

INDUSTRIAL COMMITTEES

Notes on the First Meetings

At its 101st Session (Geneva, March 1947) the Governing Body, after a brief discussion on the work of the Industrial Committees, decided to devote a whole day at its next session to a thorough examination of the work of these Committees and the results achieved. With this in view, the Governing Body asked the Office to prepare a detailed report on the subject, taking into account the comments made during the first discussion. A summary of the information submitted to the Governing Body by the Office is given below. Reference to the decisions taken by the Governing Body in the light of its discussion will be made in a forthcoming issue.

Most of the countries selected by the Governing Body as members of the Committees accepted the invitations and sent delegations to the first meetings. On the Coal Committee 11 out of 12 countries were represented; on the Inland Transport Committee 22 delegations attended out of a possible 26; on the Textiles Committee 18 out of 21; on the Committee on Building, Civil Engineering and Public Works, 19 out of 21; on the Committee on the Metal Trades, 13 out of 16; on the Committee on Iron and Steel, 12 out of 15; and on the Petroleum Committee, 11 out of 12.¹

¹ For the original lists of countries see *International Labour Review*, Vol. LII, Nos. 2-3, Aug.-Sept. 1945. Various additions have been made to these lists by subsequent decisions of the Governing Body, with the result that the countries now represented on the Industrial Committees are as follows:

Coal mines: United States of America, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Czechoslovakia, France, United Kingdom, India, Netherlands, Poland, Turkey, Union of South Africa.

Inland transport: United States of America, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, France, United Kingdom, Greece, India, Italy, Luxembourg, Mexico, Netherlands, Norway, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Union of South Africa, Yugoslavia.

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

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

An examination of the composition of each Committee shows that the number of actual delegates was approximately the same for each of the three groups. On the other hand, the number of advisers and substitute members for the employers' group was larger than the number of Government and workers' advisers and substitutes taken together. The delegates who attended the first seven meetings numbered 183 for the Governments, 175 for the employers and 181 for the workers, while there were 41 advisers and substitute members for the Governments, 71 for the employers and 28 for the workers.

In all, 695 delegates, advisers, substitutes and observers attended the first meetings of the seven Industrial Committees. This total was made up as follows: Coal Mines Committee 64, Inland Transport Committee 129, Iron and Steel Committee 55, Metal Trades Committee 81, Textiles Committee 135, Building, Civil Engineering and Public Works Committee 131, and Petroleum Committee 100. For most of those delegates the meetings were their first contacts with the International Labour Organisation. A delegation from the Governing Body was also present at each meeting. Moreover, representatives of the European Coal Organisation were present at the meeting of the Coal Mines Committee, and the European Central Inland Transport Organisation was represented at the meeting of the Inland Transport Committee, while observers from the Miners' International Federation, the International Transport Workers' Federation, the International Federation of Textile Workers' Associations and the International Federation of Building and Woodworkers attended the meetings of the Committees for the industries with which they are respectively concerned.

The work of the Industrial Committees has led to a considerable extension in the field of activity of the International Labour Organisation. The traditional method of work hitherto followed in the International Labour Conference, which consisted in furthering social progress by means of tripartite discussions, has now been extended to a number of industries which can apply it in future to their own special problems. The setting up of the Industrial Committees enables the authorities and the employers' and workers' organisations connected with those industries to take a direct part in the work of the Organisation, and the result is a marked expansion of its range of activity. This is clearly shown by the articles dealing with the meetings of the Industrial Committees which have appeared in a number of trade journals, both on the employers' and on the workers' side, whereas in the past these journals had paid but little attention to the work of the Organisation.

Nor has this publicity been limited to trade journals. Many articles have also appeared in the daily press of the countries in

Textiles: United States of America, Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Egypt, France, United Kingdom, India, Italy, Mexico, Netherlands, Norway, Peru, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland.

Building, civil engineering and public works: United States of America, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Finland, France, United Kingdom, India, Italy, Mexico, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland, Union of South Africa.

Petroleum production and refining: United States of America, Canada, Colombia, Egypt, France, United Kingdom, Iran, Iraq, Mexico, Netherlands, Peru, Venezuela.

which the meetings were held. In the United States, more particularly, very extensive cover was given by the local press. In this way wide sections of public opinion in the United States had their attention drawn to the work of the International Labour Organisation, the very existence of which had often hitherto been unknown to them. In each of the cities in which the Committees met, a new germ of interest in the work of the Organisation has been planted, and the Organisation can never have too much public interest.

CONCLUSIONS REACHED BY THE COMMITTEES

At their first meetings the Industrial Committees reached a certain number of conclusions which were embodied in resolutions, of which 85 in all were adopted by the seven Committees. This figure may be thought to be unduly high, but it would have been difficult to keep the number lower without restricting freedom of discussion. The agenda of each of those first meetings was drafted in very wide terms and as a result the discussions were necessarily of a general nature. In each of the industries covered, the war has raised a very large number of complex problems. It was therefore only natural that as the members of the Committees met very shortly after the war they felt obliged to express their views on all those problems and suggest the solutions they advocated. The Office was anxious to know the problems—all the problems—which were being faced by the members of the various industries, and therefore it made no attempt to limit or restrict the scope of the discussions. The meetings therefore provided a wealth of detailed information on the present situation and on recent developments in these industries. This information is of the greatest value for the Office, which has to prepare very full and detailed reports for the future work of the Committees. Moreover, the wide discussion which took place at the first meetings and the numerous resolutions adopted will provide the Governing Body of the I.L.O. with the necessary background for guiding the future work of those Committees.

An analysis of the discussions and the resolutions of the first meetings shows that they cover all the main social problems of the industries concerned and that the Committees also paid attention to the economic problems of the industries in so far as they affect the social aspect. A certain priority was observed for problems which were particularly urgent as a result of the war.

Manpower Problems.

In practically all these industries reconversion has raised the problem of the supply of labour in an exceptionally acute form. In quite a number of industries the needs of peacetime production exceed the available manpower. It follows that measures for recruiting and vocational guidance and training are receiving special attention, both from the authorities and from the workers' and employers' organisations. It was therefore not surprising that five of the Industrial Committees dealt with these problems.

Full Employment.

Although there is a manpower shortage in some industries, there are others in which the number of workers has had to be reduced

because of the sudden cessation of orders for the armed forces, and in those industries, therefore, the workers are particularly anxious to avoid a recurrence of unemployment. Even in the industries in which there is at present a labour shortage the workers are anxious to do all they can to ensure stability of employment. That explains why five of the Committees adopted resolutions on full employment and on the production problems of the postwar period.

Conditions of Work.

Six Committees dealt with conditions of work, with special reference to hours of work and holidays with pay.

Industrial Relations.

Six Committees discussed the relationships between employers' and workers' organisations and between those organisations on the one hand and the State on the other. During the war, the employers' and workers' organisations were closely associated in the reorganisation and planning of economic life to meet military requirements. The active part they played during the war has had a far-reaching influence on their position within the State and on their mutual relationships, as is clearly brought out by the resolutions of the Industrial Committees.

Wages.

Six of the Committees discussed questions concerning wages: guaranteed weekly wages, minimum wages, bonuses, wages in under-developed areas, etc.

Social Security and Safety and Health.

Finally, five of the Committees adopted resolutions concerning social security, and all of them paid some attention to the problems of health and safety in factories.

The resolutions¹ adopted by the various Committees at their first sessions are enumerated below:

Coal Mines Committee

First Session (London, 5-11 December 1945)

Subcommittees set up:

Subcommittee on Manpower;
Subcommittee on the Mine Workers' Charter.

Resolutions² adopted concerning:

Employment of prisoners of war in coal mines (the workers' delegates of the United States, Australia and Canada registered their objection to the principle of employment of prisoners of war);

¹ Except where otherwise stated the resolutions were adopted unanimously.
² For the text of these resolutions, see *International Labour Review*, Vol. LIII, Nos. 3-4, Mar.-Apr. 1946, pp. 200-207.

Recruitment of labour for coal mines;

Full utilisation of the industry's resources (proposal that information be obtained for a study of social, economic and technical aspects of the coal mining industry);

Principles for incorporation in a mine workers' charter (stability of employment; favourable wage rates; holidays with pay; shorter working time than in industry generally, etc.). This resolution was adopted unanimously, except for opposition by the Australian Government delegation to omission of reference to compulsory arbitration;

An international economic agreement;

Safety and health;

Conversion of coal into oil (recommendation that the Office should examine the social problems involved).

Inland Transport Committee

First Session (London, 13-20 December 1945)

Subcommittees set up:

Subcommittee on Railways;
Subcommittee on Road Transport;
Subcommittee on Other Forms of Transport.

Resolutions¹ adopted concerning:

Industrial relations;
Manpower;
Ports in Western Europe;
Social problems;
Automatic coupling;
Decasualisation of dock labour;
Meetings for branches of the industry.

Iron and Steel Committee

First Session (Cleveland, Ohio, 23-29 April 1946)

Subcommittees set up:

Subcommittee on Full Employment;
Subcommittee on Industrial Relations;
Subcommittee on Safety.

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 207-214.

Resolutions¹ adopted concerning:

- Full employment (carried by 36 votes to 2);
- The shortage of fuel; wage schemes;
- Purchasing policies; technical changes;
- Industrially under-developed countries;
- Steel statistics;
- Industrial relations (freedom of association; collective bargaining; observance of collective agreements);
- I.L.O. studies (recommendation that the I.L.O. conduct a series of studies);
- Safety (preparation of survey of safety measures; setting up of special safety services and joint safety committees);
- Meetings at regular annual intervals.

*Metal Trades Committee**First Session (Toledo, Ohio, 2-10 May 1946)**Subcommittees set up:*

- Subcommittee on Employment and Production;
- Subcommittee on Industrial Relations;
- Subcommittee on Safety and Health.

Resolutions² adopted concerning:

Production and employment; shortages of steel, new equipment and coal in European countries; Government expenditure on capital goods, consumers' goods and services; unemployment insurance and social security; technical improvements and hours of work; industrially under-developed countries;

Industrial relations in the metal trades (adopted unanimously, except for paragraph on the establishment of joint national committees, adopted by 40 votes to 11, and paragraph on the establishment of joint committees on the factory level, adopted by 40 votes to 12);

The observance of collective agreements; industrial relations studies to be undertaken by the I.L.O.; wages and freedom of association in under-developed regions;

Safety and health (international standardisation of statistics of accidents and occupational diseases; international standardisation of warning signs; special safety services and safety committees; education in matters of industrial safety and health; I.L.O. factual survey);

Provisional definition of the term "metal trades" for purposes of the Committee's work.

¹ See *International Labour Review*, Vol. LIII, Nos. 5-6, May-June 1946, pp. 364-371.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 371-379.

*Textiles Committee**First Session (Brussels, 14-22 November 1946)**Subcommittees set up:*

- Subcommittee on Production and Related Questions;
- Subcommittee on Social Security and Welfare.

Resolutions¹ adopted concerning:

Production and related questions (enquiries to be undertaken by the I.L.O.); full employment; the need for increased production; reduction of working hours; guaranteed adequate minimum weekly wage; increase of wages and equal remuneration for work of equal value; recruitment and training of personnel;

Improved working conditions and welfare facilities; joint committees on health, welfare and safety; social security; holidays with pay;

Development of the textile industry in Germany and Japan;

A statement on the future work of the Textiles Committee.

*Building, Civil Engineering and Public Works Committee**First Session (Brussels, 25 November-3 December 1946)**Subcommittees set up:*

Subcommittee on General Problems relating to Production and Reconstruction;

Subcommittee on General Conditions of Work;

Subcommittee on Industrial Relations.

Resolutions² adopted concerning:

A statement relating to problems of reconstruction; programmes of work; production; problems of reconstruction; recruitment and vocational training; stabilisation of employment;

Conditions of work (safety and health); social security (carried by 76 votes to 2); daily working hours and methods of remuneration (carried by 69 votes to 3); weekly hours of work (carried by 50 votes to 8); holidays with pay; stabilisation of employment and earnings (carried by 64 votes to 6); rural housing;

Industrial relations (general principles; industrial peace; collaboration in the construction industries; establishment of national committees in the construction industries; study to be undertaken by the I.L.O. in industrial relations).

¹ See *International Labour Review*, Vol. LV, Nos. 1-2, Jan.-Feb., 1947, pp. 77-85.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 85-96.

*Petroleum Committee**First Session (Los Angeles, 3-12 February 1947)**Subcommittees set up:*

- Subcommittee on General Social and Labour Conditions;
- Subcommittee on Machinery for Management-Labour Relations;
- Subcommittee on Vocational Training.

Resolutions¹ adopted concerning:

Safety measures in the petroleum industry; a minimum wage rate (carried by 43 votes to 1; 4 abstentions);

Machinery for management-labour relations;

Vocational training and technical education; facilities for general and technical education in the various countries; apprentice training; recruitment; promotion.

CONCLUSION

The atmosphere which prevailed from the outset in all the Industrial Committees was the one peculiar to the International Labour Organisation which results from its tripartite composition, the confidence which all groups have in the purpose of the Organisation, and the desire of all to co-operate in achieving its aims.

The task of imbuing the Industrial Committees with this spirit was facilitated by the experience which the Office has had in the organisation of Conferences. In accordance with the normal procedure for Conferences, subcommittees were set up for different subjects or groups of allied subjects. Meetings of those subcommittees alternated, as in the International Labour Conference, with plenary meetings of the Committee.

Although the subjects discussed were often controversial, the Committees worked in a spirit of mutual understanding and with an obvious desire to reach agreement on practical solutions. Evidence of this desire to reach an understanding can be found in the fact that practically all the conclusions were reached unanimously.

It would seem reasonable to suggest that the results of the first meetings of Industrial Committees have been satisfactory. These first meetings brought within the orbit of the Organisation extensive new fields of industrial activity. They also had for the Organisation a publicity value which must not be underestimated. The tripartite system, so successfully employed in the past in International Labour Conferences, has now been applied to a series of different industries. While it is true that the conclusions so far reached are somewhat general and vague in character, it would seem that from now onwards it should be possible to obtain more definite and concrete conclusions.

¹ See *International Labour Review*, Vol. LV, Nos. 3-4, Mar.-Apr. 1947, pp. 274-280.

If the activities of the Industrial Committees are closely followed and due guidance is given to them in their work, if the agenda is carefully planned, if meetings are held at the most desirable intervals, if conclusions are drawn up in the most suitable form, and if action is taken to urge Governments to apply those conclusions as widely as possible, then there is every reason for the Governing Body to hope that the Industrial Committees will go from strength to strength.