to the election of a Council President and the same solution was used; namely to elect an Acting President (Note: Council Presidents can only be elected during an Inter-Parliamentary Conference). John Hall came within a handful of votes of being elected, but the ultimate winner was Dr. Dhillon, the Speaker of Lok Sabha.

The year following there were two General Elections in Britain and this led to a certain amount of turmoil in the British Group. Early in the year at the annual meeting Sir Harwood Harrison was replaced as Chairman by Tom Williams. The latter was to go on to preside over the London Conference of 1975 and to be elected to the presidency of the IPU Council at the Madrid Conference of 1976. One odd result of the second General Election was that the British Group's delegation to the

Union's Tokyo Conference in October consisted entirely of Peers, the first time that such a situation had arisen in the Group. There had, it is true, been other occasions when an election has coincided with an IPU Conference but in those cases no delegation from Britain was sent. As a footnote it might be said that one of the Noble Lords, Cork and Orrery, made one of the most popular speeches at the Tokyo Conference when he said "Under Rule 26 of the Union I beg to move the closure of the debate". Perhaps as a just riposte to this stifling of parliamentary debate the Noble Earl in question lost his briefcase at the Madrid Conference of 1976.

Events in the Group during 1974 were leading directly towards the forthcoming London Conference of 1975. As Reg Prentice said at the annual meeting "this will call for the cooperation of a large number of individual Members of both Houses of Parliament". It certainly did as events transpired. At the Group's annual meeting held on 12 March 1975 it was disclosed that the special Government grant for the forthcoming London Conference had been agreed at a figure of £314,000. This very substantial sum proved in the end just about sufficient as final expenditure came to a little over £302,000.

Wisely, and at a very early stage, it had been decided to avoid the pitfalls of Church House, where the 1957 Conference had been held, and to hire the Royal Festival Hall. This proved to be a happy choice for delegates attending the Conference, although it proved to be somewhat of a headache from the security angle. In fact the security situation in general was not at all easy in September 1975.

Paul Ward had also, at an early planning stage, decided to mount a professional Conference and this was very evident in the Festival Hall itself where excellent conference facilities of every type were readily available to all delegates. Naturally enough, recourse had been made to professional conference organisers. But the Secretary of the Group benefited also from a large body of willing and effective volunteer helpers, whether they were Members and their Wives, Clerks drawn from both Houses and other volunteers outside Parliament who had been associated with the British Group or the IPU.

Detailed and meticulous planning was of course essential and a special conference office was operating in Palace Chambers for some time. This special office was all the more necessary to deal effectively with the 811 delegates accompanied by 340 wives and families from 67 National Groups who eventually attended the Conference.

The inaugural ceremony took place in Westminster Hall on the morning of 4 September in the presence of Her Majesty the Queen

accompanied by the Duke of Edinburgh. In the course of her speech the Queen said that "the parliamentary approach to world affairs offered the best hope of winning that concord between nations which had been sought for so long. It enabled change without violence, because its essence was a respect for the other person's point of view and a passionately-held belief in his right to express it."

Following the ceremony the Queen and Prince Philip attended a reception in Speaker's House at which heads of delegations were present. It was indeed an impressive opening for the Conference and many who were present were to recall a similar scene in Westminster Hall for the opening of the 46th Conference 18 years previously.

The business of the session commenced the same afternoon across the river in the Festival Hall. The first item was to elect a Conference President and as is normally the case this was the Chairman of the host Group, Tom Williams. However, he had a somewhat difficult start to his presidency by reason of the fact that the session was getting under way in a certain amount of political tension. This was caused by a somewhat controversial decision which had been taken by the Council at its spring session held in Sri Lanka — in a very modern conference complex equipped entirely by the Chinese. The decision was to admit at the London Conference as official observers representatives of the Palestine National Council, the parliamentary arm of the PLO. In the event however, and despite a lot of adverse Press publicity, the observers from the PNC were seated without incident. Indeed throughout the Conference no incidents of any seriousness occurred within the confines of the Festival Hall, and this was certainly a feather in the cap of the Metropolitan Police and the Conference officers.

Without going into too much detail of the social programme, which had been meticulously and imaginatively prepared it is nevertheless of historical interest to mention one or two particular events. The Guildhall reception and the Government dinner, served simultaneously at Lancaster House, Hampton Court, the Banqueting House and the New Hall at Lincoln's Inn, were noteworthy. There was little doubt however that the Group's foreign guests took away with them some unforgettable memories of the different Sunday excursions. The description appearing in the Group's annual report for 1975 gave a very good picture of the visits. "There was a choice of tours and all were fully subscribed. The weather was perfect. One group visited Blenheim Palace where they were met by the Duke of Marlborough and given a private tour. This was followed by a buffet luncheon in Magdalen College, Oxford, on the lawn in front of New Buildings. The College President, Dr. J. H. E. Griffiths welcomed the guests and gave them the pleasure of discussions

with him. The visitors were then given a guided tour of some other Oxford Colleges.

"Meanwhile another group was enjoying the hospitality of the Master of St. John's College, Cambridge where luncheon was given in the College Hall followed by a tour of other colleges and the Backs. The third group had departed for Waddesdon Manor and was given a private tour of this lovely country mansion with its superb collection of French furniture and decorative arts. They then repaired to the Bell Inn at Aston Clinton for luncheon and then toured the prettiest of the Buckinghamshire villages before returning to London. The remaining choice had been a visit to Brighton where our guests were able to tour the State Apartments in the Royal Pavilion before taking luncheon in the William IV room and Queen Adelaide Suite. This was followed by a walk through the Lanes where the famed antique shops attracted much attention."

Before leaving the social events one might add that there was an extensive and very varied programme for wives of delegates. All in all it had been a very well organised and most satisfactory Conference as all delegates who attended it agreed. The Bureau in Geneva wrote it down on their list as a "good" Conference and that was certainly high praise. It would well take its place alongside Randal Cremer's famous Conference of 1906.

The work of the London Conference was not particularly noteworthy. Familiar problems were re-hashed: non-proliferation of nuclear weapons; economic cooperation; independence of colonial countries and peoples and the Middle East situation had all been discussed at length before. However, Parliament's role in achieving effective equality of rights and responsibilities between men and women struck a new note, as did audio visual aids for the promotion of education.

At the conclusion of the session there was fairly general agreement among delegates that Tom Willams had done a good job in guiding and directing the work of the Conference. This was seen to be important at Madrid the year following when he came within a very few votes of being elected President of the Inter-Parliamentary Council outright on the first ballot. He won easily on the second and so for the first time since 1957 the Council had a British Member of Parliament as President. It was a considerable success for the British Group and its Secretary, Paul Ward, who had done so much effective lobbying.

The Madrid Conference of 1976 did, indeed, prove to be valuable for the Group as the delegation played a strong role in the plenary sessions while in the Association of Secretaries General meetings the

presence of the Clerk of the House of Commons and the Assistant Clerk ensured strong British participation. One result of the election of the Council President in Madrid was a change in the Chairmanship of the British Group as Ben Ford succeeded Sir Thomas Williams who had received his knighthood during the year. This particular year, 1976, is perhaps a good time to examine the Group membership and other related matters. There were 531 members from the Commons and 210 from the Lords giving a total of 845, if the 104 associated members are included. The number of bi-lateral Groups came to no fewer than 53.

These figures reveal very clearly the present importance of the British Group and the wide representation it has within Parliament. Indeed, it would be true to say that no parliamentary activities are conducted without participation of some Group members. From the point of view of the Union and the implementation of Union resolutions this situation is of especial importance. During 1976 Geneva circulated a questionnaire to all National Groups and one of the questions asked was "Steps taken by the Group to prepare its participation in Union meetings". The answer given by the British Group is informative and of general interest; it is reproduced below:

"Spring Meetings: Only members of the Executive Committee attend, chosen by the officers. They form the foundation of the delegation to the autumn conference.

"Autumn Conference: Remaining vacancies are advertised in the 'All Party Whip' circulated to all Peers and Members of Parliament. Those members of the Executive already included form a selection committee to analyse the applicants' previous membership of delegations and to make a choice reflecting a balance between the Government and Opposition Parties, with if possible a minority party representation.

"Advice is sought from the Foreign Office and an adviser attends preliminary discussions on the Agenda by the delegation. Contentious issues are raised in the Executive Committee".

One other event pertaining to the British Group also occurred in 1976. This was the bi-centenary of the United States of America. At the request of the Lord President of the Council a Committee was set up to organise reciprocal visits of British and US parliamentarians to celebrate the occasion. Brigadier Ward was selected to act as Secretary of this all party committee. His appointment was a distinction for the Group as a whole. The decision was made to offer a gift to the United States Congress which would be related to the foundation of American democracy. This gift took the form of a loan for one year of one of

the four copies of Magna Carta. This was to be accompanied by a replica wrought in precious metal, both to be housed in a casket of outstanding British design. The replica and casket to be gifts to Congress in perpetuity.

Paul Ward was, of course, closely associated with every move in planning the bi-centennial celebrations and he included a well-written and interesting account of the visits in the Group's annual report for 1976. It is sad to have to record his untimely death late in 1978. He had been an outstanding Group Secretary and a very popular personality as was evidenced by the large number of people from all walks of life attending his Memorial Service in St. Margaret's.

The year 1979 brought a General Election in May and the result led to a change in government. Traditionally, as is always the case with the British Group, the chairmanship changed hands so as to allow for a representative of the majority party in the House of Commons. Thus Mr. Ben Ford gave way to Mr. John Page. Shortly after taking up office the new Chairman had to lead the British delegation to the Union's Conference in Caracas.

The session in the Venezuelan capital proved to be, according to observers reports, somewhat disturbed politically. Be that as it may the Group played its usual prominent role as indeed other National Groups in the Union always expect it to do. Today the Group is strong and flourishing. With some 57 bi-lateral Groups and with delegations from abroad being regularly received at Westminster no one could deny that the seed planted by Randal Cremer ninety years ago has not grown into a healthy and enduring plant.

“THE BRIDGE-BUILDING DECADE”

By 1988 the British Group Secretariat was once again heavily involved in the preparations to host a Conference. September 1989 was to be the sixth occasion of London as the venue, and all concerned were determined that the significance of the Centenary of the IPU would not go unremarked.

The international climate had improved in a note-worthy fashion. Some commentators were already describing 1988 as a turning point in history, as significant in its way as the end of World War II or the end of the Napoleonic Wars, and the century of peace in Europe which had followed the Conference of Vienna in 1815. During 1988 Iran and Iraq had agreed an end to their 8-year war; Angola and Namibia had announced a ceasefire after 13 years of fighting; the USSR was pulling out of Afghanistan; Vietnam was withdrawing from Kampuchea; there was real progress under the UN in resolving the conflict in the Sahara; Greece and Turkey were negotiating their differences in Cyprus, and Libya had suspended its 20-year claim on Chad. Not least, the USA and USSR had ratified the INF Treaty and work had begun on the destruction of over 2,500 nuclear missiles.

Conflict was far from resolved in both Central America and the Middle East, and only history will tell whether the unfamiliar scenario of 1988 was to presage a new chapter in the affairs of mankind. Could this be the first international fruit of the electronic and economic shrinking of the globe, bringing with it the realisation that no State can prosper in isolation, or in permanent confrontation with its neighbours?

With such encouraging omens on the eve of the IPU Centenary, it is opportune to review developments within the British Group throughout this eventful and possibly historic decade. The 12 months following the untimely death of Paul Ward in 1978 saw the British Group in something of a vacuum. Permanent replacement of such an outstanding and popular Secretary posed a major challenge which was to be compounded, both by the sudden ill-health of his successor Mr P. W. Baker after only a few months in office, and the change of Chairman at the General Election in May 1979. For the second time that year the Executive Committee was called upon to select a new Secretary. Faced with 177 applicants they broke with the tradition which had hitherto favoured those from the Army or Diplomatic Service, by selecting a recently retired Naval Captain. Australian-born Peter Shaw brought to the post a wide spectrum of experience from his 41 years' naval service. Significantly this had included numerous international liaison posts, industrial management and

trades union negotiation in the Royal Dockyards, and interpreterships in five languages. As a product of four years' war service and its aftermath moreover, he had a deep-rooted conviction that communication skills and empathy are crucial to international relations.

At the Caracas Conference in September 1979 Sir Thomas Williams ended his mandate as President of the Inter-Parliamentary Council and passed the reins to Dr Rafael Caldera, former President of the Republic of Venezuela. As a skilful diplomat and enthusiastic supporter of the ideals of the Union, Tom Williams had been a very successful President and his departure from high office deprived the British Group of its central position in Union affairs. He had indeed been the first British President since the retirement of Lord Stansgate nearly 20 years earlier. This the new team set out to compensate by reorganisation at home, renewed efforts in the international field, and measures to strengthen relations between the IPU and the Foreign Office. John Page, the new Chairman, was very conscious of the anomaly presented by the absence of the People's Republic of China from the IPU membership list. Within weeks of returning from Caracas, he and the new Secretary made initial approaches to the Chinese Ambassador in London with the aim of persuading the National People's Congress to send a Parliamentary Delegation to Westminster. This was not the first time that approaches had been made to China as Lord Stansgate had been very active in this connection in the fifties. Indeed at one time the Union's Executive had before it two separate applications for membership: one from Peking and the other from Taipei! Domestically a reorganisation of the Secretariat was set in train, and procedures were introduced to make wider use of the newly acquired IPU Room in Westminster Hall to improve the briefing for delegations travelling abroad.

At the beginning of 1980 the process of detente had been disrupted with the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan, and this was to erode the harmony of that year's Conferences in Oslo, East Berlin and the CSCE Conference in Brussels. Under the leadership of John Page the British Delegation to these Conferences played a leading role in the IPU condemnation of the Afghanistan situation. This in turn attracted anti-British counter-attack with specious attempts to relate Afghanistan to the situation in Northern Ireland. Through the course of 1980 inward delegations were hosted from Venezuela, Luxembourg, and Mexico and in all visitors from 32 countries were received in the newly embellished IPU Room. Outward delegations were sent to five foreign Parliaments, the British Group submitted a demarche to the Iranian Embassy in London about the US hostages in Teheran, and efforts continued in the protracted task of persuading the Chinese to accept an invitation to London. With international tensions

now worsened by the Iran-Iraq War, the role of the Western Lobby known as the 10 Plus became increasingly important and the British Group worked hard on ways to improve its efficacy.

February 1981 saw the culmination of many months planning with the arrival of the first-ever delegation from the National People's Congress of China. This large and very distinguished delegation was impressed by the warmth of its reception and every opportunity was taken to emphasise to them the importance of China joining the Union. In the total Chinese isolation of that period, not even the greatest optimist would have envisaged that by the time of the Centenary Conference in London, China would be represented on the Executive Committee.

During 1981 the tensions in Poland added to the confrontational atmosphere of IPU Conferences and British Delegations continued to be burdened with hostile speeches comparing Northern Ireland to Afghanistan. In Canberra the 10 Plus debated specific British proposals and ultimately accepted them as an improved basis for future business. The Spring meetings in Manila saw further evidence of the value of the improved delegation briefings.

Recognising the increasing international relevance of the Northern Ireland problem, John Page, Lord Hughes and Peter Shaw spent a day in the Maze Prison before joining the rest of their colleagues in Havana for the 68th IPU Conference that September. Few will dispute that the Havana Conference was the most confrontational of this eventful decade. In his welcoming speech, President Castro spared little in his denigration of the USA and, although much shorter in length, his derogatory remarks about the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland were such as to persuade the British Ambassador to walk out of the proceedings. By dint of much hard work behind the scenes, John Page was enabled to make the immediately following speech in rebuttal, and the vitality and cogency of this will be seen by many as the acme of his oratorical skills. To show their displeasure at the lack of courtesy by their host moreover the British Delegation absented themselves from President Castro's reception that evening.

Notwithstanding the inauspicious beginning to this Conference, events at the end of the week may well prove to have been a crossroads for the future direction of the British Group. After a week of high tension, aggravated by both procedural and political dispute, the British Delegation hosted a reception in the elegant colonial-style Residence of the British Ambassador. Unexpectedly President Castro arrived during the closing stages of the reception and requested a private briefing about the real situation in Northern Ireland. This continued till well after midnight and

in retrospect gave positive identification to the IPU as a "door-opener and bridge-builder". For probably the first time in history the head of a Marxist State had entered the Residence of a British Ambassador at his own request, there to seek the truth about facts which hitherto had been distorted for propaganda purposes. The potential of the IPU to open doors which are normally closed to conventional diplomacy was clearly established, and the usefulness of this "parliamentary diplomacy" was to enhance future relations between the British Group and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. By the close of 1981 representatives of 41 foreign Parliaments had been received in the IPU Room and developments with both China and Cuba had shown that the future for the British Group should concentrate on its potential for bridge-building initiatives.

The following year saw a continued deepening of international tension as East and West polarised around the Afghanistan incursion, and events at home became dominated by the Argentinian invasion of the Falklands. After inward delegations from Norway and Algeria, and outward delegations to Spain and China, the latter to be seen in retrospect as a further step in persuading China to join the IPU, a British Conference delegation reached Lagos. Shortly after arrival the news filtered in about the Argentinian landings in Port Stanley, and the tenor of the debate at Conference reflected the increasing concern about international peace. In June John Page ceded his Chairmanship to Peter Temple-Morris but having been elected to the IPU Executive he remained at the centre of IPU affairs. Peter Temple-Morris was already well-known as an internationalist and came to the Chair with a firm determination to maximise the bridge-building potential of the platform provided by his new post. At the 69th Conference in Rome in September, East-West confrontation reached a new high over the invitation by the Republic of Korea to hold the next year's Conference in Seoul. This offer was vigorously contested by North Korea with Soviet and Eastern bloc support. As a result a vote had to be taken on a Conference invitation, the first time this had occurred since the Brussels Conference of 1961. Despite a sizeable majority in favour, the following months were to be characterised by international manipulation on the part of the East, to get the decision reversed. Rome was also to be the last occasion that the British Delegation offered a lunch for members of the Commonwealth. Attendance at this traditional function had been waning steadily over the years with the feeling that such contacts were more suitable for the CPA. The British Delegation was subsequently to offer lunches at Conference to launch a variety of international initiatives. With representatives of 58 countries visiting the IPU Room during 1982, and a marked growth in activity generally, it became necessary to identify ways of accommodating this increased activity

within the Group's fixed budget. The concept of joining forces with other agencies on a cost sharing basis, the better to cope with the increasing number of requests to visit Westminster, began to take shape. Budgetary constraints dictated that there should be a clearer policy as to the recipients of formal invitations to London and the pattern emerged that priority would go to those countries which offered potential for international reconciliation. In retrospect it can be seen that 1982 was the launching pad for the philosophy which was to guide the British Group through the closing stages of its Centenary, the "bridge-building" decade.

Both the domestic and international scene were complicated in the following year as far as British Group activities were concerned. Johannes Virolainen, former Prime Minister of Finland, had been elected President of the Inter-Parliamentary Council during the Rome Conference but within six weeks he had lost his Parliamentary seat. At the meeting of the 10 Plus in Helsinki prior to the April Conference there, Peter Temple-Morris played a key role in the search for consensus as to who should be the Western candidate for the unexpected vacancy. Eastern Bloc lobbying to prevent a Conference in Seoul continued apace and added to the tensions of the international situation. Once again, the British were attacked in debate about the Northern Irish situation and British/Soviet relations remained at a low ebb.

The General Election in May 1983 cost the British Group 123 Members who either retired or lost their seats. Of immediate concern was the loss of the delegation already selected for the CSCE Conference in Budapest, which in the light of East-West tension, was seen by some as one of the more meaningful events in the IPU calendar. With only 10 days to go before that Conference, the Secretary lobbied 55 Members of the Upper House in the space of two days in an attempt to raise a new delegation. In the event three peers attended and among other things made useful contacts with the Soviet delegation. Because of the General Election the year's routine activities were somewhat curtailed and there were only three inward delegations and three delegations sent abroad. Representatives of 40 different Parliaments visited the IPU Room however, and as a new departure the Group took up the case of a former foreign Parliamentarian, sentenced on doubtful grounds to 10 years in prison. Great satisfaction was derived when six months later the freed Parliamentarian made personal contact to express his gratitude.

Some three weeks before the 70th IPU Conference in Seoul in October 1983 international tensions were given a new boost by the USSR shooting down a South Korean airliner. This was compounded during the week of the Conference when delegates joined nearly one million mourners

at the State Funeral for four cabinet Ministers and 13 others killed in Burma by a terrorist bomb. Attendance at that Conference was reduced to less than 70 nations by the Soviet led boycott, but the British Delegation made its usual dynamic contribution to both debates and the social programme. As an innovation they organised a working luncheon with Irish Parliamentarians the theme of which was British-Irish reconciliation. The success of this initiative was to lead to regular annual exchanges between the two Parliaments in the years to follow and as such demonstrated once more the value of Parliamentary diplomacy.

By the time of the 71st IPU Conference held in Geneva in April 1984, the British had accepted Chairmanship of the increasingly effective 10+ grouping. As a product of much behind the scene persuasion, a Delegation from the People's Republic of China participated in the Conference for the first time, and it was perhaps a measure of British influence in this recruitment that Peter Shaw was invited by the Chinese to brief them on Conference procedures. No less significant was the presence for the first time in many years of a Delegation from the newly elected Argentinian Parliament. Both of these newcomers were lunched by the British in Geneva, and from those early and difficult beginnings regular meetings with the Argentinians were to take place at nearly all subsequent Conferences.

On the domestic front liaison between the British Group and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office was transferred to the Parliamentary Relations Unit of that Ministry and this particular reorganisation did much for the excellent mutual relations which have existed ever since.

As a result of representations from Cuba, anxious to remedy the strained relations since the 1981 Conference, a British Delegation visited Havana and the first ever Cuban Delegation came to Westminster in July. During the course of 1984 the former Chairman John Page was knighted, the British Group sent 11 Delegations to foreign Parliaments, received 3 Delegations in Westminster and was represented at 4 Conferences abroad. Representatives of 49 nations were received in the IPU Room. This high level of activity was to be crowned in December by the visit of a 33-strong Delegation from the Supreme Soviet led by Mikhail Gorbachev, then little known outside the Soviet Union. His subsequent rise to power in the USSR is now a matter of record. It will fall to future students of history, objectively to assess the significance of that visit but informed opinion attributes to its success President Gorbachev's more conciliatory attitude to Great Britain. In terms of improved East-West relations moreover this was the occasion when he first met Prime Minister Thatcher who was able to brief President Reagan only a few

days later on the validity of her much published remark "this is a man I can do business with".

Having enjoyed the novelty of finding themselves at the centre of world media interest as a result of the Gorbachev visit, the British Group reverted to less newsworthy activities in 1985 sending 5 Delegations abroad, receiving 4 Delegations at Westminster and representatives of 47 countries in the IPU Room. The Spring Conference in Lome (Togo), where there was no British Diplomatic representation whatsoever, will long remain a talking point for those who participated, and in June after three years of achievement, Peter Temple-Morris ceded the Chairmanship of the Group to David Crouch. The latter was already well known for his interest in Arab affairs and was soon to stamp himself on the international community as a Chairman of statesman-like abilities. At the same AGM Donald Anderson became Vice Chairman. He had already made his name as an Opposition Front Bench Spokesman on Foreign Affairs and to many this election confirmed that the IPU was now seen as a meaningful international activity from both sides of the House. At the 74th IPU Conference in Ottawa in September, Sir John Page was narrowly defeated in his bid for the Presidency of the Inter-Parliamentary Council which drew to a close a regular association with the Union which had lasted over 10 years and earned him friends from all quarters of the globe.

Away from the political scene, the year 1985 was of particular significance for the British Group Secretariat. Planning for the Centenary Conference had been proceeding quietly since 1982 and after 39 years in the House of Lords it was now necessary to move to more generous accommodation to house an increased staff. In October they moved to the newly opened annex to the House of Lords at No. 1 the Abbey Garden.

Early 1986 was marked by the arrival of a Deputy Secretary, as Centenary Coordinator and by the first visit of an Argentinian Delegation to continue the bilateral discussions which had now become a regular feature. On 28 February the British Group was saddened by the death of Sir Thomas Williams who had served with such distinction as Chairman of the British Group and subsequently President of the Inter-Parliamentary Council. In April, the British Delegation to the 75th IPU Conference in Mexico City continued in its pattern of Conference initiatives by hosting a reception for all the Latin American Delegations in attendance. On the day of that reception Guatemala was affiliated to the Union for the first time. Because of the dispute over Belize, British-Guatemalan diplomatic relations had been severed by the latter for 23 years, and it was of particular satisfaction to the new Chairman David Crouch that

they indicated at his reception a wish for closer ties with Westminster. Through that encounter two influential Guatemalan Delegations visited Westminster later in the year and as a product of these Parliamentary exchanges diplomatic relations were re-established by the end of 1986.

At the VIth CSCE Conference in Bonn in May 1986, there was a marked improvement in British-USSR relations, and in June a high-level IPU Delegation led by Viscount Whitelaw and Denis Healey visited the USSR. Their programme included two hours of discussion with Mikhail Gorbachev who took the opportunity to speak warmly of his 1984 reception in London. This was a dress-rehearsal for the Prime Minister's visit to Moscow at which British-Soviet relations were to be further improved.

In October 1986 a British Delegation attended the 76th IPU Conference in Buenos Aires where, despite the lack of diplomatic relations, they enjoyed every courtesy from their hosts. Their visit attracted great media interest and facilitated yet a further session of British-Argentinian Parliamentary talks, chaired with great statesmanship by David Crouch. By the end of the year the Group could look back on 6 outward Delegations, representatives of 59 nations in the IPU Room, a meaningful contribution to the re-establishment of diplomatic relations with Guatemala, greatly improved relations with the USSR and a continuation of the bridge-building discussions with both Ireland and the Argentine.

Once again in 1987 domestic political developments were to disrupt the long-term planning of the British Group. The likelihood of a General Election had hung threateningly over all planned activities but despite this it was possible to achieve outward Delegations to Morocco and Algeria, and a high-level inward Delegation from Ireland before those attending the 77th IPU Conference in Managua set off for the lengthy journey to reach their destination. The change of Government in Dublin, a few weeks previously, had added a twist to the Irish visit, and in the event a particularly large and important Delegation presented itself for discussions in the Jubilee Room. British interest was demonstrated by the fact that three former Secretaries of State for Northern Ireland attended the welcoming dinner.

During the Conference in Managua, the British Delegation was uniquely honoured by an invitation from their Soviet colleagues on May Day. In the light of the importance of this day for their hosts and the fact that no other guests were invited, they were very sensitive to the implications of the occasion, and conscious of the remarkable change in bilateral relations since the beginning of the decade.

After that Conference, David Crouch visited Guatemala and Belize and in both places mention was made of the key role played by the

British Group in the re-establishment of diplomatic relations. This telling example of Parliamentary diplomacy must have been a gratifying conclusion to his shortened period of office, terminated by his retirement at the June General Election. His political career was recognised with a knighthood and like his predecessor, he was in a position to look back with personal satisfaction at the achievements of the British Group under his Chairmanship.

At the 1987 AGM Michael Marshall, former Minister, and Vice Chairman, was elected to the Chair. His international experience had included long periods of residence in India and the United States but it was clear that much of his energies would inevitably be focused on the IPU Centenary Conference. Soon after his election he, together with the Officers and staff, began the process of implementing the work of the Centenary Conference Planning Committee. In July London was visited by a small Delegation from the Supreme Soviet in continuation of the improved bilateral relations, and in October the new Chairman led a Delegation to the 78th IPU Conference in Bangkok. Following the tradition of Conference Initiatives, he there hosted a unique bridge-building luncheon. Much to the anxiety of many, invitations were extended to a variety of countries in dispute, and the only common denominator was the fact that each guest was in direct conflict with someone in the room. Although Iran and Iraq declined the invitation, and Arab failed to sit down with Israeli, the unlikely mix of USSR, USA, Cuba, Nicaragua, Britain and Argentina, India and Sri Lanka, and many others, gelled to a degree which delighted the most optimistic. Notwithstanding the delicacy of the footwork necessary to achieve this end, the British Group had once again demonstrated its potential for venturing where others feared to tread, and the success of the occasion was warmly applauded in the lobbies and diplomatic circles alike.

For some time past Conference had been used as an opportunity to establish regular bilateral discussions with Japanese colleagues, and the year ended with a British Delegation visiting Tokyo where they were honoured to be the first foreign Parliamentarians to meet the new Prime Minister. In London a Delegation from Tunisia resulted in the burning of much midnight oil to produce a joint resolution about the need for a Middle East Peace Conference. By the year's end the Group could look back on 3 outward Delegations and more than 20 inward Delegations of varying sizes with representatives of 41 nations having visited the IPU Room. For the first time the work of the IPU was recognised by an Early Day Motion which attracted more than 100 signatures, the text of which was as follows:

“That this House warmly applauds the outcome of the Washington

Summit and congratulates all those concerned in the marked improvement of British-USSR relations dating from the visit to London three years ago of a delegation led by Secretary General Gorbachev as guests of the British Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union; further recognises the value to international relations and world peace of such Inter-Parliamentary contacts; and urges Her Majesty's Government to facilitate further exchanges while giving continued support to the Inter-Parliamentary Union as it approaches its centenary year in 1989."

If 1988 is to be seen by future historians as "the year of reconciliation" the British Group may justifiably regard the venue for the 79th Conference as entirely appropriate. Less than 18 months since the re-establishment of diplomatic relations after the 23 year rupture, the British Delegation led by Michael Marshall found nothing but warm hospitality and friendship in Guatemala City. Building on the success of the Bangkok initiative a second bridge-building lunch was organised during this Conference, and once again representatives of nations in dispute proved that they could sit down together in social harmony. Despite best endeavours Arab declined the opportunity to socialise with Israeli and North Korean declined at the last moment to mix with his Southern compatriot. These disappointments were outweighed by the satisfaction of observing animated and friendly conversation between Greek, Turk and Cypriot on the one side, Briton and Argentinian on the other, and Guatemala and Belize in the far corner. The remarkable change in the international scenario took for granted the easy relationship between East and West. During the early part of the year inward Delegations from Spain and China gave opportunities for useful discussions about the future of Gibraltar and Hong Kong respectively, and an outward Delegation to Dublin saw the start of new measures to formalise an Anglo-Irish Parliamentary relationship. Outward Delegations to both Hungary and Romania permitted new insights into the minorities dispute between these two countries, and at the 80th IPU Conference in Sofia that September, further constructive talks were held with the Argentinian Delegation. At the same Conference Michael Marshall was elected to the International Executive Committee and the British Group was once again represented at the highest level of the Union, as was the case at the beginning of the decade. As the year drew to its close world attention was focused on President Gorbachev's proposals for the restructuring of the USSR. Those concerned with his historic visit to London in 1984 took particular pleasure in his much publicised intention to create a new style working Parliament with greater executive powers than its predecessor. As preparations continued within the British Group to receive another high level Delegation from the Supreme Soviet, there were ample grounds

to feel that good progress was being made in implementing the stated purpose of the Inter-Parliamentary Union: namely, the development of representative institutions and the advancement of international peace and cooperation.

In pursuit of these objectives over the years many changes have taken place, both in the British Group and in the Union itself. Those who attended the first Conference in 1889 are unlikely to have envisaged that 110 nations would be represented at the Centenary in London. Equally surprising to them would have been the breadth of the Executive Committee for the Centenary year with its members drawn from:- Canada, China, Denmark, Egypt, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Poland, Senegal, Spain, Thailand, United Kingdom, USSR and Zimbabwe.

PERIODICAL PUBLICATIONS CONSULTED

Annual Reports of the British Group 1909 onwards

Inter-Parliamentary Bulletin 1921 onwards

The Arbitrator 1889-1940

Proceedings of Inter-Parliamentary Conferences 1896 onwards

Minutes of British Group Annual General Meetings

**British Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union
1889-1988**

Presidents (P) and Chairmen (C)	Honorary Secretaries and Secretaries
Lord Weardale (P) 1889-1923	Sir William Randal Cremer (Hon) 1889-1908 (Nobel Peace Prize 1903)
Lord Treowen (P) 1923-1928	Mr. Frederick Maddison (Hon) 1908-1925
Sir Robert Horne (P) 1928	Mr. Duncan Pirie (Hon) 1908-1910
Duke of Sutherland (P) 1929-1936	Sir James Agg Gardner (Hon) 1910-1914
Lord Glenravel (C) 1928-1936 (P) 1936-1939	Lt. Col. Sir K. Vaughan Morgan (Hon) 1925-1930
Col. J. Sandeman Allen (C) 1936-1939	Mr. Rennie Smith (Hon) 1930-1932
Col. Sir Arthur Evans (C) 1939-1945	Lord Scone (Hon) 1932-1936
Viscount Cranbourne (P) 1940-1947	Mr. Victor Raikes (Hon) 1932-1936
Mr. Rhys Davies (C) 1945-1947	Mr. R. A. Cary (Hon) 1936-1937
Lord Milner (C and P) 1947-1951	Wing Commander Wright (Hon) 1937
Lord Mathers (P) 1949-1950	Captain L. Plugge (Hon) 1937-1942
Viscount Ruffside (P) 1950-1957	Mr. Rhys Davies (Hon) 1942-1945
Col. Sir Malcolm Stoddart Scott (C) 1951-1958	Sir Adam Maitland (Hon) 1942-1945
Sir John Tilney (C) 1959-1961	Mr. Charles Watney 1943-1945
Sir Herbert Butcher (C) 1961-1965	Mr. V. Le T. McEntee (Hon) 1943-1945
Sir Edward Mallalieu (C) 1965-1967	Sir Peter Macdonald (Hon) 1943-1945
Mr. Albert Roberts (C) 1967-1970	Captain A. Marsden (Hon) 1946
Sir Barnett Janner (C) 1970	Lt. Commander C. Powell 1945-1949
Sir John Hall (C) 1971-1973	Sir Drummond Shiels 1950-1954
Sir Harwood Harrison (C) 1973-1974	Mr. A. G. Michelsen 1953-54
Sir Thomas Williams (C) 1974-1976	Major General W. A. Dimoline 1954-1965
Mr. Ben Ford (C) 1977-1979	Sir Andrew Noble 1966
Sir John Page (C) 1979-1982	Brigadier M. J. A. Patterson 1966-1973
Mr. Peter Temple-Morris (C) 1982-1985	Brigadier Paul Ward 1973-1978
Sir David Crouch (C) 1985-1987	Mr. G. W. Baker 1979
Mr. Michael Marshall (C) 1987-	Captain Peter Shaw, R.N. 1979-

Notes: From 1957 onwards the President of the Group was, ex officio, the Prime Minister in office. Thus Mr. Harold MacMillan succeeded Viscount Ruffside, and he in turn was succeeded by Lord Home, Sir Harold Wilson and Mr. James Callaghan. Honorary Secretaries of the Group were, with the exception of Maddison, always Members of Parliament. For a number of years there were Joint Hon. Secs.

