NEGOTIATIONS FOR THE NORDIC COUNCIL

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The Nordic Council grew out of the pan-Nordic convictions of the Danish Social Democrat, Hans Hedtoft. Hedtoft was Prime Minister during the Scandinavian Defense Alliance negotiations in 1948—49. He was deeply disappointed by the failure to form the Alliance. When his Government was replaced by a bourgeois coalition in 1950, Hedtoft turned partly to Nordic endeavors as an outlet for his energies. He determined to create a political substitute for the lost Alliance.

The topic of Scandinavian interparliamentary cooperation was on the agenda for the 1951 Meeting of Delegates of the Nordic Inter-Parliamentary Union (NIPU) in Stockholm. Without having announced his specific intentions beforehand, Hans Hedtoft proposed that the Meeting of Delegates endorse the idea of holding regular joint meetings of representatives of the Nordic parliaments. The proposal was supported in debate by Nils Herlitz (Swedish Conservative), Oscar Torp (Norwegian Social Democrat, later Prime Minister), Bertel Dahlgaard (Danish Radical Liberal), and by the Swedish Foreign Minister, Osten Undén. The Speaker of the Finnish Parliament, Karl-August Fagerholm, had some reservations, and scepticism was expressed by Sven Nielsen (Norwegian Conservative) and Erik Fast (Swedish Social Democrat).

The Finnish reservations were based on her delicate relations with the Soviet Union: Fagerholm feared that Finland would not be permitted to join the new Council; when the fear became a reality, he gave his blessing in the hope that Finland would be able to come in at a later time. Others felt that a new organ was not called for: if anything was to be done, the NIPU should be reconstructed.

Without resolving the issue of whether the Nordic Inter-Parliamentary Union should be revamped, or whether a new organ should be created, the Executive Board of the NIPU was authorized to "investigate the manner in which this idea might be effectuated, and take the initiative which is suggested thereby."

*) The author is grateful for the Woodrow Wilson Foundation Traveling Fellowship in Political Science (1959–60), spent in residence in Scandinavia.
The Executive Board appointed a five-man drafting team, composed of Fagerholm, Hedtoft, Herlitz, Torp, and the Icelandic Conservative, Sigurdur Bjarnason, which proceeded in the course of the next few months to draw up a proposed Statute for a Nordic Council based on an initial draft prepared by Professor Herlitz.

The proposed Statute was considered alternately by the Executive Board and by the several national Inter-Parliamentary groups, and was adopted by the Executive Board early in December, 1951, at which time the Finns indicate that they would be unable to participate. The Board made the draft Statute public, and then resubmitted it to the national groups for final approval.

The Danish and Swedish Inter-Parliamentary groups approved the draft Statute unanimously, but there was opposition in Iceland and Norway, as a result of which the Executive Board decided to call another meeting, and to invite representatives of the Norwegian Liberal and Christian People's parties (who had no members on the Board) to attend. The expanded Board met on February 9, 1952, and reaffirmed its approval of the Statute, in spite of the Norwegian opposition. The sole official dissenting vote was cast by the Norwegian Agrarian, G. E. Moseid, who preferred a reorganization of the Nordic Inter-Parliamentary Union. The Executive Board wrote immediately to the Governments, and asked them to foster the enactment of the proposed Statute in the respective parliaments.

A few days later, on February 16, 1952, the Norwegian group of the NIPU wrote to the Norwegian Government to suggest that the proposed Statute be amended to delete provision for participation by the Prime Ministers and the Foreign Ministers in the decisions of the Nordic Council. A minority of three members of the Norwegian group's governing body, representing the Liberals, Agrarians and Christian People's Party, urged the Government not to proceed with the establishment of the Nordic Council.

At their meetings in March, 1952, the Foreign Ministers of Denmark, Norway and Sweden and the Icelandic diplomatic representative in Denmark agreed that the two named Ministers should not vote in the Nordic Council, but that all Cabinet Members would be eligible to attend the Annual Sessions and to participate in debate. The Norwegian Foreign Minister further secured the agreement of the others that the Nordic Council secretariat would be of modest proportions, and that the Statute would not be adopted by treaty, as Hedtoft and the Danes had wanted, but by parallel enactment, either as a law or as a resolution.

Before the end of the year, the Statute had been adopted by the