

REPORTS AND ENQUIRIES

Membership of Trade Unions during the Years 1921-1926

Two previous studies on the changes in the membership of trade unions have already been published by the International Labour Office. The first one, in February 1921, on the growth of trade unionism during the ten years 1910-1919, was published in the series of Studies and Reports (Series A, No. 17). This report covered only 20 countries. In August of the same year a second study, on the growth of trade unionism since 1913, was published in the *International Labour Review*, Vol. III, Nos. 1-2. This article was designed to bring up to date the former report, and considerably to extend it in the light of the further information then available. It covered 30 countries and related to the years 1913, 1919, and 1920. Both these studies had attempted comparisons of pre-war years with post-war years, and suffered from the defect that in many countries changes of territory had taken place and new countries had been established ; also from the fact that statistics were much less complete immediately after the war than they are at the present time. It was also necessary to omit the years 1915-1918, as during this period trade union statistics were completely disorganised owing to mobilisation in most European countries.

The present report is based on information for 45 countries ; practically every country for which information is available. For 11 of these countries, however, the information available is inadequate, in that it relates only to one or two particular years, or is based on estimates, or is otherwise incomplete. These countries are countries in which trade union membership is very small, namely, Brazil, China, Cuba, Egypt, Estonia, Dutch East India, Ireland, Lithuania, Palestine, Peru, and Iceland, and their exclusion has very little effect on the totals. The summary table and the following remarks for the years 1921-1926 refer only to the 34 countries for which information is both regular and fairly reliable.

It should be remembered, however, that statistics of the number of organised workers in a country are based on returns, usually of a voluntary nature, made by the trade unions to their governments, or published in the trade union press or other periodicals. The figures, therefore, vary both in completeness and in accuracy. Where trade unions are centralised in great national federations, the figures may be regarded as fairly complete, as the unions not affiliated to these central organisations are generally the small ones. Where there is no central organisa-

tion, but a number of locally isolated organisations, the available statistics are less reliable. In many countries, however, the returns have become more complete from year to year, and omissions become less considerable. Some part of the change in membership, therefore, must perhaps to some extent be attributed to greater completeness of returns.

Where official statistics have been issued by the government concerned, these have usually been taken in preference to other information. For several countries, where official information is not available, and where it has not been possible to obtain information from national sources, recourse has been had to the Year Book of the International Federation of Trade Unions. This Year Book publishes each year a survey of trade unionism in different countries, and has been extremely valuable in such cases, although as the sources of information are not always given the International Labour Office has not been able to verify all the figures. The summary table indicates those countries in which figures of the International Federation of Trade Unions have been utilised.

The definition of the term "trade union" or "workers' organisation" varies from country to country. It has not been possible to adopt a uniform definition. In some countries associations of state officials are not considered trade unions, while in other countries they are so included. Again, certain workers' associations are not confined entirely to employed persons, and, especially in agriculture, small independent workers and peasants are included in the organisations.

TRADE UNION MEMBERSHIP, 1921-1926¹

Country	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926
South Africa	108,242	81,861	86,865	87,147	90,000 ^a	
Germany	12,595,947 ²	13,308,721	9,193,359 ²	6,900,000 ²	6,587,139	
Argentina	247,958	143,000	120,000	120,000 ²	120,000 ²	
Australia	703,009	702,938	699,713	729,155	795,722	
Austria	1,128,125 ²	1,128,054 ²	1,117,192	1,044,068	1,000,000 ²	
Belgium	885,008	780,907	764,525	750,696	727,000 ²	
Bulgaria ²	36,000	54,103	49,803	49,803	49,803 ²	
Canada	222,896	206,150	203,843	201,981	182,573	
Chile	(200,000)	200,000 ²	150,000 ²	162,000 ²	204,000	
Denmark	320,963	306,958	298,895	306,153	310,000 ²	
Spain ²	1,305,113	582,180	452,936	453,578	460,000 ²	
United States	4,815,000	4,059,400	3,780,000	3,815,485	3,923,833	4,241,542
Finland	48,589	48,176	48,146	47,312	50,472	62,000
France	1,046,748 ²	1,395,847 ²	1,395,847 ²	1,168,046	1,218,250 ²	
Great Britain	6,622,000	5,614,000	5,413,000	5,534,000	5,522,000	5,450,000
Greece	170,000 ²	170,000 ²	65,000	68,000	70,000	
Hungary ²	342,577	249,146	191,542	267,885	265,000 ²	
India ²	500,000	220,000	300,000	195,800	200,000 ²	
Italy	2,099,900 ²	3,443,444 ²	2,512,010	2,379,075	2,150,511	
Japan	110,658	137,491	125,551	175,454	234,698	272,000
Latvia ²	50,000	25,450	23,658	41,017	44,000 ²	
Luxemburg ²	26,466	12,600	12,600	14,087	14,000 ²	
Mexico ²	710,000	800,000	1,030,000	838,000	800,000 ²	
Norway	95,965	83,640	85,672	92,767	100,000 ²	
New Zealand	97,719	96,838	94,438	96,822 ²	100,540	
Holland	640,044	573,573	517,914	497,486	493,500	
Poland ²	822,777	1,232,567	769,811	539,089	475,000 ²	
Portugal	100,000	50,000	50,000 ²	36,000	36,000 ²	
Rumania	170,309 ²	81,822 ²	78,206 ²	46,863 ²	46,853 ²	40,636
Russia	7,913,600	4,546,300	5,550,900	6,430,500	7,847,000	8,768,200
Sweden ²	301,018	324,917	400,022	451,650	470,000 ²	500,000
Switzerland	349,172	238,667	298,901	261,713	250,000 ²	
Czechoslovakia	1,976,923	1,712,934	1,627,506	1,669,456	1,708,598	
Yugoslavia ²	250,000	76,156	59,692	64,000	66,000 ²	
Totals for all countries (in round numbers)	47,013,000	42,688,000	37,568,000	35,535,000	35,612,000	

¹ The figures are for the end of each year from 1921 to 1925. Where figures are given for 1926 they apply to varying dates in the course of the year.

² This indicates that as figures were not obtainable from original sources the figures supplied in the Year Book of the International Federation of Trade Unions have been taken instead.

³ In the absence of later information the figures for the previous year have been taken.

⁴ Approximate figures.

The table on page 394 gives the general situation concerning the membership of trade unions in the years 1921-1926. For the 34 countries included in the table, the estimated total membership was in 1921 in round figures 47 millions. This declined to $42\frac{3}{4}$ millions in 1922, and $37\frac{1}{2}$ millions in 1923, $35\frac{1}{2}$ millions in 1925, and increased to over $36\frac{1}{2}$ million in 1926. Though, as pointed out, these figures are the sums of estimates of varying accuracy, they may be considered as a fairly accurate picture of the aggregate membership, but it is to fluctuations in the totals for different years, rather than to actual figures, that attention should be directed.

In the previous studies published by the Office, it was estimated that trade union membership had almost trebled between 1913 and 1920 (from 16 millions to 48 millions). As will be seen from the present article, this high figure was not maintained, and in subsequent years up to 1924 trade unionism gradually declined, with a revival however in 1925, and, as far as figures are available for 1926, a further increase took place in this year. Of the 11 countries mentioned above not included in the table, it may be estimated from the following notes that the aggregate membership of these countries amounts to a little over one million, which would give a total for 1925 for all countries of 38 million.

The fluctuations in the total membership are to a very great extent dependent on the figures of a few big countries. The 9 countries which had a membership of over one million persons in 1921 (Germany, Russia, Great Britain, the United States, Italy, Czechoslovakia, Spain, Austria, France) had a combined membership of over 39 millions, out of a total of 47 millions, while Germany, Great Britain, and the United States alone accounted for practically 50 per cent. of the total membership. In 1925 these proportions were somewhat smaller, largely due to the extensive decline in trade union membership in Germany, but none the less the 9 countries above mentioned, with a membership of over one million each in 1921, had in 1925 a total membership of 30 millions, or 80 per cent. of the total world membership. It will be seen from the table that the decline in membership from 1921 to 1922 was largely due to the decline in Russia and Great Britain; the decline from 1922 to 1923 and from 1923 to 1924 was largely due to the decline in Germany.

Child Labour in the Colorado Beet Fields

A study recently completed and published by the American National Child Labour Committee¹ deals with the work of children in typical areas of the sugar beet fields of Colorado.

The study covers 434 families, in 24 school districts. To secure the information needed personal visits were made to the homes of the

¹ NATIONAL CHILD LABOUR COMMITTEE: *Children working in the Sugar Beet Fields of certain Districts of the South Platte Valley, Colorado*. New York, 1925.