

## INDUSTRIAL COMMITTEES

### Programme of Meetings

The second sessions of the Iron and Steel Committee and the Metal Trades Committee will be held at Stockholm in August and September 1947. The Iron and Steel Committee will open on 19 August and the Metal Trades Committee on 2 September 1947.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. W. Björck, Paymaster-General (Sweden), former Under-Secretary of State to the Ministry of Social Affairs and member of the Governing Body of the I.L.O., has been chosen by the Governing Body to preside over the second meeting of the Iron and Steel Committee. The chairman selected for the second session of the Metal Trades Committee is Mr. H. Altman, Director, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (Poland) and member of the Governing Body of the I.L.O.

Representatives of the following countries have been invited to attend :

*Iron and Steel Committee:* United States of America, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China, Czechoslovakia, France, United Kingdom, India, Italy, Luxembourg, Mexico, Sweden, Union of South Africa.

*Metal Trades Committee:* United States of America, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Finland, France, United Kingdom, India, Italy, Mexico, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Union of South Africa.

Each country has been asked to appoint two representatives of the Government and two representatives each of the employers' and workers' organisations having a substantial membership in the industry in question.

As a basis for the discussions which will take place at the meetings, the International Labour Office is preparing reports which will be circulated to the members of the Committees in advance.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For the agendas for these two sessions see *International Labour Review*, Vol. LIV, Nos 5-6, Nov.-Dec. 1946, p. 331.

<sup>2</sup> For other decisions of the Governing Body concerning Industrial Committees, see p. 413 of this issue.

## Second Session of the I.L.O. Coal Mines Committee

The Coal Mines Committee of the International Labour Organisation met for its second session in the International Labour Office in Geneva from 24 April to 3 May, the first session having been held in London in December 1945.<sup>1</sup> The session was presided over by Mr. L. E. Troclet, Minister of Labour for Belgium, who had also presided at the meeting in London. Mr. Troclet had been selected as chairman by the Governing Body of the I.L.O. The meeting was opened by Mr. E. J. Phelan, Director-General of the Office.

Three members were appointed by the Governing Body to attend the session on its behalf: Mr. Troclet for the Government group; Mr. Kuntschen (Switzerland) for the employers' group; and Mr. Jouhaux (France) for the workers' group. Mr. Jouhaux, however, was unable to attend.

At its opening sitting the Committee elected the following vice-chairmen: Mr. R. P. Koenig, President, Ayrshire Collieries Corporation, Indiana, for the employers; and Mr. A. L. Horner, General Secretary, National Union of Mine Workers, London, for the workers.

Twelve countries had been invited to be represented at the meeting: namely the United States, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Czechoslovakia, France, the United Kingdom, Netherlands, Poland, Union of South Africa and Turkey. All these countries except the United States, Australia and Czechoslovakia were represented by tripartite delegations; the United States workers' members and the Australian employers were unable to attend, and Czechoslovakia was represented only by two observers from the Miners' Union.

The United Nations were represented by Mr. B. Turner, and the European Coal Organisation by Mr. G. Keller. Mr. F. Malik, President of the Czechoslovakian Miners' Union, attended on behalf of the Miners' International Federation.

### *Work of the Committee*

In preparation for the session, the International Labour Office had drawn up a General Report, dealing with action taken in the various countries and by the I.L.O. since the first session, and making reference to some of the most important recent developments in the coal mining industry, together with a second report on the utilisation of the resources of the coal mining industry, based in the main upon information supplied by the Governments of the countries represented on the Committee.<sup>2</sup> These reports were discussed at several sittings of the Committee and the Committee also set aside part of its time for a special discussion on safety and hygiene in the coal mining industry.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *International Labour Review*, Vol. LIII, Nos. 3-4, Mar.-Apr. 1946, p. 200.

<sup>2</sup> See "Bibliography" section below, p. 479.

In the report on the utilisation of the resources of the coal mining industry, attention was drawn to the main problems which emerged from a consideration of the present position and needs of the coal industry and which were within the competence of the Coal Mines Committee. These included the recruitment of manpower, the improvement of miners' housing conditions, and the methods of vocational training. Reference was also made to the regulation of the employment of young persons of less than 18 years of age in work underground, a problem which the Governing Body of the I.L.O. had asked the Committee to consider.

It was agreed by the Committee that special consideration should be given to these subjects and two subcommittees were appointed to examine them, namely a subcommittee on recruitment and related problems and a subcommittee on apprenticeship and vocational training. A number of other questions were raised during the general discussion, and resolutions on these subjects, which were submitted by various members, were examined by the steering committee—acting as a resolutions committee—before being presented to the full Committee for discussion and adoption.

### *Recruitment and Related Problems*

The Subcommittee on Recruitment and Related Problems consisted of 29 members (10 Government, 9 employers' and 10 workers' members). Each of the Government and workers' members had nine votes and each of the employers' members ten votes. The subcommittee elected as its chairman Mr. H. Weiss (United States Government member), and as its vice-chairmen Mr. Dehasse (Belgian employers' member) and Mr. Bhattacharya (Indian workers' member).

Considerable discussion took place on a draft resolution concerning the regulation of recruitment in coal mines prepared by the International Labour Office. Two points in particular engaged the attention of the Subcommittee at the outset—the question of how the term *mineworker* was to be defined for the purposes of the resolution (*i.e.* whether it was to include surface as well as underground workers), and the question of the recruitment of refugees and displaced persons for work in the mines (*i.e.* whether there should be a difference between the methods of recruitment for foreign workers belonging to sovereign states and the recruitment of refugees and displaced persons).

After long and careful consideration the Subcommittee adopted a resolution on the regulation of recruitment in coal mines which embodied sections on general considerations, the recruitment of national manpower, foreign manpower recruited on the territory of sovereign states, refugees and displaced persons, and the recruitment of free German workers and prisoners of war. The resolution, which contained 41 paragraphs, embodied a comprehensive programme for recruitment during the present period of manpower shortage.

A second resolution was adopted by the Subcommittee on the proposal of the employers' group. This resolution recommended that the needs of the coal mining industry in the countries devastated by the war should be given first priority in any arrangements for the absorption into employment as voluntary workers of prisoners of war, demobilised soldiers and displaced persons.

On the initiative of the French workers' member, the Subcommittee also adopted a resolution on the employment of prisoners of war in the coal mines, emphasising that the withdrawal of prisoners of war should not jeopardise production in the countries in which they are employed and affirming that prisoners of war retained in the mines should henceforth receive the normal wage for their work, subject to deduction of the actual cost of their board and lodging.

Finally, the Subcommittee discussed a draft resolution on general problems of miners' housing which had been prepared by the International Labour Office. After discussion the Office text was revised by a small drafting committee and adopted. The resolution covered general considerations; construction programmes and particulars of accommodation; and provisions for the acquisition of individual property.

These resolutions were submitted to the Coal Mines Committee at the close of the session. The part of the resolution on regulation of recruitment which dealt with refugees and displaced persons was adopted by 17 votes to nil, with 16 abstentions, and the remaining parts without opposition. The resolution as a whole was then approved by 33 votes to nil with 4 abstentions. The other three resolutions were adopted unanimously.

#### *Apprenticeship and Vocational Training*

The Subcommittee on Apprenticeship and Vocational Training comprised 29 members (10 Government, 9 employers' and 10 workers' members). Each of the Government and workers' members had nine votes and each of the employers' members ten votes. The following officers were appointed by the Subcommittee: chairman, Mr. Latournerie (French Government member); vice-chairmen: Mr. Herold (Netherlands employers' member) and Mr. Dethier (Belgian workers' member); reporter: Mr. Wijffels (Netherlands Government member).

Two main subjects were examined by the Subcommittee: apprenticeship and vocational training, and the protection of young workers employed underground in coal mines.

As a basis for the discussion on apprenticeship and vocational training a proposed resolution had been drafted by the International Labour Office. Some discussion took place on the relationship between the vocational training of surface workers and that of underground workers, as a result of which it was agreed that the text of the resolution should be made sufficiently flexible to take account of special national conditions and traditions. A suggestion by the South African Government and employers' members that their country should be excluded from the general provisions of the text because of the peculiar conditions affecting the employment of natives in the mines was withdrawn after it had been pointed out that each country would be able to take account of special national circumstances or traditions when considering the application of the resolution.

After careful examination the Subcommittee adopted an amended text of the resolution comprising general considerations, provisions for the regulation of apprenticeship, accelerated vocational training, vocational training under normal circumstances, the training of

supervisory staff and the retraining of disabled workers. The resolution, which—like that on recruitment and related problems—extended to 41 paragraphs, was in the nature of a general plan embodying the principles, rules and methods of a policy to be applied with regard to apprenticeship and vocational training in the coal mining industry.

In regard to the problem of retraining, which was briefly touched upon in the resolution, the Subcommittee felt that more consideration should be given to this important problem. The Subcommittee therefore adopted a resolution inviting the International Labour Office to study with particular care the problem of developing adequate vocational training for miners no longer able to follow their former occupation in the mines, whatever the cause and origin of their disability. The resolution also suggested that the Governing Body of the I.L.O. be requested to place the question on the agenda of a future session of the Coal Mines Committee.

When considering the protection of young workers employed underground in coal mines, the Subcommittee had before it a brief statement prepared by the International Labour Office in the light of the Governing Body's decision that the question should be referred to the Coal Mines Committee for consideration. After discussion the Subcommittee adopted a resolution requesting the International Labour Office to prepare a report as a basis for a discussion of the question at the next meeting of the Committee and indicating that the report should include such items as the age of admission to employment, particularly the age of admission of young workers to especially hazardous or arduous underground occupations; provisions for medical and psychological examination and health supervision; hours of work; night work; holidays with pay; and safety and hygiene as related to youth employed underground in coal mines.

All these resolutions were submitted to the Coal Mines Committee at the close of the session and all were adopted unanimously.

#### *Safety and Health*

Special attention was given by the Committee to problems of safety and health in the mining industry. A long discussion took place in the full Committee and resolutions on the subject were submitted by the United States Government members, the French Government members, the employers' group and the French workers' members. A draft resolution was also prepared by the Office in the light of the discussion. These texts were considered by the steering committee, which combined them into a resolution suggesting that a tripartite technical conference should be called at the earliest possible moment to discuss and adopt a draft Model Code of safety regulations for underground work in coal mines, based on the draft Model Code prepared by the International Labour Office in 1939<sup>1</sup>; that the Office begin without delay the preparation of a draft Model Code of hygiene regulations for the mining industry; and that the Office undertake the collection and permanent co-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. I.L.O.: *Safety Provisions for Underground Work in Coal Mines. Report to the Preparatory Technical Conference, Geneva, October 1939. Vol. 11: Draft Recommendations* (Geneva, 1939).

ordination of information on the protection of underground mine workers against accidents and occupational diseases. The resolution further drew attention to the urgent need of providing the Office with the additional means for the further development of its work in the field of collecting and co-ordinating the above-mentioned information, and stressed the value of periodical international meetings of the heads of institutions engaged in research work on safety and health and of organising the exchange of mixed delegations between the coal producing countries with a view to examining methods of combating mining dangers.

On being submitted to the full Committee the resolution was adopted unanimously.

### *Hours of Work*

A resolution on hours of work in coal mines was submitted by the United States Government members and adopted unanimously. The resolution drew attention to the small number of ratifications of the Hours of Work (Coal Mines) Convention (Revised) 1935, and asked the Governing Body of the I.L.O. to authorise an enquiry among the Governments concerning their present position in respect of the Convention, any difficulties presented by the Convention which precluded its ratification and the particulars in which the Convention might be revised.

The resolution also requested the Governing Body to examine the possibility of placing on the agenda of the next session of the Coal Mines Committee the discussion of a text for a revised Convention.

### *Other Resolutions*

Two resolutions submitted by the French Government members were also adopted unanimously. One of these drew attention to the extraordinary difficulties encountered by some coal producing countries in restoring their economy, and of the considerable technical and social efforts which they have made for the benefit of mineworkers, and pointed out that the social advantages to be included in a Mine Workers' Charter will be endangered so long as the economic balance of the coal mining industry is not itself ensured against risks of disturbance by economic measures for stabilising production and distribution. The resolution invited the Governing Body to draw the attention of Governments and international organisations to these considerations in order that the social rights acquired by the miners and the principles recommended by the Coal Mines Committee might be preserved.

The other resolution noted that in accordance with the resolutions adopted by the Coal Mines Committee at its first session, most of the principal coal producing countries have already effected considerable improvements in the conditions of mine workers, and suggested that the object of the London resolutions would be more readily attained if the sum of the social advantages accorded to mine workers in each country were arithmetically calculated in relation to a common basis of comparison selected from another essential occupation, with a view to determining, after examination, the total social minimum to which mine workers are entitled. The

resolution asked the Governing Body to place on the agenda of the third session of the Committee the continuation of the detailed examination of the application of the principles incorporated in the Mine Workers' Charter<sup>1</sup> and to instruct the International Labour Office to prepare tables for enabling the above-mentioned comparison to be made.

Unanimous approval was also given to a resolution submitted by the French workers' members, which asked the International Labour Office to collect information regarding miners' invalidity and old-age insurance schemes in different countries and to prepare a report for submission to a later session of the Committee, with a view to examining the possibility of guaranteeing these rights to immigrant workers.

Finally the Committee unanimously adopted a resolution submitted by the Indian workers' member on the application in economically underdeveloped countries of the principles for incorporation in a Mine Workers' Charter which were adopted by the Committee at its first session. The resolution invited the Governing Body to recommend all these countries to apply the principles in their regulation of the conditions of mine workers and recommended that the countries concerned should plan a methodical programme indicating the target to be achieved during each of the years covered by the period, to be drawn up in consultation with organisations of employers and workers. The resolution further invited the Governing Body to convey to the Asian Regional Conference of the I.L.O., which will meet this year, the hope that it will devote special attention to watching the progress of such measures in the economically underdeveloped countries.

### *Conclusion*

This session of the Coal Mines Committee was the beginning of the second series of Industrial Committee meetings. All the committees so far constituted have held one meeting and the Coal Mines Committee was the first to assemble for the second time. The Committee both continued the work which had been started at the first session in London and raised problems for consideration at future sessions. It was gratifying to note that the decisions of the London meeting had received serious attention in the countries represented on the Committee and that good progress had been made in putting them into effect. The meeting confirmed the impression made in London that the Committee will be able to promote the effective solution of the social problems of the coal mining industry and thus to make an important contribution to the achievement of economic progress and social security.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *International Labour Review*, Vol. LIII, Nos. 3-4, Mar.-Apr. 1946, p. 204.