

Proposed Model Collective Agreement for Soviet Industry

During the last few months, the Soviet trade union press has on several occasions referred to the drafting of a model collective agreement.

As early as May 1937 the Central Council of Trade Unions, at its sixth plenary meeting¹, passed a resolution to the effect that it was necessary "to restore the practice of concluding collective agreements between the unions and the managements". The resolution went on to say that, allowing for the special features of different branches of production, the agreements should specify the main conditions of work and pay, measures of labour protection, and safety measures. The collective agreements would be signed when the economic plans for 1938 were approved.

The resolution was not, however, put into effect. In September 1938, Mr. Schvernik, First Secretary of the Central Council of Trade Unions, stated at the seventh plenary meeting² that before collective agreements could be concluded it had been necessary to revise the various systems of remuneration applied in the undertakings, since these systems had been found too complex. During the interval between the two plenary meetings, the Central Council and the central committees of the trade unions had made preparations for the revision of wage scales in certain branches of industry.

PREPARATORY WORK

The drafting of a new model collective agreement was preceded by a series of measures designed to give trade unions more say in the settlement of questions relating to wages, and by a detailed study of the situation in a number of large undertakings.

By an Order dated 11 April 1938, the Central Council set up two special sections to deal with questions of pay: one section for the pay of workers, engineers, and technical staff, in industry, transport, the postal, telegraph and telephone service, and agriculture, and another section for that of salaried employees in public institutions, State commerce, co-operative organisations, and industrial undertakings.³ Similar sections were also instituted by the central committees of the various trade unions. On 23 June 1938 regulations were issued concerning the wage sub-committees to be attached to the works and workshop committees. The new sub-committees are to consist of not less than three nor more than twenty-one members

¹ Cf. *Industrial and Labour Information*, Vol. LXII, No. 10, 7 June 1937, p. 452.

² Cf. *Industrial and Labour Information*, Vol. LXVIII, No. 4, 24 Oct. 1938, p. 129.

³ Bulletin of the Central Council of Trade Unions, 1938, No. 4.

chosen from among the Stakhanovists, shock workers, engineers, technical staff, and salaried employees.¹

The wage scales that apply more especially in the automobile and cotton industries were thoroughly investigated by the Central Council of Trade Unions and the Council of People's Commissars. The investigation showed that in the automobile industry wage scales were highly complicated and that workers therefore had difficulty in understanding them. It was observed that some skilled workers were paid at lower rates than less skilled workers; there was too great a variety in the wage scales applicable in this industry, and not enough incentive to encourage production and reduce the proportion of the production that had to be rejected. Such a state of affairs made for excessive labour turnover and hindered the development of the Stakhanovist movement.²

Similar criticisms have been levelled at the wage scales in the cotton industry.

Following these investigations, the Council of People's Commissars took steps to remedy the defects observed and revised the wage scales in the automobile and cotton industries.

The collective agreement drafted for the Stalin Motor Works in Moscow was based on the new wage scales for the automobile industry. The draft was considered by the Economic Council of the U.S.S.R. on 1 September 1938.

As Mr. Schvernink stated at the sixth plenary meeting of the Central Council of Trade Unions in September 1938, once this draft has been approved, it will be treated as a model collective agreement on which other agreements may be based. The following summary of the provisions may therefore be of interest.

DRAFT COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT FOR THE STALIN MOTOR WORKS

The review published by the Central Committee of Trade Unions³ contains an analysis of the draft, which is far more concise than the earlier collective agreement concluded in 1933. In addition to the preamble, the agreement only consists of four parts dealing with: (a) wages and working conditions; (b) management and discipline; (c) protection of labour; (d) material and cultural assistance for workers, salaried employees, engineers, and technical staff.

Draft Preamble

According to the preamble, the purpose of the collective agreement is to mobilise all the workers in the undertaking with a view to achieving the objects of the Party and the Government, those objects being to strengthen the socialist system and to increase the common wealth of the country. Both the contracting parties, the manager on the one hand, and the workers, salaried employees, engineers, and technical staff, represented by the works committee, on the other, agree to carry out the works programme, to master

¹ Bulletin of the Central Council of Trade Unions, 1938, No. 7.

² *Izvestia*, 11 May 1938.

³ *Profsoyuzy SSSR*, 1938, No. 13, pp. 104-112.

the technique of production, to reduce costs of production, to improve the product, and to work for the improvement of the material well-being of the workers and salaried employees.

With a view to achieving those objects, both parties undertake to revise the wage scales in the light of the socialist principle that pay should depend upon the quantity and quality of the work done, to improve the management of the undertaking, and to bring about the necessary conditions for a further development of socialist competition and of the Stakhanovist movement. Lastly, both parties undertake to strengthen discipline in the works and to take steps to make working conditions safer and improve the cultural and material assistance given to workers.

Wages and Working Conditions

The draft classifies workers in two groups, "operators" and "general workers". The "operators" consist of the workers who are engaged in trades practised on a large scale in the works and who are employed in production, the workers engaged in transport within the plant, fitters, and workers responsible for the technical supervision of the main production.

The "general workers", on the other hand, are those responsible for the upkeep and repair of equipment, for making and repairing tools and working appliances, and for keeping the pipes and mains, electrical wiring, etc., in a good state of repair.

The draft provides for two wage scales, each allowing for eight grades. For "operators" the ratio between the rates paid to the lowest and highest grades is 1 to 2.5, while for "general workers" the corresponding ratio is 1 to 3.5. Further, the draft specifies the amount of the hourly wage in roubles and kopecks and the monthly wage (for 175 hours) for each grade.¹

Under the new collective agreement, workers in the Stalin Motor Works will mostly be paid at piece rates, these being individual, direct, and unlimited.

Another form of piece rates, progressive piece rates, is applied in the manufacture of spare parts, and in those branches of the undertaking where operation is beset with certain difficulties, and, lastly, in cases where this type of remuneration permits of reducing the number of workers employed. Once the standard output has been exceeded, each unit of production in excess of the standard is paid for at a rate 25, 50 or 100 per cent. above the normal rate. The kinds of work to be paid for at progressive rates are specified by the manager in agreement with the works committee.

Collective piece rates (for teams or gangs) are only allowed in cases where for technical reasons it is impossible to calculate the individual output of each worker.

Lastly, the draft provides that time rates are only to be paid exceptionally, and to workers employed in operations for which it is impossible to fix a standard output. Nevertheless, bonuses are to be paid to workers who may not be paid at piece rates but whose

¹ The actual wage scales are not given in the summary of the draft on which this article is based.

work directly helps to reduce the consumption of raw materials, fuel, electric power, etc.

The draft carefully specifies the cases in which the standards of output may be reviewed, but adds that when this is done allowance should be made for the output capacity of the equipment. Standards may only be reviewed once experimental production has come to an end and mass production has started, or where measures of technical reorganisation or rationalisation were taken by the administration after the 1937 standards were reviewed.

For apprentices, the draft provides a wage scale allowing for four grades, the ratio between the rates paid to the lowest and highest being 1 to 2. For the first grade the pay is 75 or 90 roubles monthly according as the work is more or less difficult. Every six months the management must see that the apprentice passes an examination with a view to his transfer to a higher grade. Once they have passed the final examinations apprentices are given work paid for at a rate not lower than that paid to the third grade in the adult workers' scale.

Management and Discipline

This section of the draft defines the duties and privileges, both of the management and of the works committee.

The duties of the management are primarily to make the necessary arrangements in order that the production programme may be carried out in full, and even improved upon, both as regards quantity and quality. With this object in view, the management must organise the manufacturing processes, assign a workplace to each worker, give him a definite job having regard to his trade and ability, and see that the machines, frames, etc., are set and adjusted in good time. The management must also see that equipment and tools are repaired within the prescribed time-limits. Lastly, the draft provides that the management must direct the Stakhanovist movement, see that other workers become acquainted with the experience and methods of the Stakhanovists, and organise training courses with a view to improving the occupational ability of the manual and non-manual workers in the undertaking.

Corresponding duties are laid upon the works committee, which must see that output is increased, organise so-called "production conferences", and prevent breaches of discipline.

The draft provides that the committee shall "organise socialist competition between individual workers, groups of workers, and whole workshops, so as to increase the productivity of labour, make sure that output standards are maintained and exceeded, improve the quality of the production, and eliminate waste".

The committee must further regularly summon so-called "production conferences", consisting of the workers in a workshop or shift. At such conferences, the workers are to consider how the manufacturing processes could be improved upon, and how to avoid specific reductions of output; they must supervise the carrying out of decisions taken by previous conferences and of the proposals made by workers with a view to rationalising production.

Lastly, the works committee must see that full use is made of the working day. A more rational use must be made of existing equipment, and loss of time, due either to the workers or to bad organisation or faulty technique, must be eliminated.

Protection of Labour

The draft defines the measures that the management must take to make working conditions in the undertaking safer, and prescribes time-limits within which these measures must be carried out.

The management is in particular responsible for making each new worker familiar with the principal safety rules applying to his work. This must also be done when workers change their occupation. The management must see that safety rules and posters are put up in the workplace.

Among the other duties of the management, the draft mentions the following: monthly payment of a social insurance contribution, based on the amount of the wage bill, to the Automobile Workers' Union, provision of a room where women employees can nurse their babies, distribution within prescribed time-limits of safety clothes to workers, and supply of soap and milk for workers plying trades mentioned on a special list drawn up by the general directorate of the automobile industry and the central committee of the trade union.

Material and Cultural Assistance for Workers

The draft fixes the amounts to be appropriated for the cultural and material needs of workers. The amounts must more especially cover the construction of workers' dwellings. The works committee has a say in the distribution of these amounts, in deciding on the location and the type of dwellings to be built and the distribution of the dwellings among individual workers. The management undertakes to build not only dwellings, but also a medical establishment and establishments for the workers' children. It must pay the works committee a contribution towards the cost of the workers' cultural activities, the amount being equal to 1 per cent. of the wages paid.

The works committee, on the other hand, is responsible for promotion among the workers of athletics, physical culture, and tourist travel, for the upkeep of workers' clubs, developing the activities of the various cultural groups, etc.

The committee must also supervise the building of workers' dwellings, kindergartens, nurseries, and hospitals, and the operation of restaurants and shops.

Both the works committee and the management are responsible for supervising the enforcement of the collective agreement. Once a quarter the committee must make sure that the provisions of the agreement are being complied with. Further, the draft provides that twice a year the committee and the management must report to a general meeting or a workshop meeting on the enforcement of the agreement.

The agreement is concluded for a period of three years.

Every year the management and the works committee must

sign an additional agreement concerning wage scales and the utilisation of the credits appropriated for the protection of labour, the construction of dwellings and other buildings, and the various services instituted in favour of the workers.

Labour Inspection in Queensland

Control of industrial conditions in Australia is exercised largely by the individual States of the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth authority is competent to regulate conditions in certain "federal territories" over which it has entire control, and to fix the conditions of Commonwealth employees (e.g., on Commonwealth railways and public works). It also has control of the maritime industry as regards inter-State and oversea shipping. Otherwise the Commonwealth does not regulate employment conditions. It has however established, in virtue of a special article in the Constitution, a Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration "for the prevention and settlement of industrial disputes extending beyond the limits of any one State." Most of the skilled industries are covered by awards of the Commonwealth Court, the number of workers concerned being probably half-a-million, or about thirty per cent. of the total number of wage earners and salaried employees in Australia. These awards cover a wide range of subjects, including wages, hours of work, overtime, holidays, special conditions of women, young persons, and apprentices, etc. There is legislative provision for the appointment of Government inspectors to supervise the enforcement of Commonwealth awards, but up to the present only one such inspector has been appointed, for the supervision of conditions of black-coated workers (journalists, bank officers, insurance officers, etc.); the great majority of the awards are policed by the unions concerned.

The various States of the Commonwealth, in the exercise of their industrial powers, have passed a series of Acts for the control of factories and shops, the determination of conditions of employment by arbitration courts or wages boards, the inspection of machinery, scaffolding, etc. Though there are differences of detail as between the Acts of the six States, they exhibit in the main the same general tendencies. The most important instruments are those of the various industrial tribunals set up by the legislation of the different States for the regulation of industrial conditions by arbitration courts or wages boards. These instruments have in many respects superseded the provisions of the Factories Acts, but the Acts remain important as covering a variety of matters—safety, sanitation, etc.—not covered by Arbitration Awards or Wage Determinations.

In illustration of the Australian treatment of the problem of the supervision of legislation for the protection of the workers, it is proposed in the present article to review the situation existing in the State of Queensland, as disclosed in the official reports of the past eight