

# INTERNATIONAL LABOUR REVIEW

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## 'The Seventeenth Session of the International Labour Conference

**T**HE Seventeenth Session of the International Labour Conference was held in Geneva from 8 to 30 June 1933. The formal agenda of the Session comprised the following items :

- (1) Abolition of fee-charging employment agencies ;
- (2) Invalidity, old-age, and widows' and orphans' insurance ;
- (3) Unemployment insurance and various forms of relief for the unemployed ;
- (4) Methods of providing rest and alternation of shifts in
  - automatic sheet-glass works ;
- (5) Reduction of hours of work : report of the Tripartite Preparatory Conference.

The first two questions were the subject of a preliminary discussion at the Sixteenth (1932) Session of the Conference, and, in accordance with the double-discussion procedure, the Conference was this year asked to consider them with a view to the adoption of Draft Conventions or Recommendations.

The third and fourth items were submitted to the Conference for preliminary discussion in order to fix the points on which Governments should be consulted before the Conference entered on the second stage of the double-discussion procedure.

The fifth item, that of the reduction of hours of work, was added to the original agenda of the Seventeenth Session of the Conference by the Governing Body in circumstances which are described below.

In addition to these items, the Conference was as usual called upon to consider a number of other matters which were not formally placed on the agenda : the Report of the Director of the International Labour Office, the annual reports on the application of Conventions submitted by Governments under Article 408

of the Treaty of Versailles, the reports of the Governing Body on the working of certain Conventions which had been in force for about ten years, certain proposals of the Governing Body for amending the Standing Orders of the Conference, and a number of draft resolutions submitted to the Conference in accordance with the Standing Orders. In addition, a report on collective agreements in agriculture was submitted to the Conference in pursuance of a resolution of the Sixteenth Session of the Conference.

#### COMPOSITION OF THE CONFERENCE

Forty-nine States Members of the Organisation were represented at the Seventeenth Session of the Conference. This number included 27 European States, 11 Latin-American States, 7 Asiatic States, 2 African States, and Canada and Australia. The number of delegates sent by these 49 States was 159, 87 of these being Government delegates, 36 employers' delegates, and 36 workers' delegates. The advisers numbered 212. The total number of persons accredited to the Conference was thus 371. By a letter of 21 June 1933, however, the German Government representative on the Governing Body of the International Labour Office informed the President of the Conference and the Director of the Office that he had been instructed by the Federal Government to withdraw the credentials of the German delegates and advisers to the Seventeenth Session from that date. The total number of delegates and advisers was thus reduced to 347.

Two States were represented at the Conference for the first time as Members of the Organisation, namely, Turkey and Iraq. It may be recalled that for some years past a Turkish observer had attended the Sessions of the Conference.

Two other States which are not Members of the International Labour Organisation, the United States of America and Egypt, were represented at the Conference *ad audiendum* this year, the former for the first time and the latter for the second year in succession. The United States sent four observers to Geneva, and Egypt two observers.

The Conference elected as President the Italian Government Delegate, His Excellency Giuseppe de Michelis, Ambassador of H.M. the King of Italy, Senator, Member of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office, and Italian Government Delegate to most of the previous Sessions of the Conference.

As its Vice-Presidents the Conference elected Mr. Creswell, Government Delegate of South Africa, Mr. Cort van der Linden, Employers' Delegate of the Netherlands, and Mr. Hayday, Workers' Delegate of the British Empire.

#### VERIFICATION OF CREDENTIALS

As in previous years, objections were raised to the appointment of certain non-Government delegates and advisers.

One of these objections, lodged by the Mexican Regional Labour Confederation and signed on behalf of this organisation by the General Secretary, Mr. Eucario León, concerned the credentials of the Mexican Workers' Delegate, Mr. Elias F. Hurtado. While recognising that, historically speaking, the Mexican Regional Labour Confederation had undoubtedly been the most representative organisation in the sense required by the Treaty of Versailles, the Credentials Committee did not find in the letter of objection any proof that, following upon the scissions that had taken place, the Confederation still possessed this character. Consequently, the Committee unanimously decided to recommend the Conference to validate the credentials of the Mexican Workers' Delegate. The Conference adopted this proposal without opposition.

The second objection concerned the credentials of Mr. Luigi Razza, Italian Workers' Delegate, and his advisers. This objection was signed on behalf of the International Federation of Trade Unions by Messrs. Léon Jouhaux and Corneille Mertens, Vice-Presidents, and Mr. Schevenels, General Secretary of the Federation. As the Conference had already had to consider objections against the appointment of the Italian Workers' Delegate in previous years, the question for decision, in accordance with the Standing Orders of the Conference, was whether the objections were based upon "facts or allegations which the Conference, by a debate and a decision referring to identical facts and allegations, has already discussed and recognised to be irrelevant or devoid of substance". The discussion in the Committee did not lead to a unanimous conclusion. The majority, constituted by the Government Delegate (Chairman) and the Employers' Delegate, concluded that the objection was not receivable, and the minority, constituted by the Workers' Delegate, that it was. Accordingly the Conference was called upon to decide by vote the preliminary question of the receivability of

the objection. By 90 votes to 28 the Conference decided that the objection was not receivable.

Finally, the Conference had to consider an objection lodged against the credentials of Dr. Robert Ley, German Workers' Delegate, and his advisers by the International Federation of Trade Unions. The Committee had already requested the German Government Delegates to communicate to it any observations which their Government might wish to make, and also had before it a statement presented by the Workers' Delegate on the Committee, when it was informed of the decision of the German Government, noted above, to withdraw the credentials of the German delegation. In view of these circumstances, the Committee considered that it would serve no useful purpose to pursue the examination of the question, and the Conference supported this view.

The Credentials Committee noted that of the 49 States represented at the Conference, 12 had appointed only Government delegates. The Conference had already had occasion to consider this matter in previous years and had drawn the attention of States to the unfortunate effect of this dislocation of the equilibrium between the different elements (Governments, employers, and workers) from the standpoint of the work of the Conference. It once more drew attention in this connection to the binding character of the obligations arising out of Article 389 of the Treaty of Versailles.

#### TRIBUTES TO THE MEMORY OF ALBERT THOMAS AND ARTHUR FONTAINE

The Conference was meeting for the first time since the great and irreparable loss which the Organisation had suffered by the death of Albert Thomas, the first Director of the International Labour Office, and Secretary-General of the Conference at fifteen consecutive Sessions, who died on 7 May 1932, a few days after the closing of the Sixteenth Session of the Conference.

The Conference began its proceedings with a tribute to his memory. Sir Atul Chatterjee, Chairman of the Governing Body, spoke in eloquent terms of the great qualities which Albert Thomas possessed and the part he played in building up the Organisation and directing its work. On behalf of the Conference he expressed the deepest sympathy with the bereaved family, the International Labour Office, and the French nation.

Mr. Oersted, for the Employers' Group, Mr. Jouhaux, for the Workers' Group, Mr. Yoshisaka, for the Japanese Government, and Mr. Harold Butler, the present Director of the Office, associated themselves with the tribute, and Mr. Justin Godart acknowledged, on behalf of France, the honour paid to one of her most distinguished sons.

Apart from this formal ceremony organised in his memory, the proceedings of the Conference, whether in the plenary sittings or in committees, were marked by frequent references to the pioneer work accomplished by Albert Thomas. While steps are being taken to honour his memory by the erection of a monument, the general feeling among delegates at the Conference was that the achievements of the Organisation to which he devoted a considerable part of his life will be his most fitting memorial.

Members of the Conference had also the opportunity of taking part in a ceremony organised in honour of the late Arthur Fontaine, Chairman of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office from its foundation until 1931. A bronze bust of Arthur Fontaine was unveiled in the grounds of the Office on Wednesday, 21 June, in the presence of a large gathering of members of the Governing Body, delegates to the Conference, representatives of the League of Nations, representatives of the French Government, the Geneva authorities, and members of the staff of the Office. The speeches which were delivered on the occasion, notably by Mr. François Albert, French Minister of Labour, bore eloquent testimony to the outstanding qualities of Arthur Fontaine, and recalled the great part which he played in the creation of the International Labour Organisation and the invaluable services he rendered in guiding its work, side by side with Albert Thomas, during the twelve years for which he presided over the Governing Body.

#### ABOLITION OF FEE-CHARGING EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES

This question formed the subject of a preliminary discussion at the Sixteenth Session of the Conference, and the Conference, after drawing up a list of points on which the Governments were to be consulted with a view to a second discussion, placed it on the agenda of the Seventeenth Session. The results of the consultation of Governments were embodied in the "Blue Report" which the Office submitted to the Conference. The

conclusions of the report contained drafts for a Convention and a Recommendation.

The Conference decided to take the Blue Report as a basis for discussion, and referred the question to a Committee of 27 members, 9 from each Group. The Chairman was Mr. Niilo Mannio, Government Delegate of Finland, who had also been Chairman of the Committee which dealt with the same subject at the Sixteenth Session of the Conference. The Vice-Chairmen were Mr. Mullie, Adviser to the Belgian Employers' Delegate, and Mr. Elvin, Adviser to the British Workers' Delegate. The Reporter was Madame Letellier, Adviser to the French Government delegation.

In the course of a long discussion on the definition of fee-charging employment agencies to be contained in the Draft Convention, the Committee recognised that these fell broadly into two categories—those which charged fees and were managed as a business with a view to profit, and those which charged fees but were not carried on on commercial lines and in connection with which it was not sought to make a profit. It was realised that there was also a third category of employment agencies, which charged no fees at all but subsisted on funds derived from other sources. The majority of the Committee were of opinion that agencies falling within the first category should be abolished, while those in the second category might be allowed to exist subject to supervision by the authorities and to certain restrictions regarding charges made, etc. To facilitate this supervision the Committee adopted a provision to the effect that all agencies, including those in the third category, should be required to notify the authorities if they engaged in placing, even although their services might be given free of charge.

The Committee considered a number of proposals as to the time limit for the abolition of commercial employment agencies, and decided that a period of three years should be allowed for this purpose. During the period preceding abolition no new commercial agencies are to be established, while existing ones are to be supervised by the authorities.

In addition to a general exception in the case of employment agencies catering for seamen, which case had been dealt with in a previous Convention<sup>1</sup>, the Committee recognised that certain

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<sup>1</sup> Draft Convention for establishing facilities for finding employment for seamen (Genoa, 1920).

exceptions to the general principle of abolition might be necessary. It was decided, however, that such exceptions should be limited to the case of agencies catering for workers belonging to categories exactly defined by national law and to occupations in which the conditions are of a special character. Any agencies for which exceptions are allowed are to be subject to a number of restrictions, including a yearly licence renewable at the discretion of the authorities during a period not exceeding ten years. The Committee also decided that no new fee-charging agencies for these special cases should be established after a transitional period of three years, but nevertheless adopted by 13 votes to 11 a proposal by the Norwegian and Swedish Government representatives to allow this to be done "in exceptional cases when necessary to meet special requirements". This latter proposal was, however, rejected by the Conference before the final vote on the Draft Convention was taken.

The draft Recommendation contained suggestions for the adaptation of public employment offices to the requirements of those having recourse to them, and recommended that persons engaged in certain occupations should be forbidden to carry on placing work.

The Draft Convention as submitted by the Committee was adopted by the Conference with two amendments.

At the preliminary vote the Conference had accepted an amendment proposed by the Netherlands Government, to the effect that when a licence had been issued by the authorities to a person before the ratification of the Convention, it should be renewable until the death of the licensee. This proposal, combined with that mentioned above according to which new agencies might be established in exceptional cases at any time, would have considerably diminished the scope of the Draft Convention. Some delegations even considered that a draft amended in this way would become wholly inoperative. At their request, accordingly, the President of the Conference decided to apply the special procedure provided for in the Standing Orders, which allows him, before the final vote, to accept important amendments to the text prepared by the Drafting Committee. Advantage was taken of this procedure to move the deletion of the words above referred to, namely, "save in exceptional cases when necessary to meet special requirements", in the provision prohibiting the establishment of new agencies in special cases. This was adopted by 78 votes to 26. An amendment was also

moved to delete the phrase proposed by the Netherlands Government delegation and adopted previously, namely, " provided that a licence issued to an individual before the ratification of this Convention may be renewed until the death of the licensee ". On reconsideration, the Conference, as mentioned above, reversed its previous decision, and adopted the amendment for the deletion of the phrase by 67 votes to 36. The Draft Convention was then adopted by 91 votes to 20, and the Recommendation by 92 votes to 7.<sup>1</sup>

### INVALIDITY, OLD-AGE, AND WIDOWS' AND ORPHANS' INSURANCE<sup>2</sup>

The question of invalidity, old-age, and widows' and orphans' insurance was on the agenda of the Seventeenth Session for a second and final discussion. Accordingly the Conference had before it a " Blue Report " prepared by the Office on the basis of the replies to the questionnaire drawn up as a result of the first discussion. The Conference decided to take this report as a basis for discussion ; it contained six drafts for Conventions and two draft Recommendations.

The question was referred to a Committee consisting of 63 members, 21 representing the Governments, 21 representing the employers and 21 representing the workers. It appointed the following officers : Chairman : Mr. Jurkiewicz, Government Delegate of Poland ; Vice-Chairmen : Mr. Tzaut, Employers' Delegate of Switzerland, and Mr. Buisson, Adviser to the French Workers' Delegate ; Reporters : Sir Walter Kinnear, Government Delegate of the British Empire, Mr. Stern, Adviser to the Czechoslovak Government delegation, and Mr. Giorgio, Swiss Government Delegate.

The Committee held 23 sittings and submitted to the Conference six proposed Draft Conventions, one draft Recommendation, and a draft Resolution, upon the basis of which the Conference took the following decisions :

<sup>1</sup> For the full text of the Draft Convention and the Recommendation, cf. *Official Bulletin*, Vol. XVIII, No. 4, Aug. 1933, pp. 299-305.

<sup>2</sup> On account of the wide scope and importance of the question dealt with by this Committee, it would be impossible to give a full account of its proceedings within the brief space available in this article. Accordingly, only a very summary account of the composition of the Committee, the proposals submitted by it to the Conference, and the decisions taken by the Conference is given in this article. In a subsequent issue of the *Review*, a special article will be published dealing in fuller detail with the question of invalidity, old-age, and widows' and orphans' insurance as dealt with by the Conference.



By 106 votes to 5, the Conference adopted a Draft Convention concerning compulsory old-age insurance for persons employed in industrial or commercial undertakings, in the liberal professions, and for outworkers and domestic servants.

By 84 votes to 17, the Conference adopted a corresponding Draft Convention applying to persons employed in agricultural undertakings.

By 89 votes to 7, and by 75 votes to 18, the Conference adopted two similar Draft Conventions concerning invalidity insurance.

By 92 votes to 6, and by 73 votes to 18, Conference adopted two further Draft Conventions concerning widows' and orphans' insurance.

By 72 votes to 20, the Conference adopted a Recommendation indicating certain general principles calculated to promote a just and effective organisation of old-age, invalidity and widows' and orphans' insurance.<sup>1</sup>

The Conference, in virtue of paragraph 3 of Article 402 of the Peace Treaty, also decided by 75 votes to 15 to place on the agenda of its 1934 Session for first discussion the question of the "maintenance of acquired rights and rights in course of acquisition, under invalidity, old-age, and widows' and orphans' insurance, on behalf of workers who transfer their residence from one country to another".

#### UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE AND VARIOUS FORMS OF RELIEF FOR THE UNEMPLOYED

The question of unemployment insurance and various forms of relief for the unemployed appeared on the agenda of the Seventeenth Session for a first discussion. It was not, however, entirely new to the Conference. As early as its First Session in Washington (1919) a Draft Convention and Recommendation concerning unemployment had been adopted. The Recommendation suggested that the States Members should establish an effective system of unemployment insurance, and the Convention provided, among other things, for equality of treatment for national and foreign workers in respect of insurance benefits, on terms to be agreed upon between the Members concerned.

As is indicated by the terms in which the Governing Body placed the question on the agenda, the intention was that the

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<sup>1</sup> For the full text of the Draft Conventions and the Recommendation, cf. *Official Bulletin*, Vol. XVIII, No. 4, Aug. 1933, pp. 306-373.

Conference should take up and amplify the work it had done at Washington, and should establish international regulations applicable to all the forms in which assistance may be given to the unemployed. These regulations were, in principle, to cover all wage earners, seamen being the only class of worker excluded in advance. It will be remembered that a Recommendation on the subject of the unemployment insurance of seamen was adopted at the Second Session of the Conference (Genoa, 1920), together with a Draft Convention relating to unemployment indemnity in case of loss or foundering of the ship.

Without submitting the question to general discussion, the Conference referred it to a Committee of 48 members (16 from each Group). The Chairman of the Committee was Mr. J. F. G. Price, British Government Delegate, with Mr. G. L. Gérard, Belgian Employers' Delegate, and Mr. R. Robert, Adviser to the Swiss Workers' Delegate, as Vice-Chairmen, and Mr. A. M. Joeke, Netherlands Government Delegate, as Reporter.

Taking the Grey Report prepared by the Office as the basis of its discussion, the Committee held ten sittings, in the course of which it had to consider over forty amendments to the draft conclusions of the report. There was no opposition to the principle under discussion, the Committee recognising that, subject to conditions which remained to be fixed, it was desirable that provision should be made for the involuntarily unemployed. The Committee also agreed that the matter should be dealt with by a Convention and a supplementary Recommendation, it being understood that the final decision on this point would lie with the Eighteenth Session of the Conference, which would have before it the replies of the Governments to the Questionnaire. Such a Convention might cover systems of compulsory unemployment insurance, voluntary unemployment insurance, unemployment relief, or a combination of these different methods or of any two of them. The Committee also considered that the list of points on which Governments should be consulted should apply to short time in the same way as to total unemployment. Finally, it recognised the advisability of allowing for the possibility of different arrangements for normal conditions and for times of depression on a number of points, such as benefits and financial resources. Various amendments of detail were made to the draft prepared by the Office, and several new points were added—for instance, in connection with home workers, apprentices, and student employees.

Among the questions that gave rise to most discussion was that of the means test. In spite of the opposition of the Workers' Group, however, it was decided to consult Governments on this point. On the other hand, the Committee deleted from the Office's draft the points relating to married workers, maximum rates of benefit, and benefits in kind. The Committee considered that the Governments should be consulted on the position of the unemployed in social insurance schemes (sickness, invalidity, old age, etc.) and the desirability of providing for the financial participation of the public authorities and the bodies which administer unemployment benefit schemes, in order that the unemployed who are no longer able to pay their contributions may not forfeit their right to benefit in case of sickness, invalidity, old age, etc.

On the question of financial resources, the Committee added several points to the Office draft, with a view to the consultation of Governments on the measures to be taken to ensure the raising of the sums necessary for the payment of benefit, the question whether such measures should be fixed by the international regulations, the measures to be taken in order to maintain financial soundness, and, finally, emergency funds.

The discussion on questions of administrative organisation was comparatively short. The Committee, however, decided unanimously that the regulations should provide for the participation of women in the administration of benefit schemes.

The last point on which differences of opinion arose was that of the treatment of foreigners. The Committee declined to provide for the possibility of a special Convention on this question and, after rejecting a proposal to establish unconditional equality of treatment, decided to place before the Governments only the alternatives of equality of treatment of foreign workers as regards benefits, provided they fulfil the same conditions as national workers, and equality of treatment limited to foreign workers who are nationals of a country which has ratified the Convention or which in practice applies the principle. A supplementary point was added to cover the case of workers in frontier zones having their residence in one country and working in a neighbouring country.

At the plenary sitting of the Conference to which the report was submitted the discussion was brief. The Workers' Group accepted the Committee's conclusions, since they would enable the Governments to be consulted on a wide range of points. The

workers' representatives urged, however, that the regulations adopted should guarantee unemployed persons of all occupations compensation for the involuntary loss of their livelihood, insisting that voluntary relief granted for certain periods only and subject to withdrawal on various pretexts was wholly insufficient. Such regulations should apply without distinction of age or sex, and to workers on short time as well as to the totally unemployed. The position of foreign workers should be regulated by liberal and definite provisions, and, finally, the means test should be abolished.

The Employers declared that they were not hostile to the principle of relief for involuntary unemployment, but at the same time made certain reservations in regard to the form of international regulations proposed, considering that it would be possible to deal with the question in detail by a Recommendation supplementing that of 1919. They denied the possibility of admitting certain categories of independent workers to benefit schemes, maintaining that international labour legislation should apply only to workers bound by a contract of employment. Finally, they regretted that the Committee had deleted from the Office draft the point concerning the maximum rate of benefit in relation to wages.

The proposal to delete the point relating to the means test was not adopted. The Conference then approved without opposition the draft conclusions contained in the Committee's report.

Finally, it was decided by 93 votes to 4 to place the question of unemployment insurance and various forms of relief for the unemployed on the agenda of the Eighteenth Session of the Conference.

#### METHODS OF PROVIDING REST AND ALTERNATION OF SHIFTS IN AUTOMATIC SHEET-GLASS WORKS

This item was on the agenda of the Conference for a first discussion, but, in fact, the question of hours of work in glass works had already been twice discussed by the Conference. In 1924 the Conference provisionally adopted (under the double-reading procedure then in force) the preliminary draft of a Convention on weekly suspension of work for 24 hours in glass-manufacturing processes where tank furnaces are used. By 1925, however, the technical developments in the industry had rendered a complete interruption of certain processes economically impossible,

and the proposed Draft Convention failed to secure the necessary two-thirds majority at the second reading.

In 1929, the Conference requested the Governing Body to consider the possibility of placing on the agenda of an early Session the question of a regular rest for sheet-glass workers. In 1930 the Governing Body decided to appoint a committee of specialists on the subject, and, on the basis of the Committee's conclusions, it decided to place the following question on the agenda of the 1933 Session of the Conference: "Methods of providing rest and alternation of shifts in automatic sheet-glass works."

The Committee appointed by the Conference to consider the Office's Grey Report and to draw up a list of points for the Questionnaire to be addressed to Governments consisted of 24 members (8 from each Group). Mr. Picquenard, French Government Adviser, was elected Chairman of the Committee, with Mr. de Benedetti, Italian Employers' Adviser, and Mr. Viktora, Czechoslovak Workers' Adviser, as Vice-Chairmen. The Reporter was Mr. Delzant, French Workers' Adviser.

As the scope of the question had been definitely limited, and the number of countries, undertakings, and workers directly affected was comparatively small, the Committee was able to deal with the matter rapidly and without long discussion.

A preliminary difficulty was disposed of by the rejection, by 10 votes to 7, of a proposal submitted by the Employer members of the Committee that consideration of the special problem of glass works should be adjourned until the Conference had decided whether it would examine the general question of the 40-hour week with a view to the adoption of international regulations. The subsequent discussion of the list of points for the Questionnaire revealed little difference of opinion save on two or three matters.

As regards the form of the regulations, the Committee expressed the view that the question with which it was dealing was one peculiarly susceptible of regulation by means of a Convention, and that in the special circumstances of the industry a Recommendation would have little value.

As regards the scope of application, the discussion brought out clearly the Committee's intention that the regulation should be applied only to workers employed on a shift system in sheet-

glass works and not to other workers who might be employed in such works ; that definitions of the terms "shift" and "automatic" were required ; and that attention should be specially called to the continuous character of sheet-glass drawing as a means of defining what were automatic processes in the industry.

The Committee then discussed the question of the number of hours of work per week. The Office's draft list of points mentioned 56, 48, and 42 hours per week, these being the durations actually in operation in accordance with the various shift systems applied in the industry. The Committee decided that Governments should be consulted simply as to the maximum number of hours per week, deleting all reference to the 56, 48, or 42-hour week ; but it indicated that the system of hours of work and rest should in any case be more favourable than that provided for in Article 4 of the Washington Hours Convention, and that the system of four shifts seemed to be the best adapted to ensuring rest periods as well as suitable hours of work, without, however, excluding the possibility of other equivalent systems being taken into consideration after a more thorough examination.

No difficulty arose on the question of the extension of hours of work in the case of accident, etc., and in the case of change-over of shifts where an extension might be required to ensure the normal sequence of shifts, or on the point dealing with extra pay for occasional overtime. The point dealing with extra pay for work on Sundays and public holidays, on the contrary, gave rise to an acute difference of opinion in the Committee, and was again discussed in the plenary sitting of the Conference. The Office's draft list of points included "extra pay for Sunday, public holiday and night work". The Worker members of the Committee agreed to the deletion of the mention of night work in the expectation that the mention of Sunday and holiday work would be retained. The Employer members argued that Sunday work was rendered inevitable by the necessary continuity of the glass-drawing process, and was compensated by a shift system which enabled the length of the working week to be appreciably reduced, so that to give extra pay for Sunday work would be to give compensation twice over. Moreover, they contended that extra pay could not be regulated unless basic wages were also regulated, and that if the extra pay were calculated as a percentage of basic wages the burden would press most heavily on those coun-

tries where wages were highest. The Worker members, on the other hand, argued that Sunday work was usually recognised as meriting special compensation, and that the position of those workers who did, in fact, already receive higher pay for Sunday work ought not to be prejudiced. They also pointed out that the Governments were to be asked for their views on the question of principle only. On a record vote, the Committee decided by 11 votes to 8 with 3 abstentions to maintain the reference to extra pay for work on Sundays and public holidays.

In the plenary sitting of the Conference this question was again briefly debated, and the amendment submitted by the Employers' Group was defeated by 69 votes to 21.

On the question of supervision, the Committee decided simply to supplement the Office draft by a specific enquiry as to whether any measures were necessary in addition to those already prescribed by the Washington Convention on hours of work.

The Indian Government member of the Committee raised the question of possible minor adaptations of the Convention to meet the special conditions in India and other tropical countries (where, for example, Sunday is not regarded in the same way as it is in European countries). The Committee decided by 11 votes to 5 to include a point raising in general terms the question whether any adaptations were necessary.

The last proposal considered by the Committee was whether the coming into force of the international regulations should be made subject to certain conditions, and, in particular, to ratification by a certain number of States to be named. Worker members of the Committee opposed this suggestion, and the Chairman pointed out that the inclusion in the Convention of a fixed and unchangeable list of States, ratification by which would be a condition precedent to its coming into force, would give rise to serious inconveniences without any real advantage. The proposal was rejected on a record vote by 14 votes to 3, with 3 abstentions.

The Committee's report as a whole was adopted unanimously and when submitted to the Conference was approved by 83 votes to nil. Finally, the Conference decided by 94 votes to 24 that the question of methods of providing rest and alternation of shifts in automatic sheet-glass works should be placed on the agenda of the next Session of the Conference.

## REDUCTION OF HOURS OF WORK

This question was brought before the Conference in somewhat special circumstances, which it may be of interest to mention.

Following on the discussion which had been taking place in the International Labour Organisation since the end of 1930 on the idea of a reduction of hours of work as a means of diminishing unemployment, and notably after the adoption by the Sixteenth Session of the Conference of a resolution inviting the Governing Body to investigate the question of the early adoption of international regulations on the 40-hour week, Mr. de Michelis, Italian Government representative, addressed a communication to the Chairman of the Governing Body in July 1932 pressing for the adoption of an emergency procedure for exploring the possibility of framing international proposals on the problem for immediate application. In response to this appeal, the Governing Body in the following September decided to convene a Tripartite Preparatory Conference for making a preliminary survey of the problem with reference to the whole field of economic activity, excluding agriculture and maritime work. A few weeks later, in October, the Governing Body further decided to place the question on the agenda of the Seventeenth Session of the International Labour Conference for further consideration on the basis of the report which would be submitted by the Tripartite Preparatory Conference.

The Tripartite Preparatory Conference met at Geneva from 10 to 25 January 1933<sup>1</sup>, and its report was submitted to the Governing Body in February 1933. The Governing Body then directed that the report should be communicated to Governments for their information and observations.

The Governing Body left the Conference itself to decide whether it would deal with the question on its agenda by way of a first discussion only, or whether it would treat the matter as urgent and discuss it with a view to decisions being taken at that Session in the form of Draft Conventions or Recommendations. It instructed the Office to supply the Conference with all the material necessary to enable it to adopt at its discretion either of these two procedures. The Office accordingly submitted to the Seventeenth Session a Grey-Blue Report which put forward, on the basis of the conclusions of the Tripartite

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. "The Preparatory Conference on the Forty-Hour Week", by Fernand MAURETTE, in *International Labour Review*, Vol. XXVII, No. 3, March 1933, pp. 299-326.



Preparatory Conference, certain concrete proposals for consideration by the Seventeenth Session whichever procedure it should decide to adopt. These proposals took the form, on the one hand, of a list of points on which Governments might be consulted and which could be made the basis for a Questionnaire, in case the Conference decided to hold only a first discussion, and, on the other hand, of preliminary drafts for three Conventions and a Recommendation, in case the Conference preferred to proceed immediately to final decisions.

In these circumstances, when the Seventeenth Session of the Conference met, a general discussion took place on a preliminary point raised at the outset by the Employers' Group (excluding the Italian Employers' representative), i.e. whether, in the terms of Article 6 (5) of the Standing Orders, the item on the agenda was "suitable to form the subject of a Draft Convention or Recommendation". The Conference was also asked to decide whether the question should be dealt with by way of a first or of a single and final discussion. The Employers' Group (excluding the Italian Employers' representative) maintained the view that a compulsory reduction of hours of work could not remedy unemployment or mitigate the present depression and accordingly was not suitable to form the subject of a Draft Convention at all, the real solution of the unemployment problem in its opinion depending on the measures for restoring confidence and normal economic activity which were to be considered by the London Monetary and Economic Conference. The Workers, on the other hand, urged that a reduction of hours of work was required by technical progress, industrial evolution, and the existing depression, and that the Conference should proceed to frame a draft international Convention on the subject without further delay, thus supporting in the social field the measures to be taken at London in the economic field. Among the Government representatives opinion was divided as to whether a first or a single and final discussion should be held, some being in favour of proceeding immediately to the consideration of a Draft Convention, in view of the world unemployment situation, and others considering that the problem required still further investigation.

At the close of the general discussion the Conference took the following decisions: (1) that the item on the agenda was suitable to form the subject of a Draft Convention or Recommendation (95 votes to 26); (2) that the procedure of a single discussion should not be adopted (69 votes to 55); and (3) that the

usual double-discussion procedure should be followed, involving only a first discussion at that Session (86 votes to 22).

The Conference accordingly referred the item on its agenda to a Committee of 75 members (25 from each Group) to draw up the points on which the Governments were to be consulted by a Questionnaire for the purpose of the second discussion at the 1934 Session. The Employers' Group agreed to take part in the work of this Committee, but emphasised that this fact did not imply that it had in any way modified its attitude and views.

The Committee appointed as Chairman Mr. Bullrich, Argentine Government Delegate; as Vice-Chairmen Mr. Cort van der Linden, Netherlands Employers' Delegate, and Mr. Chevalme, Adviser to the French Workers' Delegate; and as Reporter Mr. Anselmi, Italian Government Delegate. The Committee took the list of points proposed in the Grey-Blue Report as the basis of its discussions.

The discussions began with certain new points which the British Government representative and the Employers' Group respectively considered should be added at the head of the Office's list of points. This list opened by referring to the "desirability of drawing up, in the form of a Convention, international regulations for the reduction of hours of work as a remedy for unemployment". The British Government representative proposed that before this question was put to Governments the latter should be asked to enquire into the effect on employment and unemployment of a reduction of hours of work with maintenance of full-time earnings, and into the number of hours being worked and the extent to which short time is in operation, either by a shorter week for all workers in an establishment, or by the rotation of workers on full time.

The Employers' Group proposed that a series of points should be inserted at the outset of the Questionnaire relating to the present position in the respective countries as regards such matters as numbers employed and unemployed, existing weekly hours of work, extent and methods of any reduction in practice of the average working week, and seasonal industries. The Employers' Group proposed that mention should then be made of the probable effects of a 40-hour week on employment and unemployment, cost of production, and the general national economy (according as wages are maintained or not), and on social insurance schemes, and also the technical practicability of reducing hours of work to 40 per week. In the Employers'

opinion, information on ascertained facts in regard to the technical and economic aspects of the problem, which in their view were fundamental, was essential for the enlightenment of public opinion and of next year's Session of the Conference, and should in any case be collected before Governments could contemplate the drawing up of a Draft Convention.

These amendments were opposed by the Workers' representatives, because they feared that the inclusion of these new and far-reaching points in the Questionnaire would sidetrack the problem, as they might lead to long and extensive investigations, and if these were not completed in time this fact might be made an argument for postponing the framing of a Draft Convention at next year's Session of the Conference. Reservations were also made by the French and Italian Government representatives respectively as to the suitability of the new points proposed for inclusion in a Questionnaire and the practical possibilities of Governments collecting sufficient information on them.

On the basis of a proposal made by the Belgian Government representative with a view to meeting some of these objections while at the same time securing the object which the movers of the amendments had in view, the Committee eventually decided, by a very narrow margin of votes and in spite of the opposition of the Workers' Group, to put these points, as well as a sub-amendment proposed by the South African Government representative, in a "preamble" to the Questionnaire, with an invitation to Governments to communicate their views and information on them in due course and so far as it is possible for them to do so.

So far as the points to be included in the Questionnaire itself are concerned, only two important changes were made by the Committee. In the first place, the Committee adopted, in spite of the opposition of the Employers, a proposal of the French Government representative that the first point in the Office's list should refer to the desirability of a Draft Convention for reducing hours of work, not only as a remedy for unemployment, but also "as a means of ensuring that the workers share in the benefits of technical progress". Secondly, the committee decided, on the basis of a proposal of the British Government representative and in agreement with the Workers' Group, that the question of the maintenance of wages (and the standard of living of the workers), which figured at the end of the Office's list as a separate point, should be brought into the forefront of the Questionnaire;

Governments would thus be asked at the outset to consider whether or not the proposed Convention was to provide for the maintenance of weekly wages or monthly salaries in spite of the reduction of hours, and whether this question should be dealt with in a separate Draft Convention or Recommendation.

The Employers abstained from voting on this amendment because it was governed by the amendment of the French Government representative referred to above, which, in the Employers' view, altered the whole character of the problem.

The Workers' representatives, it may be added, proposed that agriculture should be included in the range of the Questionnaire. This proposal, however, was considered not to be in order, in view of the fact that agriculture had been excluded in advance from the item on the agenda. The Workers accordingly subsequently made a declaration in the plenary Conference, urging the Governing Body to see that its Agricultural Committee, to which the decisions of the Tripartite Preparatory Conference concerning the extension of the reduction of hours of work to agriculture had been referred, should press forward its work in order that the matter could be considered at the 1934 or, at the latest, the 1935 Session of the Conference.

For the rest, the Committee adopted without much discussion and with only one or two minor modifications the list of points contained in the Grey-Blue Report, the Employers' Group, however, abstaining from the discussion and votes on all the points relating to the substantive provisions which might be included in the future international regulations, because they declined to take any responsibility in these matters.

The Committee's proposals were adopted by the Conference, no amendments being moved. The Workers' Group, however, made a declaration which, besides dealing with the question of agriculture referred to above, emphasised that, if Governments found it impossible to furnish replies on the points contained in the "Preamble" in time for next year's discussions, this should not be regarded as sufficient reason for not framing and adopting a Draft Convention at next year's Session, and also that no reduction in hours of work by international regulations could be really effective unless it were accompanied by adequate guarantees for the maintenance of weekly wages and monthly salaries.

Finally, the Conference decided by 99 votes to 24 to place the question of the reduction of hours of work on the agenda of the next Session, with a view to the second discussion.

## COLLECTIVE AGREEMENTS IN AGRICULTURE

At its Eleventh Session in 1928, the International Labour Conference, considering that "social legislation on behalf of agricultural workers appears in many countries to lag behind social legislation on behalf of industrial and other workers" and that "until an improved social legislation for agricultural workers can be enacted, collective bargaining may be employed as a preparatory means for regulating labour conditions", instructed the International Labour Office to increase its information on that subject to form the basis of a discussion at an early Session of the Conference.

At its Sixteenth Session the Conference requested the Governing Body to instruct the Office to submit a final report on the question to the Seventeenth Session. The Office accordingly submitted to the Conference a documentary study<sup>1</sup>, which was referred for examination to a Committee of 18 members (6 from each Group).

The Committee, the Chairman and Reporter of which was Dr. Rudolf Kolar, Czechoslovak Government Delegate, carefully considered the report and several of its members made interesting observations and suggestions on the subject. All agreed that the collective regulation of labour conditions offered advantages to agricultural workers, but that sufficient protection could not be provided by that means alone. While in a certain number of countries questions of wages, hours, and annual holidays can be adequately settled by this method, other questions, such as social insurance problems or the protection of women and children, can, at least in most cases, be satisfactorily dealt with only by means of legislation.

It was pointed out that in countries where attempts to introduce collective bargaining in agriculture had failed, systems of regulating wages by committees instituted by law had produced fairly satisfactory results. It was also pointed out that certain defects in collective agreements, such as the fact that unorganised employers can escape the obligations contained in the agreements, could be surmounted if these were given the force of law for agriculture as a whole.

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<sup>1</sup> INTERNATIONAL LABOUR OFFICE: *Collective Agreements in Agriculture. Studies and Reports, Series K (Agriculture), No. 11.* Geneva, 1933. 122 pp.

Various members of the Committee suggested that the Conference should draw the attention of Governments to the study made by the International Labour Office and invite them to encourage the method of collective bargaining in agriculture. Finally, they requested that the Governing Body should examine the possibility of placing the question on the agenda of an early Session of the Conference.

The observations and suggestions of the members of the Committee were embodied in a report which the Conference referred for all necessary decisions to the Governing Body of the International Office.

#### THE WORKING OF CONVENTIONS : TEN-YEARLY REPORTS

The Conference had before it reports by the Governing Body on the working of certain Conventions which had been in force for ten or about ten years. These reports, submitted in virtue of clauses in the Conventions requiring such reports to be presented at least once in ten years, related to the following Conventions :

- (1) Unemployment indemnity in case of loss or foundering of the ship (Genoa, 1920).
- (2) Age for admission of children to employment in agriculture (Geneva, 1921).
- (3) Rights of association and combination of agricultural workers (Geneva, 1921).
- (4) Workmen's compensation in agriculture (Geneva, 1921).
- (5) Use of white lead in painting (Geneva, 1921).
- (6) Weekly rest in industrial undertakings (Geneva, 1921).

The Conference had also before it two reports prepared in 1930 which the Governing Body had intended to submit to the Maritime Session of the Conference contemplated for 1932 and which related to the following Conventions :

- (7) Minimum age for admission of young persons to employment as trimmers or stokers (Geneva, 1921).
- (8) Compulsory medical examination of children and young persons employed at sea (Geneva, 1921).

The Conference took note of these eight reports and decided that those which dealt with maritime questions (numbers (1), (7), and (8) in the above list (should be referred to the next Maritime Session of the Conference.

## STANDING ORDERS

The Conference was called upon to consider certain proposals concerning its Standing Orders submitted by the Governing Body, relating to the following questions :

- (1) Proposed modification of the Revision Article to be inserted in the Draft Conventions submitted to the Seventeenth Session ;
- (2) Proposed Standing Orders for Committees of the Conference.

The Conference set up a Committee composed of 18 members (6 from each Group) to consider these questions. The Committee elected as its Chairman Mr. Contumas, Greek Government Delegate, and as its Vice-Chairmen Mr. Oersted, Danish Employers' Delegate, and Mr. Serrarens, Adviser to the Netherlands Workers' Delegate. Mr. Oersted was also appointed Reporter.

In connection with the preparation of the proposed Draft Conventions on social insurance submitted to the Conference, the Governing Body had been led to consider how far the form of the Article defining the legal consequences of revision of Conventions approved by the Conference in 1929 was appropriate for insertion in those Conventions, and had come to the conclusion that a slight modification was desirable, leaving it to that Session of the Conference at which revision might be discussed to decide whether or not ratification of a new revising Convention should *ipso jure* involve denunciation of the original Convention. If the Conference decided that denunciation was not *ipso jure* involved, the reciprocal obligations assumed by one State towards another would not lapse owing to the ratification of the new revising Convention, and two States of which only one had ratified the revising Convention would still be bound as regards each other by the reciprocal terms of the earlier Convention.

The Governing Body had made it quite clear that the proposed modification concerned only the Draft Conventions which might be adopted at the Seventeenth Session of the Conference ; and it instructed the Office to submit to it a report on the whole question at the October Session of the Governing Body so that it could further consider the terms of the Revision Article to be inserted in future Conventions.

The Committee unanimously approved the Governing Body's proposal and on its advice the Conference inserted the modified Revision Article in the Conventions which it adopted at its Seventeenth Session.

During the Sixteenth (1932) Session of the Conference, the proposed Standing Orders for Committees had been put into provisional operation in all the Committees to which they referred, and the Officers and members of those Committees had been requested to furnish the Office with any observations or suggestions which they might have to offer as regards those Standing Orders. The Conference had also requested the Governing Body to draw up a final text of those Standing Orders in the light of any such suggestions made and to submit it to the Conference at its Seventeenth Session.

The Governing Body had accordingly prepared a final text which, with certain slight modifications, was approved by the Committee, and subsequently by the Conference. The Conference also adopted certain consequential amendments in its own Standing Orders.

#### THE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

The Director's Report for this year was again devoted largely to the economic depression and its social aspects. It described the onward march of the depression since March 1932, and stated that despite great efforts and the expenditure of huge sums the number of unemployed had not been reduced and had continued to increase; wage cutting had not proved an effective remedy in the countries where it had been attempted, for the consuming power of the masses had fallen still further and the marketing of products had become even more difficult; and the strain imposed on social insurance institutions had grown greater.

The Report next described the action of the International Labour Organisation in the face of this complex of difficulties. The most important proofs of its activity had been the increase in the number of ratifications registered during the year despite the depression, the part played in the summoning of the World Economic Conference, and the efforts to find a partial remedy for unemployment in the reduction of hours of work which had led to the submission of the question to a Preparatory Conference and to the International Labour Conference itself.

In conclusion the Report sought to define the aims to which all discussion on economic and social problems is now being



directed and to sketch the various forms which economic planning could take.

As usual, the Conference gave up several sittings to a discussion of the Report, in which 47 Government, Employers', and Workers' representatives, the observers from the United States and Egypt, the Spanish Minister of Labour, and the Under-Secretary of State in the Italian Ministry of Corporations took part, giving a total of 52 speakers. This number included 28 representatives from European countries and 24 representatives from overseas countries.

A debate of these dimensions cannot be briefly summarised ; it may however be stated that while the delegates made a point of expressing their confidence in the Organisation, many gave vent to the uneasiness and fear which the existing depression aroused in them. Representatives of the Workers' Group criticised what they described as the inaction of Governments in face of mounting difficulties ; deplored the procrastination which had characterised the proceedings in respect of the 40-hour week ; and strongly recommended the organisation and co-ordinated execution of large-scale public works as a means of abolishing unemployment and stabilising labour conditions in general. Representatives of the Employers' Group stated their belief that social policy could only be conducted within the bounds of economic possibilities. Some of them opposed the idea of economic planning, which they regarded as a step in the direction of economic despotism, and spoke in favour of developing solidarity and collaboration between employers and workers as a means of improving the existing situation. Further, certain employers challenged the truth of the assertion that technological unemployment was a serious problem. Most of the Government delegates who took part in the debate approved the anti-unemployment measures suggested by the Director in his Report. Certain of them, and in particular representatives of emigration countries, insisted on the importance of well-organised public works and settlement schemes, while others stressed the value of directing migration.

It should be added that representatives of overseas countries, and in particular those of Latin America, once again raised the question of closer relations between the Organisation and these countries.

In replying, the Director brought out the dominant points of the debate, and defined what he believed to be the principal

immediate tasks confronting the Organisation. One of these was to deal with the difficult problem of the growing competition between the old advanced industrial countries and some of the newer industrial countries overseas, for there was a danger that it might have the effect of debasing the standard of living obtaining in the former group. A second task was to study technological unemployment, a question which was closely bound up with that of the reduction of hours of work as part of the general problem of industrial reconstruction. Lastly, when monetary stability returned, it would be the duty of the Organisation to stimulate the execution of great enterprises tending to restore the flow of credit and revive industrial activity, and therefore exceeding the usual scope of the term "public works". This formidable programme confronting the Organisation showed that it could not stand still in the face of a world which was moving with great rapidity out of its tracks into new and untried paths.

#### ANNUAL REPORTS UNDER ARTICLE 408

"Generally speaking, the application of the ratified Conventions seems to be more and more satisfactory, and if the Governments continue in future to show the same good will as in the past, the discrepancies which still give rise to observations can be eliminated." This was the broad conclusion reached by the Committee which the Conference set up this year to examine the annual reports submitted by the Governments on the application of the ratified Conventions, in accordance with Article 408 of the Treaty of Versailles.

The Committee consisted of 30 members (10 from each Group). It elected as Chairman Mr. Robert Campbell Ferguson, Government Delegate of the Irish Free State. Mr. Ferguson was however obliged to return to his country, and the Committee then appointed as Chairman Mr. Affonso Rodrigues-Pereira, Government Delegate of Portugal. As Vice-Chairmen it appointed Mr. Theodore Schmidt, Employers' Delegate of Austria, and Mr. Francis Spalowsky, Adviser to the Austrian Workers' Delegate. As Reporter it appointed Mr. Max Kaufmann, Adviser to the Government delegation of Switzerland.

As in previous years, the discussions of the Committee were based on the Summary of Annual Reports under Article 408 prepared by the International Labour Office, on the report of the Committee of Experts appended to the Summary, and also on

the replies of Governments communicating supplementary information in response to the observations made by the Committee of Experts.

After careful examination, the Committee adopted the findings of the Committee of Experts, subject to the supplementary information supplied by the Governments. The Committee made certain additional observations in cases where divergences existed between the national legislation and the ratified Conventions, on one or two questions of interpretation of the provisions of the Conventions, and also on certain cases in which the annual reports due from the Governments were either missing, late, or incomplete. The Committee also took note of the special report drawn up by Sir Selwyn Fremantle, a member of the Committee of Experts, on the application of the Conventions in colonial and other "dependent" areas.

The Committee noted with satisfaction that in most cases the observations of the Committee of Experts and of the Conference Committee had been completely successful. On the other hand, where application was still defective, it was not sufficient to take notice of divergences and imperfections; it was necessary that these should be eliminated. Since this depended primarily on the States concerned, the Committee addressed a fresh appeal to them on the subject.

The Committee again attached particular importance to the practical application of the provisions of the ratified Conventions, and stressed the desirability that the Governing Body should develop still further the points in the annual report forms relating to the practical application of the Conventions. Further, in view of the fact that the application of social legislation, international as well as national, hinges to a large extent upon the personnel of the inspection services, the Committee endorsed in principle the suggestion of the Committee of Experts that the International Labour Office should arrange for an annual meeting of representatives of inspection services for the exchange of views on the more technical aspects of the application of Conventions.

The Report of the Committee was unanimously adopted by the Conference.

#### RESOLUTIONS

As usual the Conference had submitted to it a certain number of resolutions which, according to the procedure laid down in its Standing Orders, were referred for examination to the Committee

on Resolutions. This Committee, which consisted of 12 members (4 from each Group), appointed as Chairman Mr. Renggli, Government Delegate of Switzerland, and as Reporter Mr. Justin Godart, Government Delegate of France.

The Committee was asked to consider two resolutions which were submitted after the opening of the Session but which, by reason of their urgent character, were declared receivable by the Officers of the Conference in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Standing Orders.

These two resolutions were of special importance. The first of them was submitted to the Conference on the day the Session opened, and was at once referred to the Committee on Resolutions. It was intended to be communicated to the Monetary and Economic Conference, which was to open in London shortly. It was submitted jointly by Sir Atul Chatterjee, Government Delegate of India, Mr. Oersted, Employers' Delegate of Denmark, and Mr. Jouhaux, Workers' Delegate of France, who had been appointed by the Governing Body to represent the International Labour Organisation at the London Conference. The resolution drew attention to the extent of the unemployment crisis, which deprived more than thirty million workers of the means of earning their livelihood, pointed out that it was essential that the workers should be assured of a minimum of security, and stressed the need for a resumption of economic activity which could only be secured by a revival of effective demand for the goods and services which agriculture and industry were abundantly equipped to furnish. The resolution finally called the attention of the Monetary and Economic Conference to the urgency of initiating measures aiming at the following results considered as a whole :

(1) The restoration of stable monetary conditions, national and international ;

(2) The establishment of the system of international co-operation best calculated to prevent for the future such disastrous fluctuations of the price level as must inevitably produce widespread unemployment ;

(3) The cessation of economic warfare between nations by the concerted elimination of restrictions on international exchanges and dangerous impediments to the flow of commerce, and of practices which have frequently given rise to them ;

(4) The increase in the purchasing power of the community and the maintenance or establishment of an adequate standard of living of the workers ;

(5) The restoration to circulation of the capital now lying idle by all appropriate means and notably by the adoption of a public works policy, including the following lines of action :

- (a) to set on foot immediately large-scale public works, particularly in those countries where funds are at present remaining unused ;
- (b) to secure collaboration between creditor countries and countries lacking capital, many of whom are debtors, in order to undertake in these latter countries large works likely to augment the national income and thereby to increase their capacity to meet external debts ;
- (c) to co-ordinate these measures on an international basis so as to avoid the possibility, which might arise if individual action were taken, of a disequilibrium in the balance of payments of the various countries, detrimental to international monetary stability.

The Conference adopted this resolution by 99 votes to nil. The representatives of the Organisation at the London Conference were instructed to submit it to that Conference.

The second resolution which the Officers of the Conference decided to consider as receivable in view of its urgent character also dealt with possible remedies for unemployment. It was submitted by Mr. Jouhaux, French Workers' Delegate. It pointed out that the practice of working systematic overtime would be likely to increase the volume of unemployment, and requested the Governments and industrial bodies to take all necessary steps to suspend the application of exceptions from the 48-hour week prescribed by laws or regulations or by practice, or, in exceptional cases, to reduce them to a strict minimum. The resolution further requested the International Labour Office and the States Members to exchange information on the measures taken for giving effect to the resolution.

This resolution was submitted to the Conference by the Committee on Resolutions and adopted by 77 votes to 17.

The other resolutions which the Conference adopted were submitted within the ordinary time limits laid down by the Standing Orders and were referred in the usual way to the Committee on Resolutions, which in some cases made amendments of form or substance, after hearing the authors of the resolutions, and transmitted the resolutions as amended to the Conference.

A resolution submitted by Mr. Hayday, Workers' Delegate of the British Empire, requested the Governing Body to examine all action likely to hasten the ratification of the Convention limiting hours of work in coal mines, and in particular to con-

sider the desirability of convening a tripartite conference of representatives of Governments, mine-owners, and miners of the countries concerned with a view to facilitating the simultaneous and early ratification of the Convention.

The question of finding employment for refugees compelled to leave Germany owing to the political changes which have recently taken place in that country was submitted to the Conference in a resolution presented by Mr. Kupers, Mr. Jouhaux, Mr. Mertens, and Mr. Schürch, Workers' Delegates respectively of the Netherlands, France, Belgium, and Switzerland. This resolution requested the Governing Body to instruct the International Labour Office to undertake all the necessary studies, without interfering in internal questions touching on the national sovereignty of Germany, with a view to placing the German refugees in question in various countries without detriment to the economic welfare of those countries. The Conference also decided to transmit this resolution to the League of Nations.

Three other resolutions adopted by the Conference dealt with questions which the Governing Body was asked to consider with a view to their being placed on the agenda of a future Session of the International Labour Conference.

The first of these resolutions, based upon two draft resolutions submitted respectively by Mr. Moore, Workers' Delegate of South Africa, and Mr. Sakamoto, Workers' Delegate of Japan, dealt with safety provisions for workers in the building industry.

The object of the second resolution, which was submitted by Mr. Chi Yung Hsiao and Mr. Scié Ton-Fa, Government Delegates of China, was to give effect to the studies undertaken by the Office on the question of equality of treatment for national and foreign workers.

Finally a resolution submitted by Mr. Jouhaux and Mr. Mertens related to the problem of organising public works, national and international. After recalling the work previously done in connection with this question, and emphasising the importance of organising a system of public works either in the national sphere or by international collaboration, the resolution requested the Governing Body to consider the desirability of placing on the agenda of an early Session of the Conference, by presenting a suitable report, the question of the organisation and co-ordination of national and international public works, with a view to combating unemployment and regularising the volume of employment.

## INFORMAL MEETINGS OF OVERSEA DELEGATES

In pursuance of a suggestion made by its Committee on Oversea Questions, the Governing Body authorised the Director to call an informal meeting of delegates and advisers to the Seventeenth Session of the Conference in order to discuss questions affecting the participation of distant countries in the work of the Organisation. The meeting was held on 20 June. In addition to members of overseas delegations a number of European delegates were also present. Discussion took place on a note of the Office indicating the questions which had been under consideration by the Governing Body and on which the latter had desired to take the opportunity of consulting the delegates to the Conference.

Several delegates approved the initiative taken by the Governing Body in asking the Assembly of the League of Nations to study the possibility of adopting an arrangement whereby the travelling expenses of Conference delegates could be distributed more evenly between all the States Members of the Organisation. The Workers' Group in particular considered that the adoption of a system of pooling of travelling expenses would afford a practical means of ensuring to the Conference in general and to the Workers' Group in particular the regular and effective collaboration of representatives of the workers of overseas countries.

On the question of the development of relations between overseas countries and the Office, it was agreed that it would be desirable to develop the system of correspondents' offices and correspondents in distant countries, and that until such time as the financial position could permit of this being done, efforts should be made to increase the number of missions sent to overseas countries for the study of their conditions on the spot and the dissemination of accurate information regarding the aims and activities of the Organisation. From the remarks of the Government delegates of various overseas countries, it was apparent that the Governments concerned would be prepared to do all in their power to assist the Office to send missions to their countries.

As regards the questions of interest to overseas countries which might be placed on the agenda of the Conference, a number of suggestions were made which will be brought to the notice of the Governing Body in due course.

Further, the Office had suggested to the Governments of Latin-American countries that on the occasion of the Seventeenth Session of the Conference an informal meeting should be held for the discussion of questions of special interest to these countries, including the development of their machinery for the determination and supervision of industrial conditions. The meeting was held on 30 June.

### CONCLUSIONS

In concluding this rapid survey of the work of the Seventeenth Session of the International Labour Conference, it may fairly be claimed that the Session was one of the most useful the Conference has held. Yet the conditions under which the Session opened might well have given rise to apprehensions regarding the possibility of a successful issue to its work. The intensity of the economic crisis, the great diversity of opinion on one of the most important problems with which the Session had to deal, the repercussion of the political situation, and the loss of the dynamic personality of Albert Thomas were all circumstances which seemed likely to jeopardise the success of the Conference.

But from the opening of the Session the inherent strength and vitality of the Organisation became apparent, and as it proceeded the will of the delegations to achieve the maximum possible results by international co-operation was increasingly evident. The unanimity with which, at the beginning of the Session, the Conference decided to address to the Monetary and Economic Conference the resolution summarising the views of the delegates on the action to be taken to deal with the economic situation not only showed the remarkable unity of the Organisation when confronted with vital issues, but also did much to create a favourable atmosphere for the further labours of the Conference.

It is unnecessary to recapitulate here the various phases of the organisation and work of the Conference that have been described in some detail in the body of this article, but some of its outstanding features must be mentioned.

The Conference was, in the first place, noteworthy for the number of countries represented and the presence of delegations from Turkey and Iraq, States which had been admitted to membership of the Organisation during 1932. In addition, the Conference had the pleasure of welcoming, for the second time, the



presence of observers from Egypt, and an important delegation of observers from the United States of America, including representatives of the Government and a representative of the American Federation of Labour. Remembering the great part played by the United States of America in the foundation of the International Labour Organisation, the Conference was particularly gratified at the coming of the American observers, which it interpreted as an augury of the establishment of increasingly useful relations between that great country and the Organisation. Unfortunately the Conference was deprived, in the course of the Session, of the collaboration of the German delegation, the credentials of which were withdrawn, but it may be hoped that Germany will respond to the invitation addressed to the German Government by the President, Mr. de Michelis, "to resume her place at future Sessions of the Conference, and to retain in the International Labour Organisation the place which is due to her both in virtue of her position as a large industrial country and in virtue of her importance in European affairs".

The Conference was noteworthy for its positive results. The adoption of the Draft Conventions relating to invalidity, old-age, and widows' and orphans' insurance was doubly significant. Not only did it carry further the work of completing the series of international agreements on social insurance, but it also showed the belief of the delegations in the place of social insurance in the industrial organisation of the future. The importance of social insurance was also brought into evidence by the first discussion of unemployment insurance, in preparation for the adoption of an international agreement upon this subject next year, and by the closing speech of the President in which Mr. de Michelis foreshadowed the extension and intensification of social insurance as one of the coming tasks of the Organisation. By adopting the Draft Convention on fee-charging agencies the Conference carried a step further its work for organising and safeguarding the placing of workers in employment, and the successful first discussion of the question of providing rest periods for workers in automatic sheet-glass works gives promise of the solution of a problem that had defeated the Conference at an earlier Session.

The decision to treat the discussion of the question of the 40-hour week as a first discussion only was no doubt disappoint-

ing to many who see in the reduction of hours of work a powerful weapon for fighting the economic depression. Nevertheless, it must be recognised that the opinion of the Governments and of the public of some important industrial States was not yet ready to accept this reform. It would seem, therefore, that the Conference was wise in confining its work on this subject to the preparation of the ground for a decision next year. The range of the discussion and the adoption of an exhaustive list of points on which Governments will be consulted should give good reason for the hope that a successful Convention will be adopted at the next Session of the Conference.

Finally, the adoption of the resolution addressed to the Monetary and Economic Conference, the discussion on the Director's Report, and the remarkable speech of the President at the close of the Session were of great significance for the future of the International Labour Organisation by the emphasis they laid on the inter-relation between economic problems in the stricter sense and social problems. Mr. de Michelis expressed his belief that "the conception of the unity of economic and social questions, which is increasingly tending to prevail, must be systematically recognised in the work of the Organisation", and there is no doubt that this belief was widely shared in the Conference. As the Secretary-General pointed out at the last sitting of the Session, "questions such as the extent of and remedies for technological unemployment, the commercial competition between countries whose standards of living and conditions of employment differ widely, the effect of intensive mechanisation on the workers' hours of work, health and prospects in life, the imperative need for restoring some at least of the huge army of the unemployed to work by well-conceived schemes of national equipment and improvement—all these and many other problems are at once social and economic, in treating which the two aspects cannot be disentangled." And again, in the words of the Secretary-General, "if the world is to emerge from the present crisis and is to recover something of its old prosperity, a great deal of industrial reconstruction has got to be done in which the economic and social elements must be held in their right equilibrium. The part which this Organisation is destined to play in that reconstruction is one of the principal tasks at present before it. Its future development, the value of the services it can render to the world, will largely be determined by the success with which that part is played."

The recognition of these verities alone would have made the Seventeenth Session of the International Labour Conference one of the most momentous in the annals of the Organisation. But it was also, as the bare facts of this article have shown, a Session of good will and positive achievement. The impression it left upon many who participated in its work was fittingly expressed by the Secretary-General at the end of his final speech, when he said that "the conciliatory spirit shown in this Conference, the community of view indicated by the degree of unanimity with which many of its most important decisions were taken, the strong sense of corporate feeling which has been exhibited on several occasions, are all good auguries for the future. They prove that at a time when international co-operation is encountering serious difficulties, this Organisation has not lost its vitality, its cohesion or its belief in itself, but is determined, whatever checks or obstacles it may encounter, faithfully to play the part assigned to it in creating that system of international organisation in the economic and social field without which the modern world cannot hope to realise the immense benefits which its intellectual achievements and its mechanical equipment have placed within its reach."