

## CONTENTS

	Page
The Twenty-eighth (Maritime) Session of the International Labour Conference: Seattle, 1946.....	1
The Medical Rehabilitation of the Disabled, by H. A. de BOER.....	29
<b>Reports and Enquiries</b>	
Labour Conditions in East Africa.....	37
The Fourth Five-Year Plan of the U.S.S.R.....	45
<b>Industrial Committees</b>	
Programme of Meetings.....	59
<b>Inland Transport:</b> Resolutions Adopted by the Congress of the International Transport Federation — Resolutions Adopted by the International Dockers' Conference.....	60
<b>Industrial and Labour Information</b>	
<b>International Labour Organisation:</b> 98th Session of the Governing Body — Ratification of International Labour Conventions — Publications of the Office.....	64
<b>Social and Economic Policy:</b> <i>France:</i> National Reorganisation — Social Policy in Overseas Territories — <i>Iran:</i> Labour Policy — <i>Rumania:</i> Economic Organisation — <i>Brazil:</i> Second Congress on Social Law.....	75
<b>Industrial Relations:</b> <i>Great Britain:</i> Trade Union Law — Advisory Councils — <i>United States:</i> Industrial Relations — <i>Hungary:</i> Regulation of Contracts of Employment — <i>France:</i> Industrial Relations — <i>Sweden:</i> Spokesmen for Crews of Merchant Ships.....	85
<b>Migration:</b> <i>South Africa:</i> Enquiry into Migratory Labour.....	97
<b>Social Insurance and Assistance:</b> <i>Iran:</i> Introduction of Accident Insurance.....	97
<b>Living Conditions:</b> <i>France:</i> Workers' Allotment Gardens — <i>Great Britain:</i> Holiday Facilities.....	98
<b>Workers' Organisations:</b> <i>International:</i> The International Confederation of Christian Trade Unions — The Workers' Movement in Latin America — <i>Denmark:</i> Trade Union Congress — <i>Ecuador:</i> Demands of Textile Workers.....	100
<b>Statistics</b>	
Cost of Living and Food Prices.....	108
Wages.....	115
Indices of International Comparison of Food Prices for October 1944.....	128
<b>Bibliography</b>	
Book Notes.....	131
Books Received.....	136

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# INTERNATIONAL LABOUR REVIEW

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## The Twenty-Eighth (Maritime) Session of the International Labour Conference

Seattle, June 1946

*Since its earliest infancy the International Labour Organisation has dealt with the conditions of employment of seafarers and has made a regular practice of discussing these problems at special maritime sessions of the Conference.<sup>1</sup> The Seattle Conference was the first maritime session since 1936 and it proved to be perhaps the most important and the most successful maritime session that has so far been held. Its importance lies not merely in the number of Conventions and Recommendations that were adopted, covering many of the problems that most seriously affect the well-being of seafarers, but also in the innovations which were introduced. For the first time in the history of the Organisation an attempt was made to prescribe an international minimum wage, and this attempt eventually proved successful. The Conference also introduced for the first time, in two of the Conventions which it adopted, a clause permitting States which do not wish to legislate on the particular subject to base their ratification in whole or in part on collective agreements giving effect to the terms of the Convention. It is still too early to assess the importance of these two innovations from the point of view of international labour legislation in general, but it is certain that they will have a far-reaching influence on the future work of the Organisation. This article provides only a general summary of the work of the Conference. The texts of the Con-*

<sup>1</sup> Maritime sessions of the Conference were held in Genoa in 1920 and in Geneva in 1926, 1929, and 1936. For an account of the proceedings of these sessions, see *International Labour Review*, Vol. XIV, No. 4, Oct. 1926, pp. 508-551: "The Ninth Session of the International Labour Conference"; Vol. XXI, No. 1, Jan. 1930, pp. 1-44: "The Thirteenth Session of the International Labour Conference"; Vol. XXXV, No. 1, Jan. 1937, pp. 3-30, and No. 2, Feb. 1937, pp. 141-176: "The Twenty-first and Twenty-second (Maritime) Sessions of the International Labour Conference". More recent publications of the Office concerning seafarers include: *Life-Saving Measures for Merchant Seamen in Time of War*, Studies and Reports, Series P (Seamen), No. 4 (Montreal, 1942); *Merchant Seamen and the War*, Studies and Reports, Series P, No. 5 (Montreal, 1943); *Social Security for Seafarers*, Studies and Reports, Series M (Social Insurance), No. 19 (Montreal, 1945). The texts of the earlier Conventions and Recommendations concerning maritime work, which, together with those adopted at Seattle, may be said to constitute the International Seafarers' Code, will be found in *The International Labour Code, 1939* (I.L.O., Montreal, 1941).

*ventions, Recommendations, and resolutions adopted at Seattle will be published in due course in the Official Bulletin.*

**T**HE TWENTY-EIGHTH (Maritime) Session of the International Labour Conference was held in Seattle, Washington, at the invitation of the United States Government, from 6 to 29 June 1946. This was the first Maritime Conference to be held in the United States and the first International Labour Conference to be held on the Pacific Coast. The State of Washington and the city of Seattle spared no effort to make the stay of the delegations in Seattle both profitable and pleasant, and the arduous work of the Conference proceeded under excellent conditions in the Civic Auditorium and the Armory, which were put at the disposal of the Conference by the city of Seattle. The members of the delegations took away with them unforgettable memories of what, for many of them, was their first visit to this beautiful city of the Pacific North-West, which still shows evidence of hard pioneer days while at the same time displaying an admirably progressive spirit.

#### EVENTS LEADING UP TO THE CONFERENCE

The first step towards holding this Conference was taken at a session of the Joint Maritime Commission of the International Labour Office held in London in January 1945. That meeting was devoted to a general survey of conditions of employment in the mercantile marine and had before it the proposals for an International Seafarers' Charter framed by the International Transport Workers' Federation and the International Mercantile Marine Officers' Association. The Commission was unanimous in its view that every effort should be made to secure the widest possible effective agreement among maritime countries to ensure the best practicable conditions of employment for seafarers, and regarded the proposals in the Charter as a valuable contribution to this end.

On the recommendation of the Joint Maritime Commission the Governing Body of the Office, at its 94th Session in January 1945, decided that a Preparatory Tripartite Technical Conference of maritime countries should be held towards the end of 1945 to consider, with a view to the formulation of international minimum standards, the following subjects: wages; hours of work on board ship; manning; leave; accommodation on board ship; food and catering; recognition of seafarers' organisations; social insurance; continuous employment; entry, training and promotion.

The Governing Body also decided to convene a maritime session of the International Labour Conference to meet early in 1946 and

to place on the agenda of that session, for consideration under the single-discussion procedure, the questions appearing in the terms of reference of the preparatory meeting. The Preparatory Conference met in Copenhagen from 15 November to 1 December 1945<sup>1</sup>, and drew up preliminary texts as a basis for the adoption of international Conventions or Recommendations by the Maritime Session of the Conference. After the close of the Copenhagen Conference, the Office put the draft proposals into the form of international instruments for discussion by the Conference.

#### AGENDA

The items placed on the agenda of the Conference were as follows:

- I. Director's Report;
- II. Social security for seafarers;
- III. Crew accommodation on board ship;
- IV. Food and catering on board ship;
- V. Entry, training and promotion of seafarers;
- VI. Holidays with pay for seafarers;
- VII. Continuous employment for seafarers;
- VIII. Recognition of seafarers' organisations;
- IX. Wages; hours of work on board ship; manning.

The Conference also had before it a supplement to the report on wages, hours and manning, embodying the replies of Governments to circular letters from the Office communicating two resolutions adopted at Copenhagen, the one dealing with the probable economic, financial, and other consequences of the 96-hour fortnight, the other with exchange conversion rates for a seafarers' minimum wage.

In addition to these nine items on the agenda, the 28th Session of the Conference had to consider a number of draft resolutions deposited by delegates to the Conference in advance of the meeting, relating to questions other than those on its agenda. It also had to appoint the members of the Joint Maritime Commission, the composition of which was last renewed in 1936 during the 21st Session of the Conference. It will be recalled that the Commission is bipartite in character, and that the nine shipowners' members and the nine seafarers' members, as well as substitutes, are nominated by their respective groups at the Conference. A resolution proposing that the number of members from each group should be increased to twelve was considered by the Conference and was referred

<sup>1</sup> An account of the proceedings of this Conference was given in *International Labour Review*, Vol. LIII, Nos. 1-2, Jan.-Feb. 1946, pp. 59-63.

to the Governing Body for decision. At the same time the Governing Body was requested to consider the desirability of reconstituting the Commission on a tripartite basis.

#### COMPOSITION OF THE CONFERENCE

Of the 32 countries represented at the Conference, 23 sent complete delegations as understood by Article 3 of the Constitution, that is to say, comprising two Government delegates, one employers', and one workers' delegate; 7 countries sent Government delegates only and the remaining 2 countries were each represented by one non-Government delegate. In all, 106 delegates and 189 advisers and substitutes took part in the work of the session. Among these the Conference had the pleasure of welcoming the United States Secretary of Labor, Mr. Lewis B. Schwellenbach.

#### *Officers of the Conference*

The Conference elected as its President the Hon. Henry M. Jackson, Member of the House of Representatives of the United States of America. Mr. Jackson, a member of the House Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee, was the sponsor and co-author of the Ship Sales Bill. He is Chairman of the Sub-Committee on Unemployment Insurance for Seamen and a member of the Committee on Legislation dealing with the seamen's bill of rights, and he is also Chairman of the Sub-Committee on International Influences Affecting the United States Merchant Marine. Mr. Jackson also was the United States Government adviser at the Preparatory Conference in Copenhagen and as such acquired an extensive knowledge of the procedure of the International Labour Organisation and the special problems before the Maritime Conference.

The Government Vice-President elected by the Conference was Mr. George Strauss, Parliamentary Secretary, United Kingdom Ministry of Transport. The Conference further appointed as Employers' Vice-President and Workers' Vice-President, respectively, two long-established friends of the Organisation: Mr. Emile Deckers, Belgian employers' delegate, and Mr. Eugène Ehlers, French workers' delegate.

#### WAGES; HOURS OF WORK; MANNING<sup>1</sup>

This was probably the most important and certainly the most difficult subject tackled by the Conference. It was generally

<sup>1</sup> For the report submitted by the Office to the Conference, see International Labour Conference, Twenty-eighth Session, 1946, Report IX: *Wages; Hours; Manning* (I.L.O., Montreal, 1946).

agreed at Copenhagen that the draft proposals finally adopted there were far from satisfactory in many respects and that all concerned would have to show a greater willingness to make concessions if the Convention finally drawn up were to be acceptable and likely to be ratified by the majority of maritime countries. This was the first time in history that an attempt was being made to fix an international minimum wage for any industry. It had been suggested that such a project was utopian in view of the wide divergencies in seafarers' wages in different countries, the problems of currency exchange rates involved, and the fact that seafarers' wages are spent partly in their own country and partly abroad, where their purchasing power may vary greatly according to the country with which any given ship is trading. The question of maximum hours of work is also a difficult one in itself and is complicated in the shipping industry by the fact that conditions in ships engaged on short voyages in the coastal trade differ from those in vessels engaged in distant trade, so that the same system of hours is not necessarily applicable in the two cases. The Conference had moreover to bear in mind the fact that an earlier Convention on hours of work at sea, adopted in 1936, had received very few ratifications and that some more satisfactory text would have to be elaborated if the new Convention were to be of real value. It is therefore not surprising that the committee on this subject had to work strenuously throughout the whole of the Conference and that until nearly the end of its deliberations the outcome was a matter of great uncertainty. The Convention was, however, finally adopted by the Conference by 55 votes to 21, with 7 abstentions.

The Committee on Wages, Hours and Manning consisted of 24 Government members, 16 employers' members, and 16 workers' members. It elected as its chairman Mr. Vellodi, Government member, India, and as vice-chairmen, Mr. van der Vorm, employers' member, Netherlands, and Mr. Haugen, workers' member, Norway. The chairman acted as reporter.

#### *Scope of the Convention*

With regard to the scope of the Convention, it was proposed from the employers' side that near-trade ships should be excluded entirely on the grounds that any international regulation of wages and hours in such ships would be extremely difficult and might render impossible the economical operation of those ships in competition with other forms of transport. This view was strongly opposed by the workers, who argued that near-trade ships represented a large proportion of the total tonnage in many countries



and that the exclusion of that branch would deprive a very large number of seafarers of the benefits of the Convention. The proposal to exclude near-trade vessels or vessels engaged in national coasting trade was rejected. The question of a tonnage limit to the scope of the Convention next gave rise to considerable discussion. The Copenhagen Conference had decided on a limit of 100 gross register tons, but the Office in its draft proposed that the Convention should apply only to vessels of 500 tons and over. Once again the difficulties of applying international regulations to small ships were stressed on the one hand, while on the other it was pointed out that the seamen in these ships needed the protection and that a high limit would exclude a large proportion of the total number of seamen. The Conference eventually accepted the figure of 500 tons as the limit below which the Convention would not apply. The corresponding figure in the 1936 Convention on Hours of Work and Manning was 700 tons, with certain provisions applying only to vessels over 2,000 tons.

### *Wages*

After long discussion the minimum wage for an able seaman was fixed at £16 or \$64 per month. Provision is made in the Convention for determining the exchange rate to be used in calculating the equivalents of these figures in the currencies of other countries. It was felt that it was sufficient to establish the rate of pay for this one grade of seafarer, since, if this minimum were adopted in any country, the scales for officers and for other ratings would be proportionately adjusted. Part of the difficulty in reaching an agreement as to the actual figure for the minimum wage lay in the fact that representatives of countries with high wages were reluctant to insert in the Convention a figure much below the monthly rate prevailing in the United States, the United Kingdom, and a number of other relatively advanced maritime countries. It must be clearly understood, however, that the intention of the Conference was to establish a figure which would make it possible for the less advanced countries to ratify the Convention and at the same time to establish a floor under the wages of the world's seafarers. The fact that a standard was agreed upon is one of the most outstanding achievements of the Conference. Even should the Convention not be widely ratified, the figure exists as an accepted international standard below which seafarers' wages should not be fixed, and as such it is bound to be quoted in wage negotiations and to help the seafarers in the less advanced countries to improve their conditions. By so doing it will also ease the competitive situation in the shipping industry. Moreover, the fact that the question of an international

minimum wage for one industry — admittedly an essentially international one — was so resolutely tackled at Seattle will undoubtedly lead to a demand for consideration of the possibility of international action on the minimum wage problem in other industries.

One special difficulty which arose in connection with the minimum wage was the position of certain classes of seamen (such as Chinese, Indian, and African seamen) who are employed in considerable numbers in ships of countries other than their own. The Conference was unanimous in its view that there ought not to be any discriminatory treatment of these seamen by reason merely of their race. The majority were agreed, however, on the necessity for taking account of the fact that it is at present the practice to employ these seamen in larger numbers than would be the case if the crew were composed of nationals of the country of the ship's flag. It was therefore thought desirable to apply in such cases the principle of equal pay for equal work, but to provide that the minimum basic pay should be the equivalent of the general minimum, adjusted to take account of the numbers employed and other factors affecting the cost of operation of the ship.

### *Hours of Work*

One of the first difficulties that arose in connection with the fixing of hours of work was the question whether the hours of officers and other persons in superior grades should be regulated or not. The workers' members wished to include officers in the scope of the Convention, but in opposition to this it was argued that it was not usual in industry to regulate the hours of persons in superior positions and that to do so was derogatory to their status. After a number of compromise proposals had failed to secure acceptance, it was finally decided that the hours provisions of the Convention should not apply to chief officers, chief engineers, pursers or other officers in charge of departments. Subject to this exclusion, the normal hours of work at sea of officers and ratings in near-trade ships are fixed at a maximum of 24 hours in two consecutive days or 112 hours in two consecutive weeks. In port working hours are limited to 8 in the day with a maximum of 2 hours on the day of rest. In distant-trade ships hours are limited to 8 in the day at sea and in port, with a maximum of 2 on the day of rest when the ship is in port. These figures apply to the deck, engine room, and radio departments. In the catering department the maximum hours are 10 in a consecutive period of 14 hours in passenger ships at sea (and also in port when passengers are on

board); on cargo ships the figure is 9 hours in a consecutive period of 13 hours when the vessel is at sea or on sailing and arrival days. For both types of ships shorter hours are prescribed during the stay in port. The Convention provides that there must be no consistent working of overtime. When overtime is necessary, compensation must be paid at a rate to be fixed by national laws or regulations or by collective agreement, but this rate may not be less than one and a quarter times the basic hourly pay or wage.

For purposes of comparison it may be recalled that the 1936 Convention made no distinction between near and distant-trade ships, nor did it deal with the hours of the catering department or radio officers or operators. The maximum hours prescribed in that Convention were as follows. In vessels of over 2,000 tons the hours of watch-keeping officers and ratings in the deck department were limited to 8 in the day and 56 in the week at sea and on arrival and sailing days. In vessels of over 700 tons the hours of those employed as day workers were limited to 8 in the day and 48 in the week. For the engine-room department these same hours applied to watch keepers and day workers respectively, but the tonnage limit was 700 tons in both cases. For watch-keeping engineer officers the Convention applied only to vessels required to carry three or more engineer officers. When sea watches were suspended in port, the hours of all the above categories were limited to 48 in the week, and the weekly rest day had to be observed. The Convention left the fixing of the rates for overtime to national legislation or collective agreement, without stipulating a minimum rate as has now been done. The new Convention, therefore, is considerably wider in scope. It is true that in both texts the principle of the eight-hour day is taken as a basis, but the new provisions should provide much greater flexibility and thus take fuller account of the actual conditions of work at sea.

### *Manning*

The Conference felt that it would be difficult to impose international regulations on manning scales, which vary greatly from country to country and on different types of ships. It therefore decided merely to prescribe that every vessel to which the Convention applied should be sufficiently and efficiently manned for the purposes of ensuring safety, giving effect to the hours provisions, preventing excessive strain on the crew, and avoiding or minimising overtime. It is further provided that representatives of the organisations of shipowners and seafarers should participate in the operation of the machinery to be established by every ratify-

ing State for the investigation and settlement of any complaints or disputes concerning the manning of vessels.<sup>1</sup>

### *Application of the Convention*

The Convention will come into force when ratified by nine of the leading maritime countries, of which at least five must each possess not less than one million gross register tons of shipping, provided that the aggregate tonnage of the ratifying States is not less than 15 million gross register tons. This clause was included in the Convention in order to ensure that the first two or three countries which ratified would not thereby be exposed to severe competition by other important maritime nations which did not ratify and which might continue to operate on the basis of lower wages and longer hours. The same or a similar condition for coming into force was included in all the other Conventions adopted at the session with the exception of the Certification of Able Seamen Convention.

### *Application by Collective Agreements.*

The Conference also included in the text of the Convention on Wages, Hours and Manning clauses providing for the application of the Convention by collective agreements, and a similar provision was subsequently included also in the Paid Vacations (Seafarers) Convention and the Social Security (Seafarers) Convention (as regards one provision of the text). This is an extremely important innovation, which it is hoped will ensure wider application than in the past of the international rules laid down in international labour Conventions. A State Member which ratifies a Convention is normally required to pass legislation to secure its enforcement. In the past certain countries have found themselves unable to ratify some of the Conventions because the particular subject was not one on which it was the practice of those countries to legislate. Standards equal to or higher than those of the Convention might actually be applied in such countries by virtue of collective agreements, but this did not provide the necessary basis for ratification. Under the new system, if effect is given to any provisions of the Convention by a collective agreement, the Member, when ratifying, must supply particulars of such agreements and these will be scrutinised by a tripartite committee so as to make sure that the agreement does give full effect to the provisions of the Convention.

<sup>1</sup> The provisions of the 1936 Convention required every vessel between 700 and 2,000 tons to carry at least two certificated deck officers in addition to the master; on larger vessels at least three had to be carried. In vessels over 700 tons the number of deck ratings was required to be such that three were available for each navigational watch.

SOCIAL SECURITY FOR SEAFARERS<sup>1</sup>

The Social Security Committee consisted of 16 Government members, 8 employers' members, and 8 workers' members, and elected Mr. V. C. Phelan, Canadian Government member, as chairman and reporter, and Mr. Heathcote, United Kingdom employers' member, and Mr. de Vries, Netherlands workers' member, as vice-chairmen.

The draft texts of two Conventions and of a Recommendation prepared by the Office were used as a basis for discussion.

The proposed Convention concerning the social security of seafarers guaranteed to resident seafarers present in the ship's country medical benefit and cash benefit in respect of incapacity for work, unemployment, and old age, not less favourable than those granted to industrial workers; and, where the latter were not entitled to such benefits, seafarers were entitled to medical benefit and cash benefit for incapacity for work, of an adequate standard. The dependants of resident seafarers were guaranteed medical and survivors' benefits not less favourable than those granted to the dependants of industrial workers; and, where the dependants of industrial workers were not entitled to such benefits, the dependants of seafarers were entitled to medical and survivors' benefits of an adequate standard. A resident seafarer who was left behind in another country by reason of sickness or injury was entitled to medical care, maintenance, repatriation, and, for a limited period, to an allowance equal to 100 per cent. of his wages. There were arrangements for the maintenance of rights in the course of acquisition. Equality of treatment was to be assured, irrespective of nationality or race, in the national laws relating to employment injury, sickness or unemployment insurance, and, irrespective of nationality, race or residence, in the national laws relating to shipowners' liability in respect of sickness, injury or death.

The proposed Convention concerning seafarers' pensions provided that a Member State ratifying the Convention must maintain a retirement pension scheme granting pensions payable at the age of fifty-five or sixty years after a specified period of sea service at a rate such that, together with any other social security pension payable to the pensioner, it amounted, in the first case, to not less than 1½ per cent., per year of service, of the remuneration on which contributions were paid, and in the second case to not less than 2 per cent.; or granting pensions the financing of which, together with other social security pensions payable simultaneously to the pensioner and bene-

<sup>1</sup> For the report submitted by the Office to the Conference, see International Labour Conference, Twenty-eighth Session, 1946, Report II: *Social Security for Seafarers* (I.L.O., Montreal, 1946).

fits payable to the dependants of deceased pensioners, required a premium income of 10 per cent. of the total remuneration on which contributions were paid.

The committee dealt first with the proposed Convention concerning the social security of seafarers. The question of the protection of non-resident seafarers presented a difficult problem. The workers' members and the Indian employers' member proposed that the country of the ship should be responsible for granting the medical benefits and cash benefits in respect of incapacity for work, unemployment, old age, and death both to residents and to non-residents. This principle was accepted by the committee but, on the suggestion of the chairman, the Recommendation concerning reciprocal agreements, which recommended social security protection of non-resident seafarers, was considered and adopted at this point, and it was decided that, since the committee had affirmed its interest in the protection of non-residents in the Recommendation, the structure of the Convention should not be changed. In the general interest, the workers' members and Indian employers' member did not, therefore, press their amendments. They also submitted amendments intended to extend to non-residents the application of the Article granting benefits to a seafarer left ill abroad, which led to discussion centring around the payment of a cash allowance to non-residents. In this connection, the United Kingdom employers' member stated that, to the best of his knowledge, provided nothing was done to reduce the employment of Indian seamen, the British shipowners had no intention of ceasing their present practice of voluntarily paying full wages to Indian seamen left ill abroad, and the committee agreed to cover the point by adding a paragraph to the Recommendation concerning agreements. The Indian Government member's criticism of the restriction of workmen's compensation benefits for non-residents to persons living in a country which had ratified the Convention was met in a similar fashion. Members are urged to conclude agreements for the protection of non-residents in cases of employment injury. It was decided that, where medical care, maintenance, and repatriation are not secured to non-residents left ashore abroad by reason of injury or illness by legislation concerning shipowners' liability, equality of treatment should be ensured by special legislation.

During the discussion, the employers' members submitted an amendment to delete the obligation of a Member ratifying the Convention to provide benefits especially for seafarers and their dependants where the benefit in question is not provided for industrial workers. This amendment was adopted only in respect of medical care for the dependants of seafarers, but it was decided to adopt a



Recommendation that Members should provide medical care for the dependants of seafarers pending the development of medical care services for workers generally and their dependants. The committee agreed to the principle of co-ordination, or preferably integration, of any special measure for seafarers with a general scheme which might be introduced granting benefits not less favourable. It also agreed to define the risk in the case of a seafarer left ill abroad as "injury in the service of the ship or sickness not due to his wilful act". A number of changes were made in the scope of the Convention, of which the most important, accepted to facilitate ratification by India, provided for the exclusion of persons employed on home-trade vessels of 300 tons or less for a period of five years following ratification by India.

A new Article, which figures in several maritime Conventions, was inserted to ensure that the carrying out of the Convention would in no case affect adversely any existing rights of seafarers. An Article was added concerning the number of ratifications necessary to bring the Convention into force and this was later amended in the Conference, so that the final text stipulates that the requisite number is seven out of twenty-three specified countries, at least four of which have over one million gross register tons of shipping.

The Conference adopted the proposed Convention concerning the Social Security of Seafarers with the above and other minor amendments by 76 votes to 14, with 2 abstentions, and also adopted the amended Recommendation concerning Agreements relating to the Social Security of Seafarers and the Recommendation concerning Medical Care for Seafarers' Dependants.

The committee considered a resolution submitted by the employers' members that the Conference, instead of adopting the proposed Convention concerning seafarers' pensions, should recommend Member States to include seafarers in old-age pension schemes for shore workers unless special schemes already exist. After considerable discussion as to the desirability of special pension schemes for seafarers and the advisability of a Convention, this resolution was rejected. The Article adopted by the committee to define the scope of the Convention followed the general lines of the corresponding Article in the Convention concerning the Social Security of Seafarers, but allowed non-national and non-resident seafarers to be excluded from the pension scheme. The draft text was amended to allow a Member to ratify the Convention on the basis of a scheme of a private character but required by law. A proposal that seafarers and shipowners should be entitled to participate in the management of the pension scheme was adopted in

principle. Ratification by five of twenty-three specified countries, at least three of which have over a million gross register tons of shipping, is required to bring the Convention into force. The committee discussed whether the proposed text should be submitted to the Conference as a Convention or a Recommendation and finally agreed to the former, feeling that, if the Conference did not accept it as a Convention, it might still accept it in the form of a Recommendation. The Conference adopted the proposed Convention concerning Seafarers' Pensions by 56 votes to 16, with 25 abstentions.

Thus the texts prepared by the Office were adopted without major amendment. In general, the changes made stressed the desirability of affording social security protection to non-resident seafarers.

#### CREW ACCOMMODATION ON BOARD SHIP<sup>1</sup>

The committee on this question consisted of 18 Government members, 12 employers' members, and 12 workers' members. It elected as its chairman Mr. Roubinet, French Government member, and as vice-chairmen Mr. Warfield, United States employers' member, and Mr. Thompson, United Kingdom workers' member. Mr. Bertrand, Belgian Government member, was elected reporter.

The question of the scope of the proposed Convention gave rise to considerable discussion. It was pointed out by the United Kingdom Government member that it would be very difficult to apply many of the provisions of the proposed text to small ships; she therefore suggested that the tonnage limit should be 500 tons instead of 200 tons. The workers' members objected that this would exclude from the benefits of the Convention a large number of seafarers, especially in coastal vessels. They also pointed out that a number of Articles in the draft provided for the exclusion of smaller vessels from certain of the provisions. Limits of 300 and 400 tons were suggested and thoroughly discussed, but were not acceptable to the majority of the committee. It was finally decided that the Convention should apply to sea-going vessels of 500 tons and over, but that it should also be applied where reasonable and practicable to vessels between 200 and 500 tons. Here and elsewhere in the course of the committee discussions, the United States Government and United States employers' members took exception to the use of such vague phrases as "where reasonable and practicable" or "whenever possible" on the grounds that they did not

<sup>1</sup> For the report submitted by the Office to the Conference, see International Labour Conference, Twenty-eighth Session, 1946, Report III: *Crew Accommodation on Board Ship* (I.L.O., Montreal, 1946).

make for uniformity of application and left undue latitude to Governments to refrain from applying certain provisions of the Convention. The majority of the committee, however, took the view that the provisions laid down in the Convention were not mere statements of principle and that Governments must be expected to act in good faith in giving effect to them.

A lengthy discussion also took place with regard to the possible exclusion of certain special types of vessels. The workers' members proposed that persons employed in floating whaling factories and also in larger sea-going tugs should be covered by the Convention. The employers' members contended that it would be technically difficult to apply the Convention to all the persons employed on floating whaling factories, and it was eventually agreed that in the case of vessels engaged in whaling or in similar pursuits the Convention should apply where reasonable and practicable to the accommodation of persons engaged in usual sea-going routine. It was also decided that because of the technical difficulties involved, tugs should be excluded from the scope of the Convention.

In discussing the actual crew accommodation requirements to be included in the Convention, the committee decided that it would be unwise to go into undue technical detail. There are many points on which authorities differ as to the most satisfactory means of achieving desired results: for example, whether it is preferable to sheathe decks on the upper or under side, whether insulation against heat should be applied at the source of the heat or at the point where discomfort is likely to be felt, and the like. It was agreed that in general the Convention should lay down the aim to be secured, leaving national authorities free to decide on the most effective technical methods to be employed. Nevertheless, the body of the Convention constitutes a detailed and comprehensive list of requirements to be fulfilled as regards crew accommodation. The Convention covers structural requirements, ventilation, heating, lighting, sleeping accommodation, mess rooms, recreation accommodation, sanitary accommodation, and hospital accommodation. In many cases specific minimum figures are prescribed, as for the areas of sleeping space, the height of sleeping quarters, the size of berths and lockers, the number of baths and water closets to be provided, the number of persons to be accommodated in each room, etc. Generally, these specifications, even if they fall short of the standards practised on the best ships, represent a marked advance on the conditions required by most national laws or regulations and should therefore lead to a great improvement in the comfort of crew accommodation and consequently in the health and well-being of seafarers. It is impossible

within the scope of the present article to give a full account of all the technical standards laid down, and such a survey would in any case be of little interest to the general reader. There are, however, certain points which are worthy of special notice.

### *The Position of Existing Ships*

The question of the extent to which the provisions of the Convention should apply to existing ships was one that had to be settled at the outset, because on that depended the decisions on the majority of the technical points at issue. The employers' members took the view that in some cases it would be technically impossible to make the necessary structural alterations in existing ships, and in other cases it would be economically unsound, either because of the initial cost or because of the reduction in carrying capacity which would necessarily result. This view was supported by a number of Governments and was in general appreciated by the seafarers' representatives. After lengthy discussion, the committee finally decided that the Convention should apply in its entirety to ships the keels of which are laid down subsequent to the coming into force of the Convention for any given country. In addition, however, the competent authority in each country may in certain circumstances require improvements to be made in crew accommodation in existing ships. In the case of a ship which is complete on the date of coming into force of the Convention, improvements may be required when the ship is reregistered or when substantial structural alterations or repairs are made as a result of long-range plans (that is, not as the result of an accident or emergency). In the case of ships in process of building or reconversion, alterations may also be required; when made, these alterations constitute final compliance with the Convention until the ship is reregistered. In both cases the competent authority must take account of the practical problems involved and must consult the shipowners or their organisations and the seafarers' trade unions.

### *Special Categories of Seafarers*

Just as in the case of wages, so also in the case of sleeping accommodation it was felt that some special provision had to be made to deal with the employment of crews which were larger in number than those normally employed on a ship of a given size. The Committee on Crew Accommodation agreed with the Committee on Wages, Hours and Manning that there should be no discrimination against crews of any nationality simply on account of racial characteristics. But it recognised that if a larger crew had to be



carried, the owner could not reasonably be expected to provide the same space for each individual and thus reduce the carrying capacity and earning power of the vessel. Consequently, the former committee, after laying down the minimum floor space per person that should be provided as sleeping accommodation on vessels of different sizes, decided that —

In the case of ships in which are employed such groups of ratings as necessitate the employment of a substantially larger number of ratings than would otherwise be employed, the competent authority may, in respect of such groups, reduce the minimum floor area of sleeping rooms per person, subject to the conditions that —

the total sleeping space is not less than would have been allotted had the numbers not been increased and the minimum area per person does not fall below certain specified limits. It is further provided that in such cases due account should be taken of distinctive national habits and customs and that the hospital, dining, bathing, and sanitary facilities provided should be of a standard equal or comparable to that obtaining on ships of similar type and belonging to the same registry. The competent authority must consult the recognised *bona fide* trade unions of seafarers concerned and the organisations of shipowners and/or shipowners employing them when framing regulations on these points.

#### *General Provisions.*

The Convention further provides that plans of the crew accommodation must be approved by the competent national authority before construction begins, and that the crew accommodation on every ship must be inspected whenever it is substantially altered or reconstructed or when the ship is registered or reregistered or when a complaint is made in the prescribed manner to the competent authority. Another clause of the Convention deals with the inspection of crew accommodation by the master of the vessel or his representative at weekly intervals. One Article of the Convention requires the competent authority in each country to consult the organisation of shipowners and/or the shipowners and the recognised *bona fide* trade unions of seafarers in regard to the framing of regulations to give effect to the Convention, and to collaborate so far as practicable with those parties in the administration of the regulations. It was understood that this particular requirement covered all the provisions of the Convention.

#### *Value of the Convention*

This Convention, which was adopted by the Conference by 59 votes to 21, with 3 abstentions, would seem to be particularly

opportune at a time when most of the maritime countries are rebuilding their mercantile marine, much of which was destroyed during the war. Even pending ratification there will be a tendency to take the standards of the Convention as a minimum basis on which to work in the construction of crew accommodation, so as to avoid the need for possible structural alterations at a later date if the Convention comes into force for any particular country. It is true that the standards laid down in the Convention — like any minimum standards in other international labour Conventions — fall short of the best practice in the matter, but if applied they will represent a very considerable improvement on the poorer practices of even the advanced countries and on the general level in many other countries. The Convention should therefore do much to increase the comfort, well-being, and health of seafarers.

The question of the provision of bed-linen, mess utensils, towels, soap, etc., by the shipowners was dealt with in a Recommendation, having been considered unsuitable for inclusion in the Convention.

#### ENTRY, TRAINING AND PROMOTION OF SEAFARERS<sup>1</sup>

The Committee on Entry, Training and Promotion of Seafarers was composed of 28 members. Mr. Ove Nielsen, Danish Government member, was elected chairman and Mr. R. G. Quirk, Irish employers' member, and Capt. W. H. Coombs, United Kingdom workers' member, were elected vice-chairmen. The committee had before it two proposed Conventions: one concerning the medical examination of seafarers and the other concerning the certification of able seamen; also a Recommendation concerning the organisation of training for sea service.

#### *Medical Examination of Seafarers<sup>2</sup>*

With regard to the scope of the proposed Convention, the committee agreed, in spite of the desirability of a measure of uniformity between the various instruments that came before the Conference, to adopt a fairly wide scope for the Convention, and only ships of less than 200 tons, wooden vessels of primitive build, fishing vessels, and estuarial craft were left outside the Convention.

In the original text no reference was made to the scope of the Convention as regards persons, but the committee inserted a para-

<sup>1</sup> For the report submitted by the Office to the Conference, see International Labour Conference, Twenty-eighth Session, 1946, Report V: *Entry, Training and Promotion of Seafarers* (I.L.O., Montreal, 1946).

<sup>2</sup> It will be recalled that in 1921 the Conference adopted a Convention providing that no young person under 18 years of age could be employed at sea unless he produced a medical certificate. This Convention has been ratified by 33 countries.

graph which specifies that persons not actually members of the crew, *i.e.*, pilots, travelling dockers, etc., should not be covered by the Convention.

The committee did not consider that the medical examination should be based on the same standard for a man of forty-five years, for instance, as for a young man of twenty-five. A distinction should also be made in respect of the effort required for the work to be performed, and a paragraph was adopted which takes into consideration these points.

As had been done for the other Conventions, a new Article was added requiring ratification by a specified number of countries owning a specified volume of tonnage to bring the Convention into force.

The Convention was adopted on the final vote in the plenary sitting by 79 votes to 4. It provides that no person shall be employed on board ship unless he possesses a medical certificate attesting his fitness for the work for which he is employed. The certificate must show that the person's sight, hearing, and (where relevant) colour vision are satisfactory, and that he is not suffering from any disease likely to be aggravated by, or to render him unfit for, service at sea, or likely to endanger the health of others. The certificate remains in force for a period not exceeding two years.

#### *Certification of Able Seamen*

Article 1 of the Office text specified that the Convention should apply only to sea-going vessels and left national laws or regulations to determine when a vessel would be considered sea-going. The United Kingdom Government member contended that the Preparatory Conference had explicitly left this task to the national legislation of the country concerned and he proposed the deletion of this Article. This the committee agreed to, and as a consequence it also redrafted Article 2 to take account of this deletion. The minimum age for obtaining a certificate of qualification was, on the proposal of the Norwegian Government member, reduced from eighteen and a half years to eighteen years.

The United States Government member submitted an amendment which gave rise to considerable discussion on the comparative value of training in a shore establishment or in school ships on the one hand, and training on board sea-going vessels on the other, and there was also discussion on the length of the period on board sea-going vessels which should be stipulated for the granting of a certificate of qualification as able seaman. Both the United States Government and employers' members were concerned about the

permission under the Convention to continue the certification and signing on of limited or "blue ticket" able seamen as such, but it was felt that the amendment might result in the creation of several categories of able seamen of unequal status. The committee finally agreed to a text on the understanding that declarations should be inserted in the committee's report from the United States Government and employers' members to the effect that nothing in the Convention should interfere with the United States practice of certification and signing on of limited or "blue ticket" able seamen as such.

The Convention, which received a final vote of 73 to 10, provides that no person shall be engaged as able seaman unless he holds a certificate of qualification granted by a competent national authority following an examination of his proficiency. The prescribed examination must provide a practical test of the candidate's knowledge of seamanship and of his ability to carry out effectively all the duties that may be required of an able seaman, including those of lifeboatman. Certificates may not be granted unless the person has reached the age of eighteen years and has served for a minimum period of not less than three years at sea. Shorter periods of service may be permitted for persons who have successfully passed through courses at training schools or in sea-going training ships.

#### *Organisation of Training for Sea Service*

A Recommendation outlining the principles and rules in connection with the organisation of training for sea service was adopted by the Conference by a vote of 79 to 2, with 2 abstentions. It proposes that institutions responsible for vocational training for service at sea should co-ordinate and develop their programmes on a national scale to attract men to the maritime industry. Training programmes for young persons should be open to those who intend to serve as ratings as well as those training to become officers. The award of scholarships and allowances should be encouraged. Encouragement should also be given to the extension of vocational and general education at sea by correspondence courses, ships' libraries, films, and special radio programmes.

#### HOLIDAYS WITH PAY FOR SEAFARERS<sup>1</sup>

The committee dealing with this item consisted of 28 members. It elected as its chairman Mr. Haslund, Government member,

<sup>1</sup> For the report submitted by the Office to the Conference, see International Labour Conference, Twenty-eighth Session, 1946, Report VI: *Holidays with Pay for Seafarers* (I.L.O., Montreal, 1946).

Norway, and as vice-chairmen Lt. Col. Campbell, United Kingdom employers' member, and Mr. Daggett, United States workers' member. The committee had before it a draft proposal for a complete revision of the 1936 Convention concerning annual holidays with pay for seamen. The committee decided to insert the word "vacation" before the words "holidays with pay" on account of the different meanings given to the term "holiday" in the United Kingdom and the United States. There was some discussion as to which vessels would be exempt from the provisions of the Convention, and a proposal was made by the employers' members to exclude vessels below 200 tons. The workers' members did not want to fix a tonnage limit at all, and this was agreed to by a majority vote by the committee. During the discussion in the plenary sitting, however, the committee's decision was reversed and a paragraph was inserted which permits national laws or regulations or collective agreements to exclude vessels of less than 200 tons.

Strong difference of opinion arose in the committee on the question of the length of continuous service which should entitle a person to have a holiday with pay. The text adopted at the Preparatory Conference specified "one month of continuous service", but the employers' members and some Government members who felt very strongly on this point proposed that twelve months of continuous service should be required as a qualifying period: the purpose was to allow seafarers to have a substantial holiday at home once a year in return for steady service with one company. The workers' members preferred the original text on the grounds that a seafarer who, through no fault of his own, did not remain for twelve months in the service of the same owner should not thereby lose his right to a holiday proportionate to his length of service. Several attempts to reach a compromise failed, and the committee came to a temporary deadlock on this point. The workers' members, after consideration, declared that in order to enable the committee to arrive at positive results they were prepared to accept an employers' compromise proposal to fix the period of continuous service at six months, on condition that the employers' members on their side agreed to a workers' subamendment on this point. The committee finally reached an agreement on this and adopted a text which provides, first, that seafarers are entitled, after twelve months of continuous service, to an annual holiday with pay of not less than eighteen working days for officers and not less than twelve working days for other members of the crew; and, secondly, that persons with not less than six months of continuous service are entitled, on leaving such service, to a holiday on a *pro rata* basis, and that a

person who is discharged through no fault of his own before he has completed six months of continuous service is also entitled to a holiday on the same basis.

At the end of the committee's deliberations the United States employers' member submitted a resolution urging "that affirmative action with respect to the Revised (1946) Vacation Holidays with Pay Convention be withheld" and requesting that the committee should "limit its discussions at this Conference to Recommendations or resolutions suggesting future action". He felt that, as the 1936 Convention had not come into force because a sufficient number of ratifications had not been registered, it would seem inopportune to proceed further. The United States had been among the first to ratify the 1936 Convention, and he was uncertain if it would undertake further international obligations which, so far, other maritime countries were reluctant to assume. The United Kingdom Government member pointed out that his country had not ratified the 1936 Convention, as ratification would have entailed considerable changes in national legislation. He hoped that if the Seattle Conference found a proper formula for the application of Conventions by means of collective agreements, ratification would be easier for his country. The French Government member pointed out that it was only the war which had prevented his country from ratifying the 1936 Convention, as seafarers' conditions in France were superior to those provided by that Convention. No action was taken by the committee on the proposed resolution.

The Convention, which was approved by the Conference by a final vote of 78 to 16, with 4 abstentions, provides that masters, officers, radio officers, and ratings shall receive at least the annual vacation holidays with pay specified above. During these holidays officers and crew members are to receive their usual remuneration and in addition a daily allowance for board and lodging. The qualifying period of service need not be continuous with the same employer. Effect may be given to the Convention by: (a) laws or regulations; (b) collective agreements; or (c) a combination of (a) and (b).

The Convention is to be regarded as a Convention revising the Holidays with Pay (Sea) Convention adopted by the International Labour Conference in 1936. It marks a distinct advance on that Convention, which prescribed a minimum annual paid holiday of only twelve days for officers and nine days for ratings. The Conference considered that the advance was justified in view of the progress which had been made in this field in many countries in recent years.

FOOD AND CATERING ON BOARD SHIP<sup>1</sup>

This committee, which consisted of 16 Government members, eight employers' members, and eight workers' members, elected as its chairman Mr. George Myers Frost Jackson, New Zealand Government member. The vice-chairmen were Lt. Col. Campbell, United Kingdom, and Mr. Booth, United Kingdom, for the employers and workers respectively. The chairman was elected to act as reporter.

*Food and Catering for Crews on Board Ship*

On the preamble to the proposed Convention on this subject the employers' members submitted an amendment suggesting that the proposed instrument should take the form of a Recommendation, which they considered more suitable for the particular subject under discussion. It was also later suggested that, as standards of food supply varied greatly from country to country, the Conference should merely adopt a resolution urging Governments to ensure, either by legislation or through collective agreements, proper standards of food supply and catering. These suggestions, however, were rejected by the committee.

The Office text proposed that Governments should create or maintain a central authority charged with responsibility for promoting a proper standard of food supply and catering service for the crews of their sea-going vessels. As a result of a discussion as to the definition of the term "central authority", these words were omitted and the text now merely requires ratifying Governments to be responsible for the promotion of a proper standard of food supply. This will be done through the Government agency recognised as the competent authority in each country.

One point which gave rise to a cleavage of opinion that persisted throughout the whole discussions of the committee was a clause of the Office text which read:

National laws or regulations shall determine when vessels are to be regarded as sea-going vessels for the purpose of this Convention.

The United Kingdom Government member proposed to amend the text to read:

National laws or regulations or collective agreements shall determine the vessels or classes of vessels which are to be regarded as sea-going vessels for the purpose of this Convention.

<sup>1</sup> For the report submitted by the Office to the Conference, see International Labour Conference, Twenty-eighth Session, 1946, Report IV: *Food and Catering on Board Ship* (I.L.O., Montreal, 1946).

This amendment was supported by the workers' members and by virtually all the employers' members, but was opposed by the United States Government and employers' members. The United States Government and employers' members argued that any reference to collective agreements as a means of defining when a vessel was to be considered as sea-going for the purpose of the Convention would probably make it impossible for the United States to ratify the Convention. The same argument was advanced in other cases, in which it was suggested that certain matters which in the United States are dealt with by legislation could be regulated in other countries by collective agreement. Eventually the United States Government member accepted the following wording:

National laws or regulations or, in the absence of such laws or regulations, collective agreements between employers and workers shall determine. . .

A similar decision was reached on this point in certain other Conventions where the same difficulty existed.

The United Kingdom Government member proposed the addition of a new Article such as had already been adopted for the proposed Convention on Wages, Hours of Work and Manning. This amendment concerns the number of ratifications to be required to bring the Convention into force. It was adopted unanimously.

The text of the Convention as a whole was adopted in the committee by 29 votes to 16, the employer's members reiterating their belief that a Recommendation would be preferable.

During the discussion in the plenary sitting it was again proposed that the Convention should take the form of a Recommendation. A proposal that the Convention should come into force twelve months after ratification by two Members was also submitted on the ground that it did not impose on the shipping industry any economic burden that would affect international competition but only called for a better regulation of the arrangements for food and catering on board ship. The Conference, however, did not agree to these proposals, and the Convention was finally adopted by a vote of 84 against 3, with 3 abstentions.

The Convention thus approved by the Conference requires the competent authority in each country to be responsible for the framing and enforcement of regulations concerning food and water supplies, equipment of galleys, inspection, certification of catering department members, research and educational work. The competent authority must also work in close co-operation with the organisations of shipowners and seafarers and with other interested bodies on questions of health and food. Training courses are to be organised, and facilities provided for refresher courses. National



laws or regulations will prescribe penalties for failure to comply with the requirements of the law. The competent authority must issue annual reports, copies of which will be transmitted to the International Labour Office.

### *Certification of Ships' Cooks*

On this Convention there was no difference of opinion as to what form the instrument should take. Very few changes were made to the proposed text except for the addition of a new Article containing the same provision concerning the coming into force of the Convention as had been adopted in the case of the previous Convention.

In the plenary sitting, on the proposal of the employers' group, the Conference agreed to add a new paragraph to the effect that if in the opinion of the competent authority of a country there is at any time an inadequate supply of certificated ships' cooks, exemptions may be granted from the provisions of the Convention. The Convention was then adopted by 84 votes to 1, with 5 abstentions. It provides that every ship's cook who is directly responsible for the preparation of meals for the crew must hold a certificate of qualification. He must have reached a minimum age, have served at sea for a minimum period, and have passed an examination, all three to be prescribed by the competent national authority. The examination must provide not only a practical test of his ability to prepare a meal but also evidence of his knowledge of food values. During a transition period of three years, however, a certificate of satisfactory service as ship's cook for not less than two years may be accepted as equivalent to the prescribed certificate of qualification.

These two Conventions, when ratified and applied, should do much to improve the standard of food supplied to ships' crews — a matter on which national legislation has tended to lag far behind recent progress in the science of nutrition and the current practice of the more advanced countries.

### THE DIRECTOR'S REPORT<sup>1</sup>

The Director's Report, which always provides a basis for a general discussion in the Conference, contained a survey of developments in the shipping industry during and after the war, an outline of the progress made in seafarers' conditions of employment during the same period, an account of the maritime activities of the

<sup>1</sup> For the report submitted by the Office to the Conference, see International Labour Conference, Twenty-eighth Session, 1946, Report I: *Director's Report* (I.L.O., Montreal, 1946).

Organisation since the last Maritime Conference in 1936, and some suggestions for its future activities in this field. In the debate on the Report certain speakers confined their remarks largely to correcting minor errors of fact and providing additional or more up-to-date information on some of the points touched upon. Others dealt with more general questions of the competence and effectiveness of the Organisation or put forward suggestions for its future work.

The United States Secretary of Labor and a number of other delegates, notably on the employers' side, suggested that the Office had gone somewhat beyond its province in including in the Director's Report passages dealing with the future allocation of world shipping and the question of shipping subsidies. In his reply, the Acting Director pointed out that the interdependence of labour and economic questions was now generally recognised and that it was perfectly legitimate and indeed necessary for the Report to attempt to sketch the general economic background against which any improvements in the conditions of employment of seafarers must be considered. He showed that the reference to these economic matters in the Report had proved of value, since it had brought forward a number of interesting statements on the policy of the United States and other countries on maritime questions.

The United Kingdom employers' delegate raised a question concerning the constitutional machinery of the Organisation. He suggested that it was unreasonable that at a Maritime Conference every country, irrespective of its size and the shipping tonnage it possessed, should have an equal vote in the decisions that were being taken on maritime matters. The Acting Director agreed that on the face of it there would appear to be a good deal to be said for this point of view, but he thought it was doubtful whether a system of weighted majority voting would be any more or less democratic than the present system. Although votes at present were arithmetically the same, they were very different in political value, and therefore the votes of the more important countries did in fact have a greater influence on the decisions arrived at than those of countries of less importance. He further pointed out that any future development of world organisation would doubtless be along federal lines, but in existing federal States shipping problems were within the competence of the federal legislature and it was impossible to conceive of a weighted system of voting when shipping problems were being dealt with in this way. The Acting Director used yet another argument: the voting at the Conference merely showed the degree of agreement reached on certain proposals for international regulation, but the really important point was the

subsequent ratification and application of these proposals by individual States.

The Organisation was criticised by the Indian workers' delegate for not having done enough for Indian seafarers. In reply, the Acting Director indicated what had already been done and assured the Indian seafarers that the Organisation would do all in its power to press for the implementation of the Seattle decisions, which could go far towards bettering the conditions of Indian as of other seafarers. He pointed out, however, that there were limits to the power of the International Labour Organisation: it was not a super-State with legislative powers; it could initiate action to improve defective working conditions, but the implementation of the measures it proposed must be a matter for Governments and parliaments, and for the national organisations of shipowners and seafarers, which could press nationally for the desired reforms.

In his reply to the debate on his Report the Acting Director also referred to the agreement which had just been reached between the United Nations and the International Labour Organisation and to the proposal before the Economic and Social Council to set up a Technical Shipping Council — a question related to one of the resolutions before the Conference which urged the establishment of an international shipping authority to deal with the development of shipping services, the allocation of tonnage, and unfair trading.

#### RESOLUTIONS

The resolution just mentioned on the establishment of an international shipping authority was not further discussed by the Conference, although a minority report of the Resolutions Committee suggested that it should be referred to the Governing Body. Among the resolutions adopted by the Conference was one urging Governments to consider the desirability of introducing schemes for ensuring continuity and regularity of employment for seafarers, and another affirming the right of freedom of association and stressing the value of collective bargaining.

A further resolution proposed that the number of shipowners' and seafarers' members on the Joint Maritime Commission should be increased from nine to twelve, and that the Governing Body should consider the possibility of adding Government representatives, thus making the Commission tripartite (from the earliest days the Commission has been bipartite). The seafarers now consider that the addition of Government representatives would make its work more effective, but the shipowners take exactly the opposite view. The question has already been discussed on more than one

occasion by the Commission itself, but the only decision so far reached is that the Commission may decide when setting up a subcommittee for any special purpose to make it bipartite or tripartite as seems most appropriate.

The Conference also adopted a resolution urging the Office to consider the possibility of framing an International Fishermen's Charter on lines similar to those of the International Seafarers' Charter.

Yet another resolution requested the Governing Body to ask Governments what they had done towards improving the welfare conditions for seafarers in ports and to consider the question of promoting seamen's welfare on the basis of international co-operation. The participation of shipowners' and seafarers' representatives in national delegations and the representation of the Joint Maritime Commission at the proposed diplomatic conference for the revision of the Convention on Safety of Life at Sea were advocated in a further resolution. A final resolution urged the early ratification of the Conventions adopted at Seattle.

#### ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE CONFERENCE

The preceding survey, although it could not give an exhaustive account of the discussions and decisions of the Conference, will have sufficed to show the tremendous amount of ground that was covered by the various committees. Two previous sessions of the International Labour Conference have had an equal number of items on their agenda, but in neither case were so many Conventions finally adopted. The Seattle Conference adopted, in all, nine Conventions and four Recommendations. The subject matter of these texts covers virtually every phase of a seafarer's life — his training for and entry to sea service, his accommodation, food and health on board, his certification as an able seaman, his wages, hours and holidays, his social security while at work, and his pension on retirement. As was mentioned earlier, the Conference introduced two innovations which are significant for the whole future work of the Organisation and not merely for its maritime activities. If Governments show good will in implementing the decisions which a majority of them approved at Seattle, the work of this Conference will certainly rank as a great achievement for the benefit of seafarers everywhere. That so much was accomplished must be attributed largely to the careful preparatory work done at Copenhagen. Much of what was adopted at the Maritime Preparatory Conference remains in the final texts in the same or in a slightly modified form. Even in the case of wages, hours and

manning, where the Copenhagen decisions were widely held to be unsatisfactory, the Preparatory Conference was of great value in bringing out the real practical problems and in revealing the attitudes of the shipowners and seafarers and, to a less extent, those of Governments. Without that preparatory work it would not have been possible for the 28th Session to reach the degree of agreement it did on so many problems covering such a wide field.

This does not mean that as a general rule it is wise to have so large an agenda. Very few delegations had a sufficient number of advisers to cover all the committees in which they were interested, and even if all Governments could be induced to send a larger number of advisers for each group of their delegation, the dispersion of the efforts of the Conference over a wide range of subjects is probably not calculated to produce the best results. In the present instance, however, the heavy agenda is understandable. There had been no Maritime Conference since 1936 and it was felt that there was much leeway to be made up in the international regulation of seafarers' conditions of employment. Nationally, much progress had been made in the improvement of these conditions, partly as a result of the war, and there were therefore more subjects ripe for international action than would normally be the case. Finally, it was universally agreed that the officers and men of the merchant marine had, at the cost of great hardship and danger, made an invaluable contribution to victory in the war, in the course of which many thousands of them gave their lives. It was therefore only fitting that a special effort should be made as soon as possible after the war was over to recognise these services and sacrifices by improving, as far as was possible by international action, the conditions under which seafarers have to work in time of peace. That so much has proved possible by June 1946, less than a year after the end of hostilities with Japan, represents a triumph of international co-operation which may well redound to the credit of the International Labour Organisation and prove an inspiration for that and other international bodies for the future. It now remains for Governments to show similar speed and enthusiasm in putting the results of the Conference into practice, for only so can the work of Seattle bear its real fruit.

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