

Old Photos of Dignitaries Arouse Curiosity

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Two photos dated 1950 recently turned up in old *Copyright Notices* files. A notation said, “Washington meeting UNESCO,” and included the surnames of the men portrayed. Curiosity overcame us, and we decided to find out what was going on back then.

It seems that from October 23 to November 4, 1950, Washington, D.C., hosted a committee of experts as part of a UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) project aiming for an international copyright convention agreeable to members and nonmembers of the Berne Union.

In 1947, committees began assembling information on the international copyright situation. At a second meeting in Paris in 1949 to review the report of the 1947 meetings, Librarian of Congress Luther Evans; future Register Arthur Fisher; John Schulman, partner in the New York law firm Hays, St. John, Abramson, and Schulman; and Charles E. Wyzanski Jr., judge on the U.S. District Court of Boston, represented the United States. In consultation with the Copyright Office, the U.S. government extensively reviewed the Paris committee’s recommendation for a diplomatic conference.

Meeting in the District in 1950, the third committee of experts, including representatives from 13 countries, the Bureau of the Berne Convention, and the Pan American Union, as well as observers from nine countries, further analyzed the responses to the Paris recommendations.

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From left: G.H.C. Bodenhausen and John Schulman. Georg Hendrik Christiaan Bodenhausen was a Dutch civil servant and later the first director-general of the World Intellectual Property Organization from 1970 to 1973.

Register Sam Bass Warner was one of the U.S. experts, together with Schulman and Wyzanski. Elected chairman, Evans served briefly before departing for Paris on UNESCO business. The chairmanship then moved to Plinio Bolla, a federal judge from Switzerland.

Additional international consultations followed before a fourth meeting of experts in 1951 in Paris succeeded in preparing a preliminary draft of the proposed convention. A final draft came in 1952.

Throughout the process of the meetings, the Register and other officials worked intensely with more than 60 representatives of varied U.S. interests as well as government officials to develop the U.S. position. “The views of all the interests were secured and exchanged at meetings of the Panel [established as an auxiliary of

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the State Department's U.S. National Commission for UNESCO and chaired by the Librarian] and through informal conferences and correspondence carried on by the State Department and the Register of Copyrights," says *History of the U.S.A. Copyright Law Revision from 1901 to 1954* by Abe Goldman, the Office's then chief of research. (See www.copyright.gov/history/studies.html.)

Completed in Geneva in 1952, the Universal Copyright Convention (UCC) was submitted to the Senate by President Eisenhower in 1953, ratified in 1954, and signed by the President on August 31, 1954. The UCC was the first copyright convention extending beyond the western hemisphere to which the United States adhered. ©



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From left: Judge Plinio Bolla of Switzerland; G. H. C. Bodenhausen of Holland; John Schulman of the United States; and Mr. Recht of Belgium.