

Labour Administration by the State and Trade Unions in the U.S.S.R.

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In the Soviet Union the responsibility for labour questions, such as those concerning the rational utilisation of manpower, vocational training and conditions of work in relation to the national economic plan, is shared by the State and the trade unions.

In the article below, Mr. Piatakov, Assistant Chief of the Legal Department of the State Committee on Labour and Wages of the U.S.S.R. Council of Ministers, sets out in some detail the respective functions of the State and of the trade unions in drawing up and administering labour legislation. He describes how labour relations work and the manner in which the workers and employees participate in the management of the enterprise through the factory trade union committees, and concludes with an account of the arrangements made by the State in co-operation with the trade unions to ensure the fulfilment of the current norms, and to solve the individual work disputes that may arise in that connection.

THE socialist economic system with national ownership has provided possibilities in the Soviet Union for the people to develop new ways of organising the work of society, on the basis of fellowship and mutual assistance between workers. The State, representing the whole people through the councils of deputies which embrace the whole urban and rural population, is responsible for ensuring that the rights and liberties laid down in the Constitution are equally available for all citizens, regardless of sex, religion, race and nationality, including the right to work, the right to be paid for work according to its quantity and quality, the right to rest, and the right to security in old age, sickness and disablement.

The state authorities regulate labour relationships in socialist society with the aim of improving working conditions, increasing labour productivity and ensuring a constant rise in the material well-being and cultural level of the working people. In addition to enforcing the law and maintaining the basic rights of citizens, they plan the economy so that material and manpower resources can be

used efficiently to satisfy the growing needs and development of the members of society. This direction of the economy follows the principle of " democratic centralism ", combining centralised control with freedom of initiative for regional and local authorities.

The trade unions (as well as other social organisations) play a major part in implementing measures to improve working conditions and, as mass organisations with extensive rights, collaborate with the state authorities on the most important questions relating to labour and remuneration. They encourage workers' initiative in developing new forms of work—socialist emulation, the shock-worker movement, the Communist labour brigades and enterprises—and help workers to acquire experience in dealing with production, state and community matters. As society has developed and its material level has risen, the unions have taken over functions previously performed by the State. They at present participate directly in public administration in fields closely related to workers' needs such as social insurance, the running of sanatoria and rest homes, physical culture and sports.

LEGISLATIVE POWERS

Under the U.S.S.R. Constitution (article 14) and the constitutions of the constituent republics, the basic principles of labour legislation are a matter for the supreme organs of the Union, while labour legislation itself is a matter for each republic, thus safeguarding the independence and sovereignty of the republics. The Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. enacts laws for the whole Union and can amend the U.S.S.R. Constitution, in which the main labour rights of citizens are embodied. It has issued such major legislation as the State Pensions Act of 14 July 1956 and the Act of 7 May 1960 to complete the reduction of the working day for employees to seven or six hours. Laws are enacted by separate votes in the two chambers of the Supreme Soviet (the Council of the Union and the Council of Nationalities) after close consideration by the deputies at sessions of these bodies. Adoption of an Act is preceded by considerable preparatory work on the part of the chambers or Praesidium.

Draft Acts and regulations moved in the Supreme Soviet by the Union Council of Ministers, by deputies of the Supreme Soviet or by social organisations are first examined by the " permanent committees on proposed legislation " appointed by the Council of the Union and the Council of Nationalities from their members. Representatives of ministries and government departments, regional economic councils, undertakings and scientific institutions are invited to take part in the work of these committees. If the committee so decides, a Bill may be published for consideration throughout

the country, after which it is re-examined in the light of the comments of staff meetings in undertakings and offices, or of individual workers. This was the procedure adopted, for instance, in preparing the State Pensions Act and the draft principles of labour legislation at the federal and republic levels.

In virtue of the legislation the Praesidium of the Supreme Soviet issues decrees for the purpose of improving conditions of work and raising living standards, such as the decree of 26 March 1956 to extend the period of maternity leave and the decree of 10 February 1960 to regulate the special allowances of persons employed in the far northern areas and in places assimilated thereto. The Acts of the Supreme Soviet and decrees by its Praesidium are published in the "Gazette of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R."

On the basis of the existing legislation, the Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R. issues regulations and instructions regarding the method and concrete details of implementation of the measures in the field of labour and wages prescribed in the legislation.

Decisions of the Union Council of Ministers which have a generally binding (normative) character are published for general information in the "Ordinances of the U.S.S.R. Government".

Taking this Union legislation as a starting-point, the supreme soviets of the federated republics regulate under their constitutions the various aspects of labour relations in the light of regional conditions. Their codes of labour laws have been amended or supplemented in order to give effect to a number of federal measures to improve conditions of work. The councils of ministers of the federated republics also do a great deal of regulation, giving effect either to current Union legislation, or to that of the particular republic, or to decisions by the Union Council of Ministers; these governments have issued many measures for application of the codes of labour laws to particular classes of workers.

DRAFTING OF LAWS AND REGULATIONS

The trade unions play an active part in the drafting of laws and regulations on labour questions, as well as on questions of production, material living conditions and culture :

(1) The Central Council of Trade Unions and the central or republic committees of particular unions submit draft laws and regulations to the Praesidium of the Supreme Soviet or Council of Ministers—in either case at the federal or republic level. Specific regulations of major importance are adopted jointly by the Union Government and the Central Council of Trade Unions (C.C.T.U.) ; for instance the decree of 19 September 1959 to reduce hours of

work¹ was jointly issued by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the Union Council of Ministers and the C.C.T.U.

(2) The C.C.T.U. issues instructions, rules and explanations on the application of labour legislation, except on matters within the jurisdiction of the State Committee of the U.S.S.R. Council of Ministers for Wages and Labour.

(3) The C.C.T.U., the central committees of particular trade unions, and the republic, regional and provincial trade union councils take part, through their representatives, in the preparation of draft laws and regulations by the Supreme Soviet, the Council of Ministers and other governmental bodies.

(4) The central committees of trade unions, in conjunction with the appropriate ministries and government departments, issue rules and standards on occupational safety and health.

The State Committee on Labour and Wages of the Union Council of Ministers plays a considerable part in the work of regulation, for it prepares government Bills and draft regulations on labour matters, issues many binding decisions, rules and instructions, and gives explanations for the implementation of labour legislation. Particularly important decisions, directly affecting the vital interests of employed persons, are taken by the State Committee jointly with the Central Council of Trade Unions.

Ministers at the Union and republic levels issue orders and instructions within their respective jurisdictions, and the regional economic councils also issue decisions and directives on labour matters. In many cases these "sub-legislative" instruments have a generally binding character in the branch of public administration or region concerned.

LABOUR QUESTIONS IN RELATION TO PLANNING

Side by side with the regulation of labour relations, the state authorities devote a large part of their time to labour aspects of planning.

Article 11 of the Union Constitution reads: "The economic life of the U.S.S.R. is determined and directed by the state national-economic plan, with the aim of increasing public health, of steadily raising the material and cultural standards of the working people, of consolidating the independence of the U.S.S.R. and strengthening its defensive capacity".

¹ Decree No. 1120 concerning the dates for completion of the transition to the seven or six-hour working day and adjustment of the wage rates of employed persons in all branches of economic activity in the U.S.S.R.

In the economic field considerable attention is devoted to labour questions, including the rational utilisation of the manpower resources of society, vocational training and retraining, the raising of labour productivity through constant technical progress, chain mechanisation and automation of production processes, action for the further shortening of the working day and week, improvement in methods of remuneration, including pay increases in line with higher productivity, improvement of conditions of work, further progress as regards the social division of labour, product specialisation and industrial co-operation, and raising the level of material security for aged persons, the sick and the disabled.

After approval according to the established procedure, the plan acquires the force of law and must be executed by authorities, undertakings and individuals.

The State Committee on Labour and Wages of the Union Council of Ministers takes an active part in drawing up the state economic plans, advising the Union Council of Ministers in relation to draft long-term and fixed-term plans on questions of labour and wages, social insurance, the manpower budget, and modernisation planning from the standpoint of labour economics.

The public plays an active role in this planning. A decree of the Praesidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union, dated 15 July 1958, gave factory and local trade union committees the right to participate in working out the preliminary plans for production and capital investment and to hear reports by managements of undertakings and offices on the execution of the production plans. Before confirmation, production plans of undertakings are discussed at general meetings of employees.

The trade unions play an active part at all stages in the preparation of state plans (in undertakings, on the regional economic councils, provincial executive committees of the local soviets of workers' deputies, the councils of ministers of the autonomous republics and the state planning authorities of the federated republics).

The Central Council of Trade Unions is entitled to tender advice to the Soviet Government on the draft economic plans in so far as labour questions are concerned (decree of the Union Council of People's Commissars and Central Council of Trade Unions dated 10 September 1933).

ENTRY INTO EMPLOYMENT

In the Soviet Union employment relationships arise between citizens on the one hand and undertakings, institutions or organisations on the other. The substance of the relationship and the

rights and obligations of the parties are determined in a manner laid down in labour legislation.

The basis for the existence of an employment relationship is the individual contract. In the exercise of their right to work, citizens choose their employment according to their particular trade and skill. The right to enter into a contract of employment starts at the age of 16 years ; in exceptional cases, with the consent of the factory or local trade union committee, a young person may start work at the age of 15.

When unemployment was liquidated in 1929-30 there ceased to be any practical need for employment exchanges, and these were disbanded. Undertakings and establishments inform the public of vacancies on their workforce for technical and manual workers in the various trades by means of advertisements in newspapers or notices in special display windows. Engagements for work in a different town are arranged on a voluntary basis by the recruitment departments of the regional and provincial executive committees of the soviets of workers' deputies, and their district representatives ; in such cases contracts of employment are concluded for specific periods and provide for an allowance to meet the cost of removal and of settlement at the new workplace. State undertakings and institutions are entitled to engage employees within the limits of their planned or estimated personnel establishment and total wage bill. When concluding a contract of employment, the individual negotiates the terms and conditions which would be acceptable to him, including the date for starting work, the post and trade category, the duties, the rate or scale of pay and the housing to be provided.

LABOUR IN THE INDIVIDUAL ENTERPRISE

Management in the Soviet Union is based on a combination of two principles—centralised command and initiative by the rank and file. The managing director bears full responsibility for implementing the production and financial plan, directing the work procedures and processes, and administering the undertaking. Engagements and transfers of all personnel (with their consent) are a matter for the managing director, though he must take the views of the trade union into account.

Managements of undertakings have a great deal of freedom of decision in labour questions, guided by current legislation and the targets set in the plan. The managing director organises recruitment, the distribution and assignment of skilled workers within the undertaking, and arrangements for training at the various levels. He ensures that the pay system is correctly applied and that wages are paid at the proper times. He determines and may

modify the structure and size of the staffs of the workshops and administrative departments of the undertaking within the limits of its labour plan, as well as the numbers of salaried employees, engineers and technicians, guided by the appropriate salary scale. He decides and may modify the rates of pay of individual administrative and production workers within the limits of approved salary scales and of the total funds available for wages and salaries, and approves advances of pay to wage-earning and salaried employees, etc.

The wage-earning and salaried personnel is associated with the conduct of the undertaking as regards internal questions, usually through the trade union organisation (factory committee). In particular, extensive rights were given to the factory and local committees of the trade unions by a decree of the Praesidium of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R., dated 15 July 1958. No labour problem can be decided by the management of an undertaking without the participation of the trade union committee.

It will be sufficient to indicate briefly some of the rights vested in the factory and local committees: representation of the wage-earning and salaried personnel in all questions concerning work, living conditions and culture; participation in the drafting of the production and capital investment plans and of the plans for construction of housing and welfare premises; conclusion of collective agreements; receiving of reports by the management on the execution of the production plan, commitments undertaken under collective agreement and other matters affecting the personnel; submission of proposals to higher authority for improving the operation of the undertaking or institution as well as for improving conditions of work and life and the material and welfare services provided; expressing an opinion on the candidates proposed for managerial posts and raising with the responsible bodies any questions of the removal or punishment of managerial personnel who fail to perform their obligations under collective agreements, behave bureaucratically or infringe labour legislation; participation in decisions on job evaluation and remuneration (application of pay scales to particular jobs, allocation of wage rates to workers, determination of standard rates of output, introduction of incentive pay systems, fixing of amounts of bonus, etc.); operation of the state social insurance system for employed persons; examination of labour disputes; ensuring observance by managements of labour legislation and rules and standards of occupational safety and health; organising the standing "production conferences", etc.

These standing conferences, which provide one of the main means of employee participation, comprise manual workers and salaried employees, representatives of the trade union committees

and of scientific and technical societies, etc., and also the management. The conference discusses questions relating to the fulfilment of the planned quotas, maximum utilisation of internal production reserves, creation of working conditions conducive to high productivity, and improvement of material and welfare facilities for the workers and their families.

Work in each undertaking is governed by rules of employment issued by the management after consulting the trade union committee: these are based on—and may add to—model rules issued by the State Committee on Labour and Wages of the Union Council of Ministers in agreement with the Central Council of Trade Unions on 12 January 1957.

The rules deal with engagement and dismissal, the main obligations of management and employees, hours of work and their utilisation, incentives, and sanctions for infringement of labour discipline.

An important factor in the determination of conditions of work in undertakings is the collective agreement, concluded by the factory or local committee of the trade union acting on behalf of all wage-earning and salaried employees, and by the management of the undertaking. At present collective agreements are being used more and more as a means of providing for employee participation in management.¹

The agreement lays down the respective obligations of management and personnel as regards improved organisation of production and work, due application of remuneration systems, execution of production plans, increases in productivity of labour, improvement of skills, improvement of safety and health arrangements, and also provision of housing and of material and welfare facilities for employees. Many clauses of collective agreements have legal force.

According to section 28 of the Code of Labour Laws of the Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic and the corresponding passages of the labour codes of other republics, the terms of employment agreements must conform to the provisions of the labour laws, collective agreements and the internal rules of the undertaking. Any subsequent change in the terms of employment agreed upon may be made only by mutual consent.

A decree of the Praesidium of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. dated 25 April 1956 laid down that a wage-earning or salaried employee is entitled to terminate his employment and dissolve his agreement (where it was for an indefinite period) on giving the

¹ See also G. K. MOSKALENKO: "Collective Agreements in the U.S.S.R.", in *International Labour Review*, Vol. LXXXV, No. 1, Jan. 1962, pp. 18-29.

management two weeks' notice. On the other hand, Soviet legislation strongly guarantees the individual's right to work: if the management wishes to terminate an employment relationship, it may do so only on grounds explicitly stated in labour legislation and only provided the factory or local trade union committee gives its consent.

SUPERVISION OF UNDERTAKINGS

Ministries, departments and the executive committees of provincial or municipal soviets of workers' deputies exercise general supervision over the undertakings and organisations subordinate to them. As regards most questions, the state and economic authorities do so in agreement with the central and republic committees of the trade unions and the republic, provincial and district trades union councils.

Regulations for the regional economic councils, approved by the Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R. on 26 September 1957, provide that the economic councils shall direct industry and construction in their areas, with extensive participation by the workers. With this object, technical and economic commissions have been attached to the economic councils, consisting of scientists, professional men and women, high-output workers, innovators, inventors and rationalisers, and leaders of government, economic, trade union and other organisations. The councils also regularly convene meetings of managerial and technical personnel and industrial innovators who have been active in popularising progressive methods of work to study together the means of introducing such methods on a wider basis. The orders and instructions of the economic councils on basic questions of work and wages, safety and health questions and material and cultural facilities for employed persons are issued with due regard to the proposals of the trades union councils.

SPECIAL RULES FOR SAFETY AND HEALTH

Much importance is attached in the Soviet Union to occupational safety and health. Increased output of commodities, widespread introduction of new techniques, the progress of mechanisation and automation are being accompanied by improved safety and health conditions at work. In addition, there is special state action to protect the health of employed persons while at work, enormous sums being spent on such action every year.

Federal legislation deals mainly with occupational safety and health questions requiring uniform action throughout the Union: these include elaboration of schedules of safety and health measures,

drafting of safety and health standards to apply in projected industrial undertakings, general rules on safety and health and rules for particular industries, lists of occupations involving unhealthy processes and therefore requiring specially advantageous conditions of work (shorter working day, longer holidays), lists of occupations with unhealthy or arduous conditions of work in which women and young persons are not to be employed, rules regarding pre-employment and periodical medical examinations, instructions on the issue of special working clothes, etc.

Some of these rules and instructions are issued by the Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R., others by ministries and departments to which the Council of Ministers grants the necessary powers. Many of the rules on occupational safety and health which were issued by the former People's Commissariat for Labour are still in force today. A number of occupational health rules have been issued by the Union Ministry of Health and by the Chief Health Inspector of the Soviet Union : these relate to the medical examination of workers and to the medical equipment of industrial undertakings.

In recent years other rules regarding occupational safety and health have been issued by the State Committee on Labour and Wages of the Union Council of Ministers—for instance, lists of occupations with unhealthy or arduous conditions of work, to which persons under 18 years of age may not be admitted.

In accordance with section 7 of an order by the Union Council of People's Commissars and the Central Council of Trade Unions dated 10 September 1933, many orders on occupational safety and health in particular industries have been issued by the central committees of the trade unions in agreement with the ministries, departments and economic councils concerned. Special safety rules of inter-occupational scope have been issued by the Central Council of Trade Unions (on the provision of workshop personnel with aerated or salt water, etc.).

The legislation of the republics has supplemented federal standards by laying down a whole network of measures on occupational safety and health—issue of soap to workers on dirty jobs, issue of neutralising substances to those on unhealthy work, or provision of additional (nursing) breaks for mothers feeding their children at the breast.

As part of the current extension of rights of the federated republics, the governments of these units and the regional economic councils are also now empowered to amend or supplement the lists of jobs involving unhealthy conditions of work and therefore requiring a shorter working day and longer holidays : such action must be taken in agreement with the State Committee on Labour and

Wages of the Union Council of Ministers, the Central Council of Trade Unions and the Union Ministry of Health. The councils of ministers of the federated republics are empowered—in agreement with the State Committee on Labour and Wages and the Central Council of Trade Unions—to supplement the lists of jobs to which women and persons under 18 years of age may not be admitted. Thirdly, the governments of the federated republics issue, in agreement with the Central Council of Trade Unions, safety rules for the mining industry (including mining and drilling for geological organisations) and also rules for the construction and operation of steam boilers, pressure containers and hoisting installations.

INSPECTION AND ENFORCEMENT

Inspection to ensure compliance with safety and health rules is primarily the responsibility of the appropriate organs of government.

The Public Prosecutor of the U.S.S.R. and his subordinates in the federated republics, provinces and cities carry out general supervision over the due application of the laws, including labour legislation, by all undertakings and institutions and by public officials and private persons. The public prosecutor's office at each level is independent of the local government authorities and exercises constant supervision as regards observance of the law in matters of employment.

A public prosecutor is entitled to order an undertaking or institution, and also officials, to desist from any illegal action taken. He can challenge the legality of any order or instruction, make investigations, suggest disciplinary action or initiate criminal proceedings for infringement of labour laws, and prosecute offenders in the courts, etc.

In addition to action by the public prosecutors, supervision in regard to labour legislation is carried out by the State Committee on Labour and Wages of the Union Council of Ministers. The Committee is entitled to check on the work of ministries, government departments, economic councils, undertakings and organisations, to ensure that action to improve the health aspect of conditions of work is duly taken, to hear (at its own sittings) statements and reports by the heads of ministries, departments, undertakings and institutions, to receive the necessary documentation and accounts, to suspend the effect of orders and instructions issued by Union ministries and departments if these are incompatible with current labour legislation, and to apply to the Union Council of Ministers for their annulment. In the light of the results of its inspections and checks, the Committee issues binding instructions and interpretations for the purpose of securing compliance

with laws and regulations. Members of the Committee's staff are entitled to visit and examine the premises of undertakings and organisations without let or hindrance.

The Union and republic ministries and departments and the regional economic councils are required to direct and supervise action for occupational safety and health in the undertakings subordinate to them.

Great importance also attaches to the special state authorities which supervise particular aspects of the work of undertakings and institutions.

The chief state inspectors of the ministries of health at the federal and republic levels and their network of health inspectors supervise hygiene conditions in undertakings and offices.

The state committees for safety inspection in industry and mining (attached to the councils of ministers of the federated republics) and their subordinate bodies at the regional and district levels supervise observance of safety rules in mining undertakings and on geological and drilling work of all kinds. As a rule these committees are also responsible for inspection of steam boilers and pressure containers (as regards both manufacture and operation) as well as hoisting gear. All these special inspection services may issue compulsory orders to managements, suspend any work, investigate cases of accident or damage, and impose fines on officials who have not observed the rules.

A special authority, the State Shipping Register of the U.S.S.R., and its local organs supervise the conditions of steamboiler gear and other machinery on seagoing vessels.

Current legislation places on managing directors of undertakings and worksites the responsibility for safety and health arrangements and for conformity with the labour laws. In undertakings there are special officials whose responsibilities include enforcement of safety rules—the deputy director for safety, the safety engineers, safety technicians, etc. Managing directors of undertakings conclude special agreements with the factory trade union committee embodying obligations as regards safety and health.

The activity of the state inspecting bodies is combined with a great deal of labour protection work by the trade unions. These supervise observance of safety and health rules, acting through their "technical inspectors of labour". The work of the inspectors is directly administered by the republic, provincial and regional trade union councils.

These technical inspectors have wide powers, including the right to check safety and health conditions and arrangements in undertakings and institutions and the right to take proceedings against persons infringing labour laws.

A great deal of work is also done by the "social inspectors for labour protection" and the safety and health commissions attached to the provincial and the factory or local committees of the trade unions. A social inspector for labour protection is elected at the level of each trade union group.

These social inspectors, who act under the direction of the technical inspector, are agents of the factory trade union committee: they have special powers to supervise observance of labour legislation, including power to require the management to produce or give necessary documents or explanations, to issue orders binding the management in agreement with the technical inspector, etc. The safety and health commissions comprise social inspectors and industrial innovators (workers) under the chairmanship of a member of the trade union committee. The commissions participate in the planning of safety and health measures, supervise the expenditure of money for these purposes, check the medical equipment of undertakings, and investigate the causes of employment injuries and occupational diseases.

More than 2 million members of trade unions take part in this way in the supervision of safety and health on the workers' behalf.

DISPUTES

The Soviet state authorities and trade unions also enforce the law on employment relationships through their handling of disputes between employees and managements. Labour disputes are very rare in the Soviet Union, mainly arising through inadequate knowledge of labour legislation on the part of individual management representatives or workers, or through its faulty application.

Under the regulations for the examination of labour disputes approved by decree of the Praesidium of the Supreme Soviet on 31 January 1957, such disputes are handled by (a) labour disputes boards, (b) the factory or local trade union committees and (c) the people's courts.

The labour disputes boards are set up in undertakings, institutions and organisations and are composed of equal numbers of permanent representatives of the factory or local trade union committee and of the management. They are thus joint union-management bodies. The two sides are on an equal footing at meetings of the board: the functions of chairman and secretary are performed at alternate sessions by representatives of the trade union committee and of the management respectively. Decisions are reached by agreement between the two groups of members.

The disputes board acts as court of the first instance for all labour disputes arising between employees on the one hand and

the management on the other, excluding those in which the employee can apply directly to a court (in case of dismissal by the management).

In large undertakings with separate workshops there are workshop disputes boards as well as one for the whole undertaking.

Cases are examined by the labour disputes board only where the employee has failed to overcome the disagreement through direct discussion with the management. The factory, workshop or local trade union committee receives complaints for consideration by the board.

Disputes are considered in the presence of the employee. If necessary, the board may summon witnesses to its sittings, delegate technical or financial investigations to individuals, and require submission of documents or accounts by the management. Before the sitting begins, the employee may object on specific grounds to any member of the board. Objections to management representatives are decided by the head of the undertaking; objections to trade union representatives by the factory trade union committee.

The decisions of the board come into force as soon as they are issued. Each decision must give reasons and be based on the labour legislation, the collective agreement, the contract of employment, the rules of the undertaking, or relevant regulations or instructions. If agreement cannot be reached between the representatives of the management and the trade union on the disputes board, or if the employee concerned appeals against the decision of the disputes board for the whole establishment, then the case goes to the factory or local trade union committee. After considering an appeal against a decision by a disputes board, the committee may uphold the decision or issue a new one.

Decisions by the disputes board and orders by the factory or local committee must be put into effect by the management within ten days. If a decision is not put into effect, the committee gives the employee an attestation which has the force of a writ of execution.

Workers enjoy extensive possibilities as regards defence of their employment rights before the courts. Any labour dispute which has been examined by a factory or local committee (and, in first instance, by a disputes board) can be referred for decision to a people's court if the employee is not satisfied with the committee's order or if the management considers this contrary to law.

Under an order issued by the Praesidium of the Supreme Soviet on 27 January 1959, the people's courts also have primary jurisdiction for disputes regarding the reinstatement of employees dismissed by the management with the consent of the trade union committee.

In a labour case the employee may make his complaint orally or in writing, oral statements being recorded by the people's court and signed by the judge and the complainant. Employees are exempted in such proceedings from state charges and from payment of costs. To ensure proper examination of the case, the judge is required to order production of the necessary documents and other exhibits, to summon witnesses and (where the management alleges that the committee's order in the employee's favour was contrary to the law) to allow a representative of the trade union committee to defend the employee.

If the court orders payment of a sum of money to the employee, settlement of any amount not exceeding one month's earnings must be immediate.

An appeal against the court's decision may be brought by either party or by the public prosecutor within ten days of its announcement. The appeal goes to the next higher court, which is entitled in a labour case either to annul the decision of the people's court and order a re-examination or to issue its own decision on the merits (if the facts are sufficiently clear or if only the explanatory part of the decision requires to be modified).

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The tendency of the Soviet State is in the direction of stronger links between governmental agencies and the mass of the people, better services for the workers, more extensive self-administration by the public and a greater role for the trade unions in Communist construction, particularly as regards the settlement of labour and wages questions.