

The first, and so far only, change in the contribution system of the Berne Union was made by the conference of revision of 1967 (Stockholm), which, as already stated, added one new class (Class VII) to the six classes (I, II, III, IV, V and VI) established in, and in existence since, 1886. That new class (with one unit) raised from 1:8.33 to 1:25 the ratio between the contribution class with the highest and the contribution class with the lowest amount of contributions. Accordingly, in 1986, any of the three countries belonging to Class I paid 5.88%, and any of the 29 countries belonging to Class VII paid 0.24% of the total contributions in the Berne Union.

The difference between the highest and the lowest contributions is less than in most other intergovernmental organizations. For example, in the United Nations, it is 25 to 0.01, or two thousand five hundred-fold. Therefore, the question was raised, in the Assembly of the Berne Union (and other Governing Bodies), whether some further changes should not be introduced in the system of contributions.

The matter has been under consideration since 1977 but no decisions have been reached by the beginning of 1986, the year of the centenary of the Berne Convention.

Amendment of the Administrative Clauses

As already stated, the provisions on the Assembly of the Berne Union, on the Executive Committee of that Assembly, on the role of the International Bureau of WIPO and the Director General of WIPO in respect of the Berne Union, and on the finances of the Berne Union—that is, Articles 22, 23, 24 and 25 of the 1967 (Stockholm) Act—are generally referred to as “the administrative clauses.” The conference of revision of 1967 (Stockholm), conscious of the fact that revising the text of a multilateral treaty in a conference of revision is a difficult and slow task, decided that there should be a simpler method of revising the said administrative clauses. That simpler method—which should also yield results faster—is provided for in Article 26 of the 1967 (Stockholm) Act and consists of the possibility of amending the said administrative clauses, including Article 26 itself, by the Assembly of the Union. The entry into effect of any such amendment requires that three fourths of the countries members of the Assembly (members, that is, at the date of the adoption of the amendment) notify their acceptance of it to the Director General. It is to be noted that, once the amendment enters into effect, it binds also those countries of the Assembly which were members of the Assembly at the said date and which have not notified their acceptance of the amendment. There is one exception to this rule: any amendment that increases the financial obligations of countries of the Berne Union binds only those countries which have notified their acceptance of the amendment. Any country that becomes a member of the Assembly after any amendment enters into force is automatically bound by it. All this is provided for in the said Article 26, which, by the way, is identical in the 1967 (Stockholm) and 1971 (Paris) Acts.

The possibility of amendment offered by the Article under consideration was made use of for the first—and so far only—time in 1979, when the Assembly decided to replace its triennial ordinary sessions by biennial ordinary sessions, and the triennial budget and annual budgets by a biennial budget. For that purpose, the Assembly adopted amendments to Article 22(2)(a)(vi) and (7)(a) and Article 23(6)(a)(ii) and (iii). The amendments entered into force on November 19, 1984, but, in

fact, the amendments were applied from the moment they were adopted by the Assembly, and they were so applied by virtue of a corresponding unanimous decision of the Assembly. Amendments increasing the financial obligations have not so far been adopted by the Assembly.

The Locations of the International Bureau

The International Bureau has been in Switzerland from the very beginning: first in Berne, later and now (in 1986) in Geneva.

The first office of the United Bureaus, in 1886, was in an apartment of ten rooms at Kanonengasse 14 in Berne. Six rooms were used for office purposes, the other four were the apartment of the janitor and for storage. All those premises were rented.

A big change occurred in 1904 when the United Bureaus moved into the Helvetiastrasse in Berne. They rented most of a four-storey house. The house number was 7.

The Helvetiastrasse house was the home of the United Bureaus for 56 years, that is, until 1960.

In 1958, the construction of the first building belonging to the United Bureaus started, in Geneva, on a piece of land between the Avenue Giuseppe-Motta (*Conseiller fédéral* (Minister) from 1912 to 1940) and the Chemin des Colombettes (“*colombette*” is an edible mushroom (*lepiota naucina* in Latin, *large spored lepiota* in English, *rosablättriger Schirmling* in German, also called *bisette* in French); it was abundant in the suburban meadows of Geneva, where the street (*chemin*) is today)). The address of that building is 32, chemin des Colombettes. It is some hundred meters from the Place des Nations, a large square on one side of which is the main entrance to the Palais des Nations, the headquarters (since 1936) of the League of Nations and, since 1945, of the Geneva Office of the United Nations.

The construction of the said building of the United Bureaus was completed in 1960, and the Bureaus moved from Berne to Geneva in 1960. It is now referred to as “the BIRPI Building.” Operations started there on July 20, 1960.

The BIRPI Building, when constructed, had four floors and an unequipped conference room. The size of the building is the same in 1986 as it was in 1960 but, in 1964, the (only) conference room, with some 60 seats, was furnished with simultaneous interpretation equipment. (In 1982, the conference room was dismantled.) The first telex equipment was installed in 1965. The first electric typewriters were purchased in 1964. The first word-processors were installed in 1980. Telefax was installed in 1985. The computerization of administrative operations started in 1984. In 1960, the BIRPI Building was too large for the needs of the International Bureaus and one of its floors was rented—from 1959 to 1969—to the European Free Trade Association (EFTA). When the WIPO Building (see below) was completed, two of its floors were, once again, rented out; such rentals ended in 1984 and 1986, respectively. On the ground floor, office space is rented (in 1986) to a bank and to a travel agency.

The volume of the BIRPI Building is 14,720 cubic meters. It has two small elevators.

All the rest is office space. The active collections of the library and the library’s reading room are (in 1986) also in the BIRPI Building.

With the growth of the staff (see below) and the increased need for conference rooms for meetings, the BIRPI Building became too small and during the nineteen-seventies part of the staff had to be located in a temporary building constructed next to the BIRPI Building (1971 to 1978) and in several rented premises