

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR REVIEW

VOL. LXV, No. 1

JANUARY 1952

Industrial Committees of the I.L.O.

by

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SEVEN years ago, in January 1945, the Governing Body of the International Labour Office decided to inaugurate a new series of Industrial Committees to deal with problems in some of the most important international industries. This was one of the measures taken to adapt the machinery and methods of the Organisation to the needs of the post-war era, and the decision to establish the Committees was adopted while the war was still raging.

In those days, when the future of the world was in the balance, there were men who found time and energy to plan for the future of the International Labour Organisation, believing more than ever in the maxim laid down in its Constitution that lasting peace can be established only if it is based upon social justice. In 1944 the aims and purposes of the Organisation were restated in the Declaration of Philadelphia; in 1945 the decision was taken to establish Industrial Committees; and in 1946 the Constitution itself was brought into line with the requirements of a new age. Before the end of 1945 the first Industrial Committee meetings were actually held, and they were followed in 1946 by the first of a new series of Regional Conferences. Since then emphasis has been laid on other new or extended forms of activity—action to deal with post-war manpower problems, with special reference to recruitment and training; technical assistance to underdeveloped countries; an operational programme for promoting migration, and so on. It is within the framework of these measures for streamlining

the Organisation and improving its effectiveness that the Industrial Committees find their place.

During the six years since the first Industrial Committees met in December 1945 the eight Committees which now exist have held a total of 25 sessions. These bodies have become an established part of the I.L.O.'s structure. To adapt a phrase often applied to the Organisation as a whole : if the Industrial Committees did not already exist it would be necessary to create them.

It was above all because of the far-sighted statesmanship of the late Mr. Ernest Bevin, British Minister of Labour and National Service, that the Industrial Committees came into existence. Mr. Bevin realised that after the war new and improved methods would be needed to supplement the old and tried procedures, that post-war problems would have to be tackled with speed and a sense of reality, and that the I.L.O. would be able to meet the added strain only if its methods and machinery were overhauled, improved and made ready. Others before him had pointed to the need for new forms of machinery to cope with the problems of individual industries, but it was he who saw that these problems could best be handled by representatives of the industries themselves in Industrial Committees specially constituted for the purpose. His plan was carried through the Governing Body on behalf of the United Kingdom by Sir Frederick Leggett, a former Chairman of the Governing Body, and a firm believer in the I.L.O., who made this last contribution to its work before his retirement.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE INDUSTRIAL COMMITTEES

When the Governing Body decided (at its 94th Session, London, January 1945) to set up the Industrial Committees, it examined a long list of industries for which such bodies might be needed. To begin with, the Governing Body decided to form Committees for the following industries : coal mining, inland transport, iron and steel, metal trades, textiles, building, civil engineering and public works, and petroleum. Later (at its 99th Session, Montreal, September 1946) the Governing Body decided that a Committee should be added for the chemical industries. It will be noted that all these are indus-

tries which have an international importance and which are faced with international problems because they have world-wide ramifications, or because they use raw materials imported from other countries, or because their products enter into world trade, or for other reasons. It may also be recalled that special committees for some of these industries have been set up by other international bodies, a fact which confirms the correctness of the Governing Body's decision that particular attention should be accorded to the industries concerned.

A number of such committees have been established, for example, by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. The European Central Inland Transport Organisation and the European Coal Organisation, which were represented by observers at the first sessions of the I.L.O. Inland Transport Committee and Coal Mines Committee, formed the basis for the E.C.E. Inland Transport Committee and Coal Committee respectively. Other committees set up by E.C.E. include a Steel Committee, a Timber Committee, and an Industry and Materials Committee which has various subcommittees including a subcommittee for housing. Close contact with these committees is maintained by the I.L.O., which is represented at most of their meetings, while representatives of the United Nations attend meetings of the Industrial Committees. Other committees of a similar nature have been set up by the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East: these include a Committee on Industry and Trade, an *Ad Hoc* Committee of Experts on Inland Transport and a Subcommittee on Iron and Steel. Similarly, committees on an industry basis have been set up by the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation. Those which relate to the industries of interest to the I.L.O. Industrial Committees include an Inland Transport Committee and Committees for Coal, Oil, Iron and Steel, Non-ferrous Metals, Timber, Textiles, Chemical Products and Machinery.

The existence of the Industrial Committees is evidence that the I.L.O. has kept abreast of the needs of the time. By maintaining these Committees the Organisation has shown a realism and an understanding of the imperative need to take hold of problems before they get out of hand and to give the people concerned the opportunity to discuss their problems on the basis of accurate information, to reach agreement on the

action which should be taken and to follow up that action until satisfaction has been obtained.

The first of the Industrial Committees to meet were the Coal Mines Committee and the Inland Transport Committee, which held their inaugural sessions in London in December 1945. These two industries were of outstanding importance at that time because of the need to develop the production of coal in Europe and to restore the European transport system which had been so much damaged during the war. The two Committees have now held four sessions each as follows: Coal Mines Committee—London (1945), Geneva (1947), Pittsburgh (1949), Geneva (1951); Inland Transport Committee—London (1945), Geneva (1947), Brussels (1949), Genoa (1951).

In 1946 four more Industrial Committees were launched in pairs. The Iron and Steel Committee and the Metal Trades Committee held their first sessions in the United States, while Europe was chosen for the first sessions of the Textiles Committee and the Building, Civil Engineering and Public Works Committee. In 1947 the Petroleum Committee met for the first time in the United States, and the last of the Committees—the Chemical Industries Committee—was inaugurated in Europe in 1948. All these Committees except one have now held three sessions, as follows: Iron and Steel Committee—Cleveland, Ohio (1946), Stockholm (1947), Geneva (1949); Metal Trades Committee—Toledo, Ohio (1946), Stockholm (1947), Geneva (1949); Textiles Committee—Brussels (1946), Geneva (1948), Lyons (1950); Building, Civil Engineering and Public Works Committee—Brussels (1946), Rome (1949), Geneva (1951); Petroleum Committee—Los Angeles (1947), Geneva (1948), Geneva (1950). The Chemical Industries Committee has held two sessions—Paris (1948) and Geneva (1950).

COMPOSITION OF THE INDUSTRIAL COMMITTEES

Each of the Industrial Committees is composed of Government, employers' and workers' delegates from a number of countries in which the industries concerned are of some importance. The list of countries differs for each of the Committees. Some of the industries exist in practically every country and it might therefore appear desirable, in theory, for

these particular Committees to contain representatives of all the States Members of the I.L.O. An Industrial Committee constituted on such a basis, however, would approximate in size to the International Labour Conference itself. Not only is it impossible to maintain Committees of such a size but it would be quite unnecessary to do so, even if it were possible, because there is no need for all the interested countries to be represented on the Committees in order to benefit from their work. As long as the Committees are sufficiently large to enable the greater number of the countries concerned to participate in the deliberations, and as long as they are representative of the different regions of the world, they will have a sufficient basis of information and experience for their recommendations and will be able to take account of the needs and possibilities of countries in all stages of development. The conclusions of the Industrial Committees are communicated to all the States Members of the I.L.O., and every country wishing to do so may therefore apply the Committees' recommendations to its own circumstances whether it is represented on a Committee or not.

The membership of the Industrial Committees varies from 12 to 31 countries, as follows : Coal Mines Committee 13, Petroleum Committee 14, Iron and Steel Committee 18, Chemical Industries Committee 18, Metal Trades Committee 19, Textiles Committee 23, Building, Civil Engineering and Public Works Committee 23, and Inland Transport Committee 31. When it established the Industrial Committees the Governing Body drew up a first list of countries which were invited to be represented, and has since added a number of countries to each Committee at the request of the Governments concerned. There has been no attempt to apply any hard and fast rule or rigid statistical requirement as a qualification for membership, though the Governing Body has for some time past been considering whether it would not be desirable and possible to adopt criteria for use when new applications for membership are being considered. So far, however, the membership of the Committees has consisted of the countries which have an obvious claim to participate in their work, together with others that have expressed a desire to be repre-

sented. The growth in the size of some of the Committees, however, has caused the Governing Body to feel that objective and specific criteria may have to be adopted.

Each of the countries represented on a Committee is entitled to appoint six delegates—two delegates for the Government, the employers and the workers respectively—together with additional representatives as advisers. The travelling expenses and subsistence allowances of the four employers' and workers' delegates are defrayed by the I.L.O., while those of the Government delegates are payable by the individual Governments. The expenses of the advisers are met by the Governments or organisations concerned. This arrangement makes it possible for the different countries to be adequately represented. It is thought that, if the expenses for all delegates had to be met by the Governments, the smallest countries and those most distant from the place of meeting might have great difficulty in sending a full delegation. Yet the presence of their representatives at the meeting is important, sometimes because they stand to gain the most from such international contacts and sometimes because of the special nature of the information or experience which they can contribute.

It is, of course, for each Government to appoint its own representatives to the various Industrial Committees as it thinks fit. The Governments are also responsible for appointing the employers' and workers' representatives, though here it has been thought desirable to offer some general guidance. When the Industrial Committees were set up the Governing Body suggested that each Government should nominate these representatives in agreement with the organisations of employers and workers having a substantial number of members in the industry concerned. The Governing Body has not thought it appropriate to lay down any rigid procedure concerning the method of appointment. At its 104th Session (Geneva, March 1948) the Governing Body agreed, however, that—leaving aside the question of nationalised industries, concerning which the Governing Body did not express any opinion—it was desirable in principle that Governments should follow the same procedure as that followed in nominating

delegates for the International Labour Conference, except in cases where that method was not considered practicable.¹

Apart from the delegates and advisers representing the various countries, provision has been made for the representation of international organisations. Some of these are organisations set up by intergovernmental agreement, such as the United Nations and the various specialised agencies, and these may appoint representatives to the meetings of the Industrial Committees in cases in which agreements have been concluded between them and the I.L.O.; their representatives have the right to participate in the proceedings of the Committee but not the right to vote. The other international bodies in question are non-governmental organisations, which fall into two categories—those which may be represented at I.L.O. meetings in general in virtue of decisions according them consultative status, and those which are invited to be represented at meetings of particular Industrial Committees only. The first-mentioned organisations have an interest in the work of the I.L.O. as a whole, while the second are more especially concerned with the activities of the Committees dealing with their particular industries. The representatives of the non-governmental organisations attend as observers. In accordance with rules laid down for the participation of non-governmental organisations in the work of the I.L.O. generally, these observers may be permitted by the chairman, in agreement with the vice-chairmen, to make or circulate statements for the information of the Committees upon matters included in the agenda of the meetings.

FIRST RESULTS

Before the Industrial Committees were established there was considerable discussion as to the functions which they would fulfil and the problems which they would discuss. The requests put forward on behalf of transport workers, textile workers, miners, iron and steel workers and metal workers between 1938 and 1943 all referred to the need for special

¹ The non-governmental delegates and advisers for the Conference are chosen by the Governments in agreement with the industrial organisations which are most representative of employers and workpeople.

machinery to deal with economic and social conditions in their respective industries.¹ When the United Kingdom Government submitted its proposal for the establishment of Industrial Committees to the Governing Body it drew attention to Article 5 of the Atlantic Charter which envisages "the fullest collaboration between all nations in the economic field with the object of securing, for all, improved labour standards, economic advancement and social security". The Government considered that this Article "for which the I.L.O. has a special responsibility" would require "closer attention to actual working conditions than has so far been possible" and that for this reason it was necessary to have machinery "through which those engaged in the main industries may consult together".² The Government also pointed out that, while the International Labour Conference and the Governing Body are able satisfactorily to cover the field of general policy, they, alone, do not provide the machinery through which the special circumstances of individual industries can be adequately considered.

These and other considerations were examined in a report submitted to the International Labour Conference at its 26th Session (Philadelphia, 1944).³ The report indicated that the functions of the proposed Industrial Committees must clearly include the formulation of proposals concerning the regulation of wages, conditions of employment and welfare arrangements in their respective industries. Following the precedent of the 1937 Textile Conference it was suggested that the Committees ought to keep under constant review all the economic factors which constitute the background of the social conditions of their respective industries. The report went on to suggest that—

the collection, analysis and distribution of information on the supply of and demand for the raw materials and products of the industries concerned, on the ways in which the production and consumption of these products may be increased, and on all measures calculated to promote the prosperity of the industry and the well-being of those

¹ Cf. *International Labour Review*, Vol. LII, Nos. 2-3, August-September 1945, pp. 142-3.

² INTERNATIONAL LABOUR OFFICE : *Minutes of the 91st Session of the Governing Body*, p. 181.

³ Report I : *Future Policy, Programme and Status of the International Labour Organisation* (I.L.O., Montreal, 1944).

engaged therein, would therefore appear to be desirable in order to ensure the availability of an adequate foundation of relevant information as a basis for the work of the committees. The committees would also constitute a means of securing closer contact between their respective industries and the International Labour Organisation and through it with other international bodies, and it might be possible for them or for the staffs so attached to them to furnish technical and secretarial assistance and possibly other facilities in connection with international negotiations designed to promote international trade in the products of the various industries.

Finally, the report mentioned that in some cases broader functions might be entrusted to the Committees, pointing out that—

it would, for instance, be undesirable to exclude *a priori* the possibility that certain of the committees might progressively, in cases in which the interested parties thought such developments appropriate, play an increasingly responsible part in the international organisation of social and economic measures designed to secure stable prosperity and reasonable social standards in the industry concerned. The extent to which such developments may be desirable or undesirable will depend in part on the general policies adopted in regard to commodity control arrangements and international industrial agreements and on the nature of the relationships established between the proposed industrial committees and any other international bodies which may be set up to deal with these subjects.

In the light of these considerations it was thought that each of the new Industrial Committees would deal with the problems of a specific industry and that any matters which fell within the field of the I.L.O. could be considered by the Committees in so far as they affect the respective industries. To begin with, however, it was necessary to ascertain what were the main problems in each of the industries and what was their order of urgency. This was all the more important because of the fact that the Committees would be meeting for the first time in a period when a multitude of problems left as a legacy of the war would be clamouring for attention, when men's minds were in a ferment, and when contacts broken off by the war would have to be renewed. Accordingly the Governing Body decided that all the Industrial Committees should discuss at their first session a common agenda drawn up in the widest terms to enable them to review the whole field of their respective industries and to indicate their requirements and priorities. The agenda in each case comprised the following two items: the social problems of the industry during the

period of transition from war to peace, and future international co-operation concerning social policy and its economic foundations in the industry. The conclusions reached at the first sessions provided the Governing Body with a picture of the situation in each industry and it was thus able to evaluate the needs of the different Committees.

As was to be expected, the discussions ranged widely ; almost every social and economic question of interest to the I.L.O. in the respective industries was touched upon. The resolutions adopted at these meetings dealt with the following main categories of subjects : manpower, recruitment and training ; working conditions, including hours of work and holidays with pay ; wages, including methods of remuneration and guaranteed wage schemes ; full employment and production ; safety and health ; social security ; and industrial relations. The problems could not all be tackled at once, nor could they all be disposed of within the Industrial Committees. Most of them were suitable for further examination by the Industrial Committees, others needed the attention of the International Labour Conference or some other organ of the I.L.O., and a few could be solved only by other international organisations or by joint action between such organisations and the I.L.O.

After the ground had thus been cleared the next thing was to achieve more positive results. This could be done only by concentrating attention at future sessions on a manageable number of precise and concrete items. The Governing Body therefore draws up agenda for the sessions of the Industrial Committees, comprising a limited number of points which can be dealt with in the time available. In so doing, the Governing Body takes account of the work and proposals of the previous sessions of the Committee concerned.

In the middle of 1949 the Governing Body undertook one of its periodical reviews of the position of the Industrial Committees. By that time seven of the Industrial Committees had held two sessions and one—the Chemical Industries Committee—had met on one occasion. At these fifteen sessions a total of 176 resolutions or other conclusions had been adopted, some of them quite brief and others of considerable length. Of these, 69 called for studies and enquiries to be undertaken by the Office, 31 suggested other forms of action by the I.L.O.,

8 dealt with matters to be taken up with other international organisations, 15 contained general suggestions addressed to Governments, and the remaining 53 put forward specific recommendations for action to be taken in the various countries by Governments and by the organisations of employers and workers. As was to be expected in these early stages, the number of resolutions asking for studies and enquiries was high in relation to those containing definite proposals for action. The most significant group comprised the 53 resolutions which suggested action in the various countries and which were made up as follows: employment problems—7 resolutions, recruitment problems—5, training and promotion—9, conditions of work—10, industrial relations—12, safety measures—5, social services—2, and miscellaneous—3. A study of these resolutions threw light both on the nature of the Committees' interests and on the directions in which their conclusions might be expected to develop.

SUBJECTS DISCUSSED

As a general rule the agenda of the Industrial Committee meetings now consist of three to four items, one of which is framed in fairly wide terms, the others being "technical" items limited to specific and clearly defined problems. The first item consists of a General Report prepared by the International Labour Office, which provides the basis for a general discussion. This Report deals with (a) action taken in the various countries in the light of the conclusions of the previous sessions; (b) steps taken by the Office to follow up the studies and enquiries proposed by the Committee; (c) recent events and developments in the industry. The General Report at first consisted of a single printed document, but with the increase in the volume of material it now comprises a printed report, studies or articles published in the *International Labour Review* or in other I.L.O. publications, and roneoed documents prepared for the Committee's use as working papers. In the case of the technical items a special report is always prepared by the Office, analysing the problem, describing the situation and the practices in the various countries, and presenting conclusions drawn from an examination of the information and of the possibilities for action. All the reports are prepared

in accordance with a Governing Body decision which provides that they should consist, as a rule, of "an analysis of the existing situation in the industry concerned, giving the greatest possible amount of technical information directly relating to the items placed on the agenda".

Particulars of the technical items which have been placed on the agenda of the various Industrial Committees since their opening sessions are given below :

Coal Mines Committee : Utilisation of the resources of the coal-mining industry; the protection of young workers employed underground in coal mines; vocational retraining of disabled miners; hours of work in coal mines; productivity in coal mines.

Inland Transport Committee : Employment in inland transport; industrial relations in inland transport; inland transport statistics; decasualisation of dock labour; protection of young workers on inland waterways; technical methods of selection of workers for the inland transport industry; co-ordination of transport (labour problems).

Iron and Steel : Regularisation of production and employment at a high level; minimum income security; labour-management co-operation; guaranteed wages in the iron and steel industry; technological improvements in the iron and steel industry and their effects on employment; vocational training and promotion in the iron and steel industry; welfare services in the iron and steel industry.

Metal Trades Committee : Regularisation of production and employment at a high level (the automobile industry); minimum income security (annual and other wage systems designed to provide assured earnings); labour-management co-operation; vocational training and promotion in the metal trades; systems of wage calculation in the metal trades; human relations in metal-working plants; factors affecting productivity in the metal trades.

Textiles Committee : Employment problems (with special reference to recruitment and training); industrial rela-

tions; disparities in textile wages between the various countries engaged in textiles and the effect of these disparities on the standards of life of textile workers; safety of workers in the textile industry.

Building, Civil Engineering and Public Works Committee :

Instability of employment in the construction industry; recruitment and training in the construction industry; industrial relations; welfare in the construction industry; seasonal unemployment in the construction industry.

Petroleum Committee : Recruitment and training; safety in the petroleum industry; industrial relations; social conditions in the petroleum industry; principles and methods used in determining wages in the petroleum industry; social services in the petroleum industry.

Chemical Industries Committee : Safety and hygiene in the chemical industries; the organisation of working hours in the chemical industries; vocational training in the chemical industries; general problems of hours of work in the chemical industries with particular reference to a comparison of day work and shift work.

Each of the sessions of an Industrial Committee lasts for two weeks. This period has been found sufficient to allow for a general discussion on the problems before the Committee and for more detailed consideration of the main items by subcommittees which meet simultaneously. It also gives time for visits to one or more industrial plants in the area in which the meeting is being held. These visits are specifically provided for in the rules laid down by the Governing Body for the meetings of the Industrial Committees : " The length of the sessions should be sufficient to allow time for the different groups to meet and study together the items on the agenda, for the members of the Committee to visit industrial undertakings in the country in which the session is held, and for the Committee to draft its reports, recommendations and resolutions carefully and effectively ".

Gradually forms of procedure have been worked out which enable the Committees to complete their business in the time allotted. After a formal opening of the session there are

usually separate meetings of the Government, employers' and workers' delegates, at which views are exchanged on the issues which will come before the Committee. Then follows the first part of the general discussion, which is concerned with the action taken in the light of the resolutions of the previous sessions; this part of the general discussion provides an opportunity for a review of the progress made during the periods between the sessions and enables the Committee to consider the extent to which its previous recommendations have been carried out. When this business has been disposed of the work of the subcommittees begins. There are usually two or three subcommittees, which sit for several days and work out reports and proposals for submission to the full Committee. In the intervals between the subcommittee meetings the Committee usually holds a further general discussion devoted to a consideration of recent events and developments in the industry, which is intended to furnish delegates with an opportunity to comment upon the problems of the industry as they appear at the time and to propose questions for the Committee's consideration in the future. The session closes with the discussion and adoption of the subcommittees' reports and proposals, suggestions for the agenda of future sessions and any other recommendations which may be found necessary.

ACTION FOLLOWING THE MEETINGS

In the light of the experience of past meetings of the Industrial Committees the Governing Body considers that the form of their conclusions must largely depend on the nature of the subject under discussion and the particular circumstances obtaining at the time. Some of the conclusions may take the form of resolutions, while in other cases real progress and practical results are more likely to be achieved by the framing of concrete reports or memoranda. Resolutions, reports or memoranda are to be addressed in the first instance to the Governing Body. They may relate to such matters as the following: (*a*) suggested action by employers' and workers' organisations in the various countries (e.g., matters considered more appropriate for joint negotiation than for legislative action); (*b*) suggestions for the consideration of Governments; (*c*) suggestions concerning questions

which the Governing Body may wish to bring to the attention of the United Nations or other international organisations; (d) proposals for action by the International Labour Organisation; these may be for action by the Governing Body, by the International Labour Conference (or other conferences or committees of the Organisation), or by the International Labour Office; (e) proposals for studies and enquiries to be undertaken by the Office; (f) recommendations as to the subjects which might be examined at future sessions.

As far as action within the I.L.O. is concerned, every conclusion adopted by the Industrial Committees is carefully examined by the Office before being submitted to the Governing Body. The conclusions are then considered in detail by the Governing Body, which gives instructions in each case as to the action which should be taken. All the conclusions are subsequently communicated to the Governments with any observations which the Governing Body wishes to make, and full information on the action taken is laid before the Committee concerned at its next session. To assist in examining the work of the Industrial Committees the Governing Body set up in December 1947 (at its 103rd Session) a Committee on Industrial Committees consisting of nine of its own members (three Government, three employers' and three workers' members), which meets before every session of the Governing Body, examines all the recommendations of the various Industrial Committees and other matters relating to their work, and submits recommendations to the Governing Body for approval. In 1951 it was decided that the membership of this Committee should be increased to twelve.

In general, the work undertaken within the I.L.O. at the request of the Industrial Committees consists of the collection of information and the preparation of studies for the use of the Committees, and the publication of articles and other documents on subjects relating to their respective industries. In some cases matters raised in the Industrial Committees have been disposed of at other meetings organised by the I.L.O., such as the International Conference of Labour Statisticians (Montreal, 1947 and Geneva, 1949), the Conferences concerning Rhine boatmen (Tripartite Conference, Geneva, 1949, and Conference of Governments, Paris, 1950), the Tripartite Technical Conference on Safety in Coal Mines (Geneva, 1950) and

the Meeting of Experts on Systems of Payment by Results (Geneva, 1951). Some questions of concern to the International Labour Conference have been examined by the Governing Body at the suggestion of various Industrial Committees, and one of these—the protection of young workers employed underground in coal mines—will be discussed by the Conference at its 35th Session in 1952. Another noteworthy task accomplished on the proposal of an Industrial Committee was a study of the working and living conditions of workers in the oil industry in Iran, which was carried out by a mission from the International Labour Office in 1950.¹ It is hoped that similar studies of this and other industries may be carried out in various parts of the world on future occasions in order that first-hand information may be made available in cases of outstanding interest.

The activities of the Industrial Committees, as also much of the other work of the International Labour Organisation, often involve close co-operation with the United Nations or with the specialised agencies. For instance, some of the studies proposed by the Building, Civil Engineering and Public Works Committee are a matter of common interest to the United Nations and to the I.L.O., and are part of an integrated programme of work in this field approved by the Economic and Social Council and by the Governing Body. The resolution of the Inland Transport Committee on co-ordination of transport was communicated to the Transport and Communications Commission of the United Nations, while the Economic Commission for Europe asked the I.L.O. to collect information on labour costs in the various branches of transport as a contribution to its studies on transport costs as they affect co-ordination policies. The Inland Transport Committee was also called upon to consider the labour clauses to be inserted in a standard set of rules applicable to operators engaged in international road transport in Europe, drawn up by a working party of E.C.E. Conclusions reached by Industrial Committees on a number of subjects with important economic aspects, such as the resolutions concerning long-term estimates of raw material requirements by the metal trades and the regularisation of production and employment at a high level

¹ Cf. INTERNATIONAL LABOUR OFFICE, *Studies and Reports, New Series*, No. 24 : *Labour Conditions in the Oil Industry in Iran* (Geneva, 1950).

in the iron and steel industry, have been communicated to the Economic and Social Council (or, as in the case of the conclusions relating to stability of employment in the construction industry, to the Council's Economic and Employment Commission). The consideration of problems such as the education of Rhine boatmen's children involved consultations with U.N.E.S.C.O., and conditions of employment in civil aviation have been examined in co-operation with the International Civil Aviation Organisation. The need for such consultations has been recognised in the Standing Orders of the Industrial Committees. The consultations are carried out in accordance with agreements between the I.L.O. and the United Nations and with the general desire of Governments to ensure the required concentration of effort and resources in the work of the various organisations concerned and to avoid any wasteful duplication of work.

But it is in the individual countries that action must be taken if the Industrial Committees are to produce their full effect. A large proportion of the Industrial Committees' conclusions contain recommendations for action by Governments and by employers' and workers' organisations, and they constitute a challenge to the parties who are principally affected. It is essential that they should be known in the various countries and properly considered by all concerned, because the recommendations can only become effective if they are acted upon by the Governments and organisations in their respective spheres. As the Governing Body has pointed out in its Document for the Guidance of Industrial Committees—

Certain action on the Committees' deliberations will be proper to the Office, the Governing Body or the Conference, but a great deal will depend on the individual Governments and employers' and workers' organisations concerned. Clearly this is so in this case of the meetings for, without goodwill on all sides, good results cannot be expected. It is also true in the particular countries. Governments will need to supply information and reports to the Office to enable the work of the Committees to be adequately prepared and followed up. Governments and employers' and workers' organisations acting together in their respective countries through the machinery deemed most appropriate will also need to pay due regard to the deliberations of the Committees if these are to result in improvement of labour and social conditions in their respective countries and throughout the world. To that end, the Committees in their deliberations will no doubt keep in mind what is reasonable and practicable and how far the measures they advocate are capable of wide application.

At first evidence of results was slow to appear. The machinery of the Industrial Committees was new, the Governments and organisations had not yet familiarised themselves with its working, nor had procedures been devised in the various countries for ensuring effective consideration and action. By the middle of 1949, however, it was apparent that a variety of methods were being employed in the different countries and that it would be helpful if some guidance on this matter could be furnished by the Governing Body. The principal methods noted at that time were: (1) consideration of the conclusions by the Government departments concerned, with little or no consultation of the employers' and workers' organisations; (2) consultation of the organisations, the results being communicated to the Office with their approval; (3) consultation of the delegates to the last session of the Committee in question, followed by the communication of an agreed statement to the Office; and (4) submission of the conclusions to a tripartite body for consideration, followed by the communication to the Office of a report on the meeting. Regarding most of the countries, however, no information was available as to the methods, if any, which had been adopted. Nor was precise information forthcoming as to the procedures adopted by the employers' and workers' organisations, though it was known that in a number of countries reports were made to the organisations by the delegates.

At all events it was clear that more effective action on the part of the Governments and organisations was needed and that the supply of information to the Office concerning the action taken was quite inadequate. It was also evident that there were doubts as to what was expected of the Governments and that it would be desirable for the Governing Body to work out a procedure which they might adopt. The Governing Body therefore decided at its 109th Session (Geneva, June 1949) to suggest to the Governments (*a*) that the resolutions of the Industrial Committees be examined by the competent authorities, with a view to determining what action, if any, the Governments might take; (*b*) that the Governments communicate the resolutions to the employers' and workers' organisations; (*c*) that the organisations be asked by the Governments to give their views with regard to the resolutions and to indicate, where appropriate, what action they propose

to take ; and (d) that in the light of these consultations the Governments forward to the Office nine months before the next session of each Committee a statement setting out the position in their respective countries on the matters dealt with in the resolutions, including details of any action taken or which it is proposed to take. The Governing Body also decided that the Office should bring this information to the notice of the Industrial Committee concerned at its next session.

This procedure divides the responsibility for action between the Governments and the organisations. The organisations, as well as the Governments, have a responsibility for examining and following up the resolutions of the Industrial Committees, but it is for the Governments to initiate the consultations. On the one hand the Governments are asked to consider whether they themselves might take action on the resolutions in question (by introducing legislation, by framing regulations, by instituting enquiries, by strengthening or re-organising their own services, and so on), and on the other hand they are asked to ascertain whether the organisations have any views to express and whether they, too, propose to take any action. It is then for the organisations to discuss the questions involved and to make their position known. They may, indeed, suggest action on the part of the Government, or they may propose discussion of a given subject through the collective bargaining machinery, or they may recommend their members to carry out suggestions which the Industrial Committees have made. Finally, after consulting the organisations, the Governments are asked to inform the I.L.O. of the position, giving both their own views and the views of the organisations, and indicating what action has been taken or planned.

The method of consultation is left to the individual Governments. In some cases it is carried out by correspondence and in others the information is obtained from meetings. The method of correspondence often produces satisfactory results, but instances have been reported in which organisations have supplied only the briefest comments or none at all. In such cases more information and action might be obtained if the consultations took place at specially convened meetings or through some appropriate form of machinery which may already exist or which might be set up. While there are often

strong reasons for not forming new committees—especially in countries which are well-organised—it is highly desirable that the conclusions of the Industrial Committees be properly examined and actually discussed by the parties concerned. Unless this is done the parties may not always in fact be “acting together” as the Governing Body has recommended.

The procedure suggested by the Governing Body has been followed by a large number of the Governments and it has now been in operation long enough for its effects to be seen. One of the most noticeable results has been an increase in the amount of information available to the Office. At first only a few Governments supplied the Office with information on the action which had been taken, but during 1951 a much greater volume of material was forthcoming. Thus, in connection with the Fourth Session of the Inland Transport Committee (Genoa, December 1951) a total of 27 countries supplied information on 36 resolutions previously adopted by the Inland Transport Committee. The fact that information is now becoming available to such an extent is evidence not only that the Governments are giving more attention to the preparation of their statements but also that more is actually being done to put the recommendations of the Industrial Committees into effect.

IMPORTANCE OF DISCUSSIONS

The value of the Industrial Committees cannot, however, be judged solely upon the action taken in the light of their conclusions. Under the stimulus of the Industrial Committees a great deal is done, as already noted, within the I.L.O. itself. The actual meetings of the Committees are also of assistance to the industries because they facilitate personal contacts, encourage the exchange of information, and exert an influence upon the minds and actions of the delegates. Discussions, again, are useful in themselves, quite apart from the conclusions to which they may lead. Frequently a discussion in an Industrial Committee results in the adoption of a comprehensive and carefully considered resolution embodying suggestions which may be widely adopted in the individual countries. On the other hand, it sometimes happens that an equally full discussion reveals practical difficulties or differences of view-

point which make far-reaching conclusions impossible. This may happen when progress in regard to a subject has been made in a few countries, but it is still new and strange to most of the others. In such a case, the matter may not yet be sufficiently ripe for a solution to be found in an international gathering. The same thing may happen when a proposal under discussion is desirable in itself, but world economic or political conditions make it advisable to refrain from attempting to translate it into action for the time being. Or, to give one more example, it may happen when the special circumstances of a small number of countries permit of the adoption of a measure which cannot be put into effect in the same way or to the same extent in others. In such circumstances the mere fact that the subject has been discussed is in itself an advantage. The discussion helps to clarify the issues, and the Committee as a whole understands the situation better and realises why no action or only a limited action is possible. The discussion, in fact, contributes towards the spread of international understanding.

When the resolutions of the Industrial Committees contain far-reaching proposals for action, worked out in detail, or when they embody agreement on important principles, it is clear that solid progress has been achieved. If such a big step forward is not possible, however, all the more importance must be attached to the Committee's report on its discussion. When the resolution itself does not carry the matter very far, the Committee's accompanying report is usually a most useful contribution to an appreciation of the problem and its implications, and frequently paves the way for a new approach at a subsequent session. In fact, one of the lessons learned in the Industrial Committees is that, before a problem can be solved, it may be necessary to discuss it at two or more meetings.

In this connection it is worthy of note that discussions within the Industrial Committees are tending to promote a wider measure of agreement as to what is desirable and possible. When the first meetings were held, it was felt in some quarters that it should be possible to agree rapidly on the solutions to a number of the most pressing problems. It was found, however, that while progress—even substantial progress—was possible in certain cases, there were others in which the difficulties could not so easily be overcome. There were, of

course, differences of opinion as to what ought to be done ; there were doubts as to the powers of the Industrial Committees to deal with some of the problems raised ; and there were misapprehensions as to the nature and extent of the obligations that would follow if solutions were adopted. Gradually, however, increasing familiarity with the Industrial Committees has brought about three results—a better understanding of the machinery and procedures of the I.L.O. and of the implications of its decisions ; an increased knowledge of the problems themselves and of the possibilities of solving them ; and a growth in the respect which the three groups have for each other and for the International Labour Office. Battles are still fought, differences of opinion still subsist, misunderstandings still occur, but the meetings of the Committees have now become gatherings of people who recognise that, however they may differ, they are all concerned with the welfare of their industries and are all responsible for trying to solve their problems.

It is significant that by far the greater number of the resolutions of the Industrial Committees have been adopted unanimously. Most of the others have been opposed by only a handful of delegates, usually for special reasons, and the number of those carried in the face of a substantial minority can be counted on the fingers of one hand. This would be no cause for congratulation if the resolutions were emptied of the greater part of their content in order to meet the objections of their opponents. What has in fact happened is that there has been a large measure of accommodation on all sides and that general agreement has usually been reached on the maximum that was possible at the moment. If that maximum has sometimes seemed too little to some of the delegates, they have nevertheless appreciated the difficulty of making spectacular progress when the interests of three groups and a great variety of countries have to be reconciled. Moreover, all sides have realised that it is not only decisions that matter but also the spirit in which they are taken.

STUDIES AND ENQUIRIES

Another important effect of the work of the Industrial Committees is that a mass of new information on the condi-

tions and problems of specific industries has been collected by the International Labour Office, and that a number of reports and studies have been published which would not otherwise have been undertaken. Reference to the list of "technical" agenda items set out in an earlier section of this article will convey some idea of the number and scope of the subjects covered. The list, however, is by no means exhaustive. To it must be added a multitude of questions which have been treated in General Reports and dealt with in articles or in working papers prepared for use at meetings. While it is obvious that much of this work would have been done by the I.L.O. even if the Industrial Committees had not been established, it is evident that under the spur of the Industrial Committees a great deal more attention has been given to these particular industries than would otherwise have been the case.

Moreover, it is not merely within the I.L.O. itself that this effort to grapple with the problems has been made. Many of the studies prepared by the International Labour Office have been carried out on lines suggested after discussion in the Industrial Committees, and in these cases the Office has had the benefit of the practical experience of delegates, whose lives are spent in the industries concerned. In a great number of instances, also, much of the material presented in the studies has been obtained by means of enquiries addressed to the different Governments, which have gone to considerable trouble to prepare factual information, views and suggestions for the purpose. In these cases the preparation of studies for Industrial Committees has led to investigation and discussion in the government departments, accompanied by consultations with the organisations in the industries concerned, which has meant, of course, that special consideration was given in the individual countries to the subjects in question. The task of providing this information often involves a considerable effort for the departments, which is not always sufficiently appreciated.

Connected with this aspect of the question is the fact that the interest shown by the Industrial Committees in certain questions has resulted in various measures being initiated which have not stopped at the preparation of studies, but have led on to more positive decisions. The conferences

concerning Rhine boatmen, which ended in the adoption of two agreements on conditions of work and social security, are an outstanding case in point.

BROADENING INTEREST IN THE WORK OF THE I.L.O.

Another noticeable result of the activities of the Industrial Committees has been a broadening of interest in the work of the I.L.O. During the 25 sessions already held, many hundreds of delegates and advisers have attended. While some of these were already associated with the I.L.O., by far the greater number were participating in its work for the first time. Through their attendance at the meetings, they have come to know the organisation at first hand and have learned to appreciate its meaning and purpose. In turn, they have been able to pass on that knowledge to others in their respective industries. The fact that they were dealing in the Industrial Committees with problems of immediate concern to them in their daily lives has made their interest more direct and acute. Moreover, by their presence at these meetings they have not merely been listening and learning but have had the feeling that they were playing a personal and active part in the work of international co-operation.

Here it might be noted that the interest of the various countries in the activities of the Industrial Committees has been maintained, and that this has been so despite the problems caused by the increase in the number of international meetings in general. The great majority of the countries invited to be represented at the meetings have always accepted the invitation. As a rule, no more than two or three countries abstain from sending delegations, and their abstention is usually due to special reasons. Except in these particular cases, practically all the countries invited are in fact represented. Moreover, since the early post-war days, when temporary difficulties arose, nearly every country has been represented by a tripartite delegation. Changes in the delegations are, of course, bound to occur from one session to another, but in a number of countries the changes have been kept to the minimum, and a reasonable measure of continuity in the personnel has been maintained. Many of the delegates to the Industrial Committee meetings might now, indeed,

be described as "veterans". For example, at the 4th Session of the Coal Mines Committee, held in Geneva in 1951 (the first occasion on which a fourth session was held), 14 of those present had attended the 1st Session, 18 the 2nd Session, 28 the 3rd Session, 9 the 1st and 2nd Sessions, 9 the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Sessions, 5 the 1st and 3rd Sessions, and 7 the 2nd and 3rd Sessions. There seems, moreover, to be a growing tendency to arrange for delegates to be accompanied by advisers. This is a clear sign of increasing interest, because the expenses of the advisers have to be borne by the Governments or organisations which nominate them. The result has been that, whereas each country would normally be represented by six persons, many of them have exceeded that number at the last sessions of each of the Industrial Committees; for example, the last session of the Inland Transport Committee was attended by 200 representatives from 29 countries, of the Chemical Industries Committee by 102 representatives from 14 countries, of the Petroleum Committee by 110 from 14 countries, and of the Textiles Committee by 141 from 20 countries. These figures do not include the representatives of international organisations.

Interest is not confined, of course, to the persons actually in attendance. The organisations and departments which they represent are also involved. Discussions regarding the composition of delegations, the line to be followed at the meetings, and the action to be taken afterwards, are carried on within the employers' and workers' organisations and the government services, and all who participate in them are brought into personal contact with these international activities. There are, in fact, large numbers of people all over the world who have been directly concerned with the work of the Industrial Committees—and therefore of the I.L.O. in general—without ever having attended one of the meetings. The influence upon the organisations in the various countries must be considerable. The international organisations which are represented at the meetings are also given an increased interest in the activities of the I.L.O. and greater opportunities for taking part in them.

There is yet another way in which a knowledge of the I.L.O. has been spread, namely, by means of the meetings which have been held away from headquarters. It is the

policy of the Governing Body to arrange for a certain number of meetings to be held outside Geneva, and a fair proportion of them have taken place in suitable places in Europe and North America. These have either been the capitals of the countries concerned or important centres of the industries. The value of these "outside" meetings has been particularly important for the delegates, who have been able to see how their industry is carried on in other countries and to meet a far greater number of colleagues from those countries than they could have seen at a meeting in Geneva. In connection with these meetings, it has been possible to arrange for representatives of the various industries to visit a coal mine in Pennsylvania, a steel plant in Cleveland, automobile factories in Detroit, and oilfields and refineries in California, to see an electrical machinery works and a steel works in Sweden, to make a tour of the port of Antwerp, to study the silk industry in Lyons and the manufacture of synthetic fibres in Belgium, to visit building sites in Italy, and to see a chemical works in France. Such visits have also been arranged in the case of some of the meetings held in Geneva, and the delegates have thus been given the opportunity to see various aspects of Swiss industry, such as the working of the transport system, the watch industry, and the manufacture of chemicals and textiles.

Apart from the interest aroused amongst people in the industries concerned, the holding of the meetings has attracted public attention as a result of reports and interviews in the press and on the radio, which would not otherwise have occurred. In some cases the work of the I.L.O. has been explained to the general public in some detail for the first time. Even in countries in which the work of the I.L.O. was already well known the meetings have stimulated renewed interest and have provided topical material for reports and comments. The presence of members of the Governments of the countries concerned and of other prominent personalities has demonstrated their personal regard for the I.L.O., and this in its turn has enhanced the public interest in the meetings and in the problems with which they were dealing.

RELATION TO OTHER ORGANS OF THE I.L.O.

It is evident that the creation of the Industrial Committees involved problems both for the International Labour Office and for the Organisation as a whole. They were not only new committees but committees of a different kind. Before the war there had been Committees of the Governing Body, Committees of Experts, Correspondence Committees and others, but the Industrial Committees did not resemble any of these. There had also been a number of tripartite technical preparatory conferences to examine problems of specific industries, but these were *ad hoc* meetings. The only actual committee concerned with a particular industry was the Joint Maritime Commission. This, however, is composed of representatives only of the shipowners and seafarers, and does not contain representatives of the Governments. The Industrial Committees, on the other hand, are tripartite and in this respect they resemble the International Labour Conference and the Regional Conferences. In fact, many of their meetings are attended by over 100 persons and their proceedings more nearly resemble those of a conference than of a committee.

To incorporate these new bodies in the structure of the Organisation implied, in the first place, adjustments within the International Labour Office. A new Division was created as a secretariat and principal research unit for the various Industrial Committees, and this Division has the main responsibility for planning and organising the meetings, co-ordinating and preparing the studies, and ensuring that the conclusions of the Committees receive the requisite attention. But, in addition, a considerable effort has been called for from all the technical Divisions of the Office, which have prepared or helped to prepare many of the reports and studies, from the editorial, translating and interpreting services, from those responsible for relations with Governments and with employers' and workers' organisations, and indeed from virtually every department in the Office. Not only has the amount of work increased but much of it has been given a changed emphasis, has taken a more practical and concrete shape, or has had to be done in different ways. These adjustments had to be made during a period when pre-war tasks were being resumed,

when other new and heavy responsibilities were being undertaken and when the staff of the Office had been dispersed and reduced as a result of the war.

Problems also arose regarding the relationship of the Industrial Committees to the Governing Body. These, however, were not controversial. At bottom the relationship was quite clear and could not be questioned; it was simply a matter of allowing time for it to be understood. The Industrial Committees were set up by decision of the Governing Body and they are responsible to it. It is the Governing Body which draws up the budget for their work, determines their agenda, fixes the dates for their meetings and authorises the studies undertaken for them by the Office. It is the Governing Body which has adopted the Standing Orders and other rules that govern their work. It is, moreover, the Governing Body which decides whether and in what form their conclusions shall be communicated to the various countries for consideration and action. Accordingly, the conclusions, although they are known in the various countries through the representatives who attend the meetings, are not officially communicated to the Governments until they have been examined by the Governing Body, which considers them in relation to the general policy of the I.L.O. and decides whether the official texts which are to be sent to the Governments should be accompanied by any comments or reservations.

INDUSTRIAL COMMITTEES AND THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR CONFERENCE

More difficult were the problems concerning the relationship between the Industrial Committees and the International Labour Conference. The representatives of the various industries who attend the meetings of the Industrial Committees are naturally prone to assume that they are competent to discuss any problems that arise within their industries. At first many of them also took it for granted that the Industrial Committees were entitled to adopt decisions for their respective industries without regard to the impact of those decisions on other industries or to their significance for industry as a whole. It soon became clear, however, that the discussions in the Industrial Committees were raising more questions of

broad general interest than had at first been foreseen. Some of the matters they discussed, while certainly of importance within the particular industries, were also of concern to other industries, and it was evident that such questions should also be considered in their general aspect. The body to give them such consideration was the International Labour Conference. It was therefore necessary to ensure that the activities of the Industrial Committees should neither duplicate the work of the International Labour Conference nor cut across it. Moreover, the International Labour Conference had dealt in the past with the problems of particular industries as well as with problems of interest to industry generally, and it was realised that the Conference would continue to exercise this function, especially in cases in which the problems necessitated the adoption of international regulations.

As the Governing Body has pointed out, the object of the Industrial Committees was "to fill a gap in the structure of the International Labour Organisation. The International Labour Conference effectively covers the field of general policy. These Committees are to provide machinery through which the special circumstances of the principal international industries can receive special and detailed consideration. . . . The Conference has dealt in the past, and will deal in the future, with detailed problems affecting particular industries for which international regulations are needed, although the Conference will, no doubt, take the benefit in suitable cases of the preparatory work of Industrial Committees. On the other hand, there will be some problems the consideration of which by Industrial Committees cannot be divorced from the more general aspects of the subject".

In order to be effective the Industrial Committees must, in fact, relieve the Conference of much of the detailed discussion of the problems of individual industries and increase the contribution of the I.L.O. to the solution of those problems by taking on work that the Conference could not possibly find time to accomplish. The effectiveness of the Industrial Committees as part of the machinery of the Organisation must to a certain extent be considered in this light. It is not the number of items which the Industrial Committees propose for inclusion in the Conference agenda that counts so much, as the extent to which they can promote progress in their individual indus-

tries without diverting the Conference unnecessarily from its work in fields of wider interest. It is the business of the Industrial Committees to break new ground, to develop new techniques within the I.L.O. and in the various countries, and to promote the search for solutions that will carry weight and authority because they have the support of the interests immediately concerned. The traditional work of the International Labour Conference is the adoption of Conventions and Recommendations as the basis for laws and regulations in the separate countries, and from time to time it will no doubt be necessary for such international regulations to be adopted for industries which have their own Industrial Committees. But there are limits to the number of questions of this kind which can be taken up by a Conference meeting only once a year and covering the general field of industrial conditions and social welfare; and it is essential, therefore, that the Industrial Committees develop procedures for solving as many of these problems as possible by other means.

Already the Industrial Committees have relieved the Conference of much of the responsibility for discussing the problems of individual industries; a great deal remains to be done, however, in regard to the formulation of effective solutions. Even before the war the International Labour Conference had given some of its attention to conditions in specific industries, and a number of Conventions or Recommendations in regard to some of these industries had been adopted. Further international regulations of the kind were contemplated and technical preparatory conferences for the industries concerned were being organised when the war broke out. If the Industrial Committees had not been established there is no doubt that pressure would have been brought to bear upon the Conference to resume this work when the war was over. Since the war, however, the number of problems of other kinds has been so great that the Conference would have been placed in a serious dilemma if it had also been pressed to give its attention immediately to the particular needs of miners, transport workers and others employed in the great international industries. Year by year the Governing Body is faced with a formidable list of subjects for which consideration is demanded. Every year complaints are made about the load that is placed upon the Conference agenda. But every year a number of subjects

which would otherwise have been raised at the Conference are examined by representatives of the industries themselves at the meetings of the Industrial Committees. It is difficult to imagine the situation that would have arisen if the International Labour Conference had remained the only effective forum in which these matters could be raised.

As indicated in an earlier section, one question has already been placed on the Conference agenda at the suggestion of an Industrial Committee, namely, the protection of young workers employed underground in coal mines. Other questions which have also been receiving consideration include the protection of young workers in inland navigation and the possibility of revising the Hours of Work (Coal Mines) Convention (Revised), 1935, and the Hours of Work and Rest Periods (Road Transport) Convention, 1939. In view of the pressure upon the International Labour Conference, however, it may be assumed that very few of these items will find their way on to its agenda in the near future.

On the other hand, there are subjects in which the Industrial Committees have expressed an interest but which are at present reserved for discussion by the International Labour Conference. An outstanding example is the problem of industrial relations. The regulation of relations between employers and workers is one of the fundamental problems of every industry, and whatever nation-wide machinery may be established the problem must be tackled within the various industries according to their own needs and circumstances. To assist in improving these relations is therefore one of the most important tasks which the Industrial Committees can perform. A significant first step in this direction was taken by the Inland Transport Committee at its Second Session (Geneva, 1947) when it unanimously adopted a resolution "concerning the principles, methods and machinery by which relations between management and labour in the inland transport industry should be conducted". The resolution dealt with such subjects as freedom of association, the determination of conditions of employment, the adjustment of labour disputes and labour-management co-operative machinery.

Before any further progress could be made, however, either in this Committee or in any of the others, the subject of industrial relations was taken up in its general context

by the International Labour Conference. This was done as the result of a resolution adopted by the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, which referred to the I.L.O. the problems raised in two memoranda—one from the World Federation of Trade Unions and the other from the American Federation of Labor—relating to guarantees for the exercise and development of trade union rights. The Governing Body therefore decided to place this question upon the agenda of the International Labour Conference at its 30th Session (Geneva, June 1947) and the Conference began its discussion of the matter only a month after the adoption of the resolution relating to industrial relations in inland transport. Since then the subject of industrial relations in its various aspects has been on the agenda of every session of the Conference and there have been few opportunities for the Industrial Committees to discuss it.

There can be no doubt, however, of the interest which this subject presents for the various industries. When such a question is before the Conference it is necessary to await the Conference decisions on the fundamental issues and general principles, but when those decisions need to be applied within the individual industries it once more becomes possible for the subject to be considered by the Industrial Committees. At its 34th Session (Geneva, 1951), the International Labour Conference adopted a Recommendation concerning collective agreements and a Recommendation concerning voluntary conciliation and arbitration. Earlier Conventions and Recommendations adopted since 1947 were concerned with fundamental guarantees to apply in industry generally, but the provisions relating to collective bargaining and conciliation and arbitration need to be applied not only in the general field but also within the individual industries. An examination of the methods to be adopted to this end might enable the Industrial Committees to make valuable suggestions for improving labour-management relations in the industries with which they are concerned.

It was in one sense unfortunate for the Industrial Committees that the subject of industrial relations came before the International Labour Conference at such an early stage in their history. The subject had in fact already been placed on the agenda of the Iron and Steel Committee and the Metal

Trades Committee before it was referred to the International Labour Conference, and when these Committees met in the latter part of 1947 they found that they were unable to carry their discussions very far without running the risk of prejudicing the decisions of the Conference itself. A time was bound to come, of course, when a subject of interest to one or more Industrial Committees would have to be reserved—even if only temporarily—to the International Labour Conference, but a great deal of misunderstanding and disappointment might have been avoided if the situation had not arisen so suddenly and so soon.

Actually, the fact that this question had to come before the International Labour Conference in 1947 precipitated a discussion on the relationship between the work of the Industrial Committees and that of the Conference, and made it more difficult for this relationship to be satisfactorily defined. The issue was complicated by the fact that other problems of interest to industry generally were also arising within individual Industrial Committees. To clarify the situation, the Governing Body therefore included a statement regarding this relationship in the Document which it adopted for the guidance of the Industrial Committees in December 1948. In this Document the Governing Body defined the scope of the Industrial Committees as follows :

8. In the light of experience and in order to avoid any confusion between the work of the International Labour Conference and the Industrial Committees, the Governing Body has decided that the scope of the Industrial Committees should be defined as follows :

- (a) primarily, the consideration of particular and practical problems of the industry with which the Committee is concerned ;
- (b) secondarily, the consideration of general problems which have been decided by the International Labour Conference, but only in so far as they affect the industry with which the Committee is concerned ;
- (c) thirdly, and exceptionally, the consideration of problems which have not been finally dealt with by the Conference, but only in so far as they affect the industry with which the Committee is concerned.

In the same Document the Governing Body gave its views as to the distinction between questions affecting a particular industry and questions of a general character. This distinction has always been a source of difficulty and misunderstanding.

If the discussions in the Industrial Committees had to be confined to questions which arise in one industry only and in no other, then the greater part of the subject matter of discussion would be removed. In actual fact, most of the problems that really matter arise throughout the whole field of industry, but this does not alter the fact that each industry usually has to settle the problems for itself in its own way. Anything that the Industrial Committees can do towards finding solutions for the problems of their individual industries, even if the same problems also arise in other industries, is surely to be welcomed.

As the Governing Body pointed out in the Document mentioned above, the distinction between particular and general questions is, of course, only a rough and ready one. The Governing Body therefore indicated the line to be followed "when Industrial Committees in the course of their examination of the problems of their own industries are dealing with subjects having a more general aspect". This guidance related in particular to cases in which the question to be considered by the Committee has already been the subject of final consideration by the Conference, and to cases in which the questions are currently receiving the attention of the Conference. In the light of this guidance and on the basis of the agenda determined by the Governing Body, the Industrial Committees have been able to pursue their work without duplicating that of the International Labour Conference and have thus made their contribution to the effectiveness of the Organisation within their respective fields of competence.

NATURE AND AUTHORITY OF CONCLUSIONS

One other important problem which has arisen in connection with the Industrial Committees deserves to be mentioned here, and that is the question of the nature and force of their decisions. It will be remembered that the Industrial Committees were set up by the Governing Body and that they report to it. No mention is made of the Industrial Committees in the Constitution of the I.L.O., and no new constitutional obligation is assumed by the Governments of the countries which participate in their work. The Governments

are, of course, expected to arrange for the results of the meetings to receive adequate consideration in their respective countries and to report to the I.L.O. on any action taken. This, however, is a moral obligation to be carried out by the individual countries as they think fit and no precise procedure is laid down for its observance. So far the Governing Body, as already explained, has simply "suggested" a procedure which might be followed "with a view to securing effective consideration for the conclusions of the Industrial Committees" (109th Session, Geneva, June 1949). The resolutions and reports adopted by the Industrial Committees are not described as "decisions" but as conclusions which are in the nature of suggestions for consideration, first by the Governing Body and then, if necessary, by the Governments or organisations.

Some concern has been expressed from time to time at the fact that the conclusions of the Industrial Committees do not involve greater obligations for the individual countries. In the case of the Conventions and Recommendations adopted by the International Labour Conference there are definite procedures laid down by the Constitution of the I.L.O., and it has been suggested that analogous provisions might be introduced for some, at least, of the conclusions of the Industrial Committees. Proposals to this effect were put forward by the Belgian Government and by the International Transportworkers' Federation, and were examined by the Governing Body's Committee on Industrial Committees at the end of 1948 and again in 1949 (107th, 108th and 109th Sessions). The I.T.F. proposed, for example, that the conclusions of Industrial Committees should be given the form of Recommendations. Mr. Troclet, the Chairman of the Governing Body and of the Committee on Industrial Committees, suggested on behalf of the Belgian Government that a decision of a particular Industrial Committee might be of sufficient importance to justify its being made a legal obligation and that some of the resolutions of the Industrial Committees might be converted into Conventions or Recommendations by a curtailed procedure. Another possibility considered at the same time was one that had been foreshadowed in the original proposals for the establishment of Industrial Committees put forward by the United Kingdom Government in 1943, namely,

the possibility of embodying appropriate conclusions of the Industrial Committees in international agreements containing model clauses for insertion in the collective agreements of the various countries.

These proposals were given lengthy consideration by the Committee on Industrial Committees but the Committee could not see its way to endorse them. It was only after a full discussion of the implications of the proposals that the Committee recommended the Governing Body at its 109th Session to suggest that the Governments might follow the procedure mentioned above.

A certain amount of uneasiness will nevertheless persist until a way is found to give some, at least, of the conclusions a greater measure of authority. The desire that this be done is, however, by no means universal. There are, for example, strong objections to the idea that Governments should be expected to assume new constitutional obligations in the matter. There is also the argument that effective action must depend upon the situation in the individual countries, that the Governments and the organisations of employers and workers cannot be bound by the decisions of an international body, and that each country must be left to apply the resolutions of the Industrial Committees to its own circumstances in the way it thinks best. As against this, it is contended that in many countries effective action will only be taken if formal and precise obligations are laid down. Be this as it may, it is already clear that greater attention is being paid to the conclusions of the Committees as a result of the Governing Body's suggestions regarding the effect which may be given to them in the various countries.

NEXT STEPS

Attention may now be drawn to certain other needs which have still to be met and to further steps which might possibly be taken. The first of these arises in connection with the nature and authority of the Committees' conclusions. Whatever decisions might ultimately be taken regarding the conversion of resolutions into international agreements or regarding the obligations which the conclusions might be

expected to carry, it would be both possible and desirable to examine the contents of some of the resolutions already adopted with a view to increasing the weight and authority of the texts themselves. In other words, a step which might now be undertaken is to review and consolidate the resolutions on a series of important questions.

Subjects which come before the Industrial Committees are not usually dealt with exhaustively. In many cases there has been a brief preliminary discussion, followed by a request that the matter be studied by the International Labour Office. The study proposed by the Office has then been considered at a subsequent session. Often, however, one of two things happens : either time does not allow the subject to be exhausted at the meeting, or there is not a sufficient measure of agreement to enable the Committee to reach really comprehensive conclusions at that particular stage. In either case, a further discussion at a later date might lead to the adoption of new conclusions and to the reconsideration of others in the light of subsequent experience. There is another point, namely, that while some problems arise out of emergency or abnormal situations—such as certain of the problems which confronted the Industrial Committees during the first period of post-war reconstruction—there are others of a more permanent character which can only be disposed of in stages over a prolonged period. Problems of the latter kind can be the subject of re-examination and review, and the Committees' recommendations for dealing with them might well be both detailed and comprehensive. Such recommendations would carry added weight and authority, both because of the nature of their contents and because of the time and care that had been spent in working them out.

Accordingly, it might be possible to re-examine the contents of certain selected resolutions after a sufficient period had been allowed for the subjects in question to be further considered by the Governments and organisations, and after some experience of the effects of these resolutions in the various countries had been acquired. In such cases—and also in connection with some of the resolutions which may be adopted in the future—it might be possible for the Industrial Committee concerned to examine the information available regarding the action taken in the countries and to review each resolution in the light of the developments which had taken

place since its adoption. As a result of this reconsideration, the Committee could formulate new conclusions, revise or confirm the original ones, and thus adopt comprehensive recommendations in a consolidated form.

After such a consolidated text had been prepared it might even be possible for it to be given the sanction of a decision of the International Labour Conference. At present the conclusions of the Industrial Committees carry weight because of their contents and because of the fact that they have been adopted by representatives of the industries to which they apply. It is conceivable, however, that consolidated conclusions, adopted after renewed consideration and taking account of the intervening experience, might be submitted to the International Labour Conference for consideration and adoption as Conference resolutions. Such a procedure could only be followed in a small number of cases, but if it could be adopted it would do much to enhance the authority of the conclusions in question and would enable the I.L.O. to give still more effective assistance to the countries in the solution of their problems.

Another need which has not yet been fully met is the need to universalise the usefulness of the Industrial Committees. These Committees were never meant to deal with the problems of one class of countries only, but were intended to consider the needs and possibilities of countries in all stages of development. From the beginning, therefore, they have been open to countries of every continent and to the economically underdeveloped countries as well as those that are highly industrialised. It is natural, however, that because of their greater experience in dealing with labour and social problems the representatives of the industrialised countries of Europe and North America exercise the greatest influence over the proceedings of the Committees. Again, many of the delegates tend to view the problems of the industries from the standpoint of the needs and experiences that are familiar to them in their own countries, and a large proportion of them are not thoroughly acquainted with the conditions and problems of the same industry in other parts of the world. It follows, therefore, that more attention is given, as a rule, to problems and proposals of importance to the industrialised countries than to those of importance to the countries which are still

underdeveloped. Yet the countries which have already made substantial industrial and social progress have the least need of the support of international institutions to enable them to make still further progress, while the underdeveloped countries need increasing opportunities for making their special circumstances and difficulties known, assistance in working out solutions for their problems and international support to enable them to put the solutions into effect. If it be true, as is proclaimed in the Constitution of the I.L.O., that "poverty anywhere is a danger to prosperity everywhere", then the advanced countries will need to co-operate still more closely with the underdeveloped countries if they are to maintain their own high standards. Technical assistance, in fact, needs to be greatly expanded in regard to methods of dealing with labour and social problems as well as in fields of material endeavour.

As far as the Industrial Committees are concerned, this would imply placing on the agenda more items of particular interest to underdeveloped countries; devoting a greater part of the general discussions to exchanges of views and information on the problems of these countries; carrying out more first-hand studies of these problems; and placing increased emphasis upon the requirements and possibilities of the underdeveloped countries in the Committees' reports and conclusions. Much more needs to be known about the nature and extent of the problems, the conditions which give rise to them and the practical measures which can be taken to deal with them. Accordingly there is scope for extensive studies and for discussions designed both to bring out the facts and to secure agreement upon solutions which can be applied in the circumstances of the countries involved. Further, in formulating their conclusions the Industrial Committees might be able in appropriate cases to include an exposition of the special nature of the situation in certain countries and to make recommendations which take the particular needs of these countries into account.

There is one other direction in which much remains to be done. A further process of development is still needed in order to strengthen the position of the Industrial Committees in the International Labour Organisation until they are quite firmly embedded in its structure. This will involve still more activity on the part of the International Labour Office and

an increased effort by the representatives of the industries themselves. Experience has shown that far too little is known internationally about the conditions and problems of the industries in the various countries. Much more factual information needs to be collected and diffused and there is scope for a much wider exchange of ideas and experiences. The International Labour Office has made a considerable effort towards meeting this situation but the requirements are still far from being adequately covered. The Office is conscious of a need to provide more current information about the actual conditions in the industries; to publish more studies about the problems of the industries, in addition to those prepared for the meetings of the Committees; to carry out more original research into these problems; to undertake more work in the field, with a view to seeing the conditions at first hand and to giving advice and assistance on the spot; and to establish closer relations, through the appropriate organisations, with people in the industries, so that they may have a clearer understanding of what the I.L.O. is able to do for them and make full use of its services and facilities. In other words, the Office appreciates the need to become more widely recognised as a centre for information and assistance in regard to the labour and social problems of the various industries.

As a corollary to this, it is desirable that the representatives of these industries should develop an increased confidence in each other and in the International Labour Organisation. On the basis of mutual respect and in the light of growing experience, it should then be possible for the employers and workers in each industry to regard the Industrial Committee for that industry as *their* Committee, to be willing to discuss their problems at its meetings and, in fact, to bring their problems before it as the natural forum in which they can be examined.

Recent experience justifies the conclusion that these two things are on the way to being achieved, namely, that the Office is being increasingly recognised as a reliable centre for information and advice and that each Industrial Committee is becoming an acknowledged world forum for its industry. Organisations and individuals are showing a growing desire to consult the Office, and representatives at the various meetings are now more disposed to regard each other as colleagues

with a certain range of common interests and not simply as opponents who must always defend the position of a particular group.

PROGRESS ACHIEVED

Considered objectively and soberly, the results achieved by the Industrial Committees so far are distinctly encouraging. Those who expected more can hardly have been conscious of the nature and magnitude of the tasks which the Committees were set. They were new bodies established in a period of great difficulty, even though it was also a time of promise and hope. They were not given a free run with unlimited powers, but were integrated into an existing organisation with its own traditions and recognised procedures. Much of what they might have regarded as their proper subject matter has been dealt with by other organs, and no obligation rests either upon Governments or upon employers' and workers' organisations to carry out their decisions. Nevertheless they have made their impact felt both within the Organisation and in the various countries. They have brought out the problems of their industries which need attention from the I.L.O.; they have encouraged the study and discussion of those problems; they have worked out solutions, and they have stimulated action to give effect to them. All this has been done by agreement between the three groups, which have striven to arrive at a common understanding. Only two of the Committees have so far held more than three meetings and one of them has met only twice. If more had been expected of the Committees in such a short time they would have had to be given greater powers and wider freedom, and their decisions would have had to be invested with much more authority. As it is they can advise and recommend but they have no power to act.

There is no lack of interesting examples to show how the idea of the Industrial Committees has caught on and spread. For instance, the number of countries associated with their work has increased. Since the Committees were first formed countries have been added at their own request as follows: Coal Mines Committee, two; Inland Transport, seven; Iron and Steel, four; Metal Trades, six; Textiles, six; Building, Civil Engineering and Public Works, four; Petroleum, two;

and Chemical Industries, four. A number of international organisations of employers and workers which were not associated with the work of the Industrial Committees at the beginning have asked to be allowed to send representatives to the meetings. Two other Committees of the I.L.O. have adopted the same methods and procedures as the Industrial Committees: the Advisory Committee on Salaried Employees and Professional Workers, which had its first session in 1949, and the Committee on Work on Plantations, which met for the first time in 1950. Requests have been received from various quarters for the establishment of new Industrial Committees for mines other than coal mines; lumber (timber) and woodworking; printing and allied trades; hotels, restaurants and cafés; the paper and cellulose industry; the leather and shoe industry; the glass industry; the sugar industry; the margarine, oils and fats industry. The creation of further Committees would, however, raise serious financial and administrative problems and these are still under consideration.

AIMS AND OBJECTS

In all their work the Industrial Committees are seeking to achieve two clear and simple objects. Their first main concern, of course, is to bring about an improvement in the conditions in the respective industries. This they attempt to do by way of the collection and diffusion of the facts, by discussing the problems and by seeking agreement on the solutions. By meeting at more or less regular intervals they are able to give sustained attention to long-term problems and thus to achieve a measure of continuity in their treatment which was lacking before they were formed. The solutions themselves are more often recommendations for action to be taken by agreement between the employers and workers than proposals for legislation. The application of such solutions depends to a very large extent upon the nature of the relations which exist between the employers and workers, and the improvement of these relations is therefore fundamental to the success of the Industrial Committees' work. It is hardly too much to say, indeed, that the promotion of improved industrial relations is the real task of the Industrial Committees within their immediate field of activity.

The other main object is wider. It is to assist in promoting world peace and social progress through the machinery of the I.L.O. The Industrial Committees contribute towards this end by providing opportunities for increasing international contacts and by enabling large numbers of people from different countries not merely to meet but actually to play an active and personal part in the solution of international problems. This was foreseen at the time when the Industrial Committees were formed and was indeed one of the reasons put forward for their creation. The object has never been lost to view.

In the pursuit of these aims the Industrial Committees have experienced growing pains and they have, of course, encountered difficulties, set-backs and disappointments. But after 25 meetings the foundations have been laid and noticeable progress has been achieved. With goodwill in industry and a sincere desire to promote international co-operation this progress must surely continue.
