

SECOND UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE LAW OF THE SEA: Committee of the Whole [New York: United Nations; London: H.M.S.O. 1962. xiii + 431 pp. 35s. 6d.]

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON DIPLOMATIC INTERCOURSE AND IMMUNITIES : Official Records, Vol. 1 [New York: United Nations; London : H.M.S.O. 1962. xxviii + 240 pp. 25s.]

A GUIDE TO THE USE OF UNITED NATIONS DOCUMENTS. By **Brenda Brimmer & Others.** [New York: Oceana. 1962. xv + 272 pp. U.S. \$6.00.]

When Wilson enunciated the Fourteen Points his plea for open covenants openly arrived at was considered to be a great blow on behalf of open diplomacy and popular control of foreign policy. The United Nations is perhaps the clearest example of open diplomacy in operation with the full glare of publicity on nearly all its activities. Not only are General Assembly and Security Council debates held in public, and subject to the activities of press, radio and television, but even working committees publish the full text of their deliberations.

Sometimes, when, for example, incidents reminiscent of pre-war scenes in the French Chamber take place in the Assembly, one might well wonder if this new form of open diplomacy is really to be encouraged. When, however, there has been a conference of State representatives, and especially legal experts from Foreign Offices, on some matter of international law, and the final result is a treaty which purports to codify, or occasionally develop, the law, it is of value to have available the records

of the Conference and its committees. In this way it is possible to ascertain the views that were held by States on the particular subject before the Treaty was finalised, and to see to what extent compromise has produced development rather than codification. It also serves to show how real or superficial are the differences between the 'English', the 'Continental', the 'American', the 'Communist' and 'Afro-Asian' (if any) views of international law.

Among recent conferences held under the auspices of the United Nations have been the Geneva Conferences on the Law of the Sea, 1958/1960, and the Vienna Conference on Diplomatic Intercourse and Immunities, 1961. Recently, the Secretariat has made available the verbatim record of the general debate of the Committee of the Whole of the 1960 Geneva Conference and the Summary Records of the Plenary Meetings and the meetings of the Committee of the Whole of the Vienna Conference. Research students interested in these matters as well as historians of the law of the sea are placed deeply in the debt of the United Nations for having made this raw material available.

There is one inherent drawback in the publication policy of the United Nations. By excessive documentation it is possible to produce the same result as would be the case if nothing or little were published. From the point of view of research, much valuable time is lost by wading through mountains of unnecessary paper and any machinery which is available for simplifying this task is to be welcomed. Miss Brimmer and her colleagues have done yeoman service by making available *A Guide to the Use of United Nations Documents*. The value of this *Guide* is enhanced by the fact that it not only deals with the United Nations, but also with the specialised agencies and special United Nations bodies.

One of the difficulties when dealing with U.N. Documents has been the plethora of apparently incomprehensible initials, followed by a complicated series of reference numbers. Now, we know that documents in the series BIO/MISC relate to biographical data on persons temporarily connected with the U.N. Commission for Conventional Armaments; CH/ refers to Charter Day and UND/ to United Nations Day; ACG/ concerns the 2nd International Conference on Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy; and HQSUM is the Review of U.N. activities at Headquarters.

The volume not only identifies the documents, thus indicating exactly which relate to a particular research project, but also gives hints as to how they should be used. As new international institutions are created, so the need for more extensive guides will make itself felt. It is to be hoped that Miss Brimmer's team will keep the *Guide* up to date, and will shortly bring out a companion volume devoted to the documents of the European and other regional organizations.