

SOWING JUSTICE

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OR
THE ROMANCE OF THE
INTERNATIONAL LABOUR OFFICE

by
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CONTENTS

PART I

THINKERS, VISIONARIES, PREACHERS AND REFORMERS

CHAP.	PAGE
I. THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION	13
II. THE FORERUNNERS	25
III. THE IDEA EVOLVES	37
IV. PREPARING FOR PEACE	47
V. PEACE PUDDING	55

PART II

GOVERNMENTS, WORKERS, EMPLOYERS AND OFFICIALS

VI. PREAMBLE AND GENERAL PRINCIPLES	67
VII. THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR CONFERENCE	79
VIII. THE GOVERNING BODY	89
IX. THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR OFFICE	95
X. ACHIEVEMENT	109

PART III: THE FUTURE

DEMOCRATS, DICTATORS AND MEN OF GOODWILL

XI. THE FUTURE: COLLABORATION OR CHAOS?	129
INDEX	149

PART I
THINKERS, VISIONARIES, PREACHERS AND
REFORMERS

What is now proved was once only imagined."

—WILLIAM BLAKE,

Proverbs of Hell.

CHAPTER I

THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

"Every Revolution contains in it something of Evil."

—BURKE.

Appeal from New to Old Whigs.

I

THE industrial revolution is the term generally used to describe the extraordinary development in industry which took place roughly between the years 1750 and 1850. In this period were laid the foundations of British and European industrial pre-eminence, a pre-eminence destined to continue without serious opposition for many decades, and which has only been challenged in comparatively recent years by the vast economic development of countries overseas.

This tremendous outburst of human activity caused a greater change in the habits and mode of life of the Englishman and the European than any that had occurred since the gradual decay of the Feudal System. Stupendous wealth was produced by the vigorous and unrecking exponents of the new methods of transmuting the energy of coal, of exploiting the ductility of metals, of harnessing the expansive power of steam, of utilizing the interplay of geared cogwheels, of carrying power from a central plant to the farthest limits of factory premises by means of belting and transmission systems and of completing the whole process by the subjugation of humanity, body, hand and brain, to the exactions of the new manufacturing apparatus.

This was the beginning of the machine age.

It was born of science and steam: of coal and chemistry: of low wages and high pressure: the oppression by rugged individualist employers of ragged infant workers was the first manifestation of what it was capable of producing if left unchecked. Some time elapsed before there was any general realization of what a miserable army had been mobilized through the conscription by capital of these elemental forces.

The statesmen and politicians, the preachers, the landed aristocrats, the comfortable burgesses, the soldiers, the sailors, the civil servants and the stolid rural population saw the first smoke stacks—precursors of the fantastic industrial skylines of to-day—rise grim above the peaceful farms, without in the least understanding what they portended.

For many decades previously, the conditions in which men and women in Great Britain had earned their living in the fields, in commerce, in trade guilds or as artisans and labourers, had been subject through the years to the uplifting influences of the British gift for tolerance and common sense in the arrangement of compromise between employers and employed. The growing conception of the dignity of man, and, as far as agriculture was concerned, the benign reactions of the countryside had slowly illumined the gloomy and oppressive legacy of the Dark Ages.

Relations between master and man, though far from ideal, were at least intimate and human, and often uplifted by a common affection for the ordinary and familiar features of English country life. It is sometimes forgotten that in the Middle Ages, often unjustly characterized as cruel and barbarous, there had risen, along with the mighty naves of the cathedrals of the epoch, the unassuming spires of certain social achievements regarding better living conditions, the regulation

of wages and hours of work, occupational organization, a primitive form of insurance against sickness, old age, invalidity and death, as well as measures for the relief of widows, orphans and the poor.

All these matters had been the subject of attention by the rulers of the land, not only in England but in Europe generally, and had been recognized in the debates of the legislative assemblies. The work problems of craftsmen and artisans—of "the singing masons building roofs of gold"—had been studied and many an ancient compromise, between master and man, between landlord and tenant, between wholesaler and retailer, had been found feasible and humane and had been incorporated in the law of the land or in the immutable customs of trade. Many barbarous survivals marred the picture, but, in so far as day-to-day working conditions were concerned, in the fields at least air was free and so was sunlight; hours were long, but in work-time songs and friendly converse were possible, and the general rhythm permitted occasional surcease; a sense of solidarity amongst the various participants in any one industry had engendered a feeling of comradeship; a general recognition of common humanity—for the rich were subject to plague and the overwhelming blows of higher authority as well as the poor—had done something to lighten the burden of toil.

The times were hard perhaps, but they brought "round to all men some undimmed hours."

In the stark new textile mills; in the gloomy coal areas, no longer exploited by the individualist burrowings of the old free miners; in the potteries; in the iron and steel industry particularly, which during the centuries saw the change over from the easily won ores of the Weald and the Forest of Dean with their small furnaces blown by hand bellows and fired by charcoal, through the introduction of the blast furnaces in 1500, the generalization of the

Bessemer Converter in 1856, and the adaptation of the Siemens process to shipbuilding about 1880, till finally it began to approximate to the titanic processes of the rolling mills of to-day; in the engineering shops and in all the warrens of industry, the problems arising from the new conditions and the new relations between men, masters and machines were unstudied.

There was nothing to prevent the greedy exploitation of human beings of both sexes and all ages; there were no measures to mitigate the abrupt change over from the unhurried pace of field, barn and smithy, to the grinding intensity and staccato rhythms of the new processes; there was no protection from the insatiate engineers and no compensation for the accidents caused by their machines.

II. NATIONAL LABOUR LEGISLATION

When our forefathers, "some certain dregs of conscience yet within them," paused occasionally from their satisfying task of flooding Great Britain and the rest of the world with the saleable products of their industry—not a very complex matter, for the world was avid for the new products and competitors were few—they somewhat guiltily began to consider the face of the new Britain they were creating. They did not find it fair, and some of them were appalled. The nation and its rulers took time to react, but, eventually under the spur of the national conscience awakened—"in a fever just a day too late as ever"—by certain prophets crying in the industrial wilderness, realization of the vile exploitation of sweated women and little children began to penetrate the carapace of the ruling classes.

Then it was that proposals for national legislation to deal with the basic elements in working conditions began to take shape.

In 1802 the British Parliament passed an act to protect children employed in factories.

It had at last been understood that, as regards the regulation of industry, the efforts of individual employers to raise the standards of their own workpeople were hampered and frustrated by the lack of similar action on the part of all, or at least of the majority of their competitors. The principle known in finance as "Gresham's Law" whereby if two sets of currency, one sound and one spurious, are equally available as legal tender, the spurious inevitably displaces the sound, and the public is finally left with dross instead of sterling, was found to be definitely applicable to working conditions in industry.

"Why," says Sir Malcolm Delevingne, one of the founders of the International Labour Organization, in a contribution to the principal work on its origins, "was a law necessary?" and replies: "Because it could not be taken for granted that the development of morality, or the moral or religious persuasion exercised on employers, would ever prevail over their pecuniary interests."¹

Later on, as will be seen, there grew up, for parallel reasons based on the fact of foreign competition, the realization among the competing industrial nations of the necessity for some form of *international* law to govern the effects of recalcitrance by individual nations to the gradual improvement of labour conditions.

At the beginning, however, of the national awakening, and of the urge to national labour legislation, the scandals cried so loud to heaven that the discussions in Parliament turned more on the moral than on the economic aspects, and the international angle was scarcely mentioned.

It was only later, when standards had slightly improved, that Richard became himself again, and every effort at reform began to provoke tenacious opposition, based

¹ *The Origins of the International Labour Organization*, Vol. I. Columbia University Press.

upon allegations, some true, some false, that the industry to be reformed could not possibly stand the cost of improvement, and would crash in total ruin if the new-fangled laws were to be entered upon the statute book.

Gradually, then, parliamentary discussions on labour problems, as reported in the Hansards and newspapers of the time, began to resemble in a most striking manner modern deliberations concerning the effects of present-day proposals for labour reforms, such, for example, as the national and international generalization of the reduction of hours of work in commerce, industry, agriculture and transport.

In 1831 Sir John Cam Hobhouse and Lord Morpeth, influenced by the growing inefficiency of the then existing labour laws, and by the many glaring examples of their successful evasion, took stock of the appalling labour situation in the Yorkshire textile factories, which had been exposed in a notable journalistic campaign and by the proceedings of what were known as the "short-time committees"—set up in Yorkshire through the action of the churches—and introduced a Bill for the reform of conditions in the textile industry.

This Bill called for the limitation of the hours of labour in all textile mills to eleven hours daily, with eight hours on Saturday, that is, a week of sixty-three hours.

Over a hundred years later the International Labour Organization investigators found that India and Japan were working very similar hours. The authors of the Bill also demanded the prohibition of night work for all persons under eighteen.

Between 1919 and 1937, after the creation of the International Labour Organization, thirty-one countries had ratified an international labour treaty containing this prohibition. In addition, the Bill proposed to make it

illegal for any child under nine to be admitted to a textile factory. Here again the International Labour Organization international treaties have obtained world-wide application of proper regulations governing the age of admission of children to industrial employment: the first treaty concluded at Washington in 1919 fixed an under fourteen age limit with easier conditions for India and Japan: this treaty was ratified by twenty-eight States and the statutory revision undertaken in 1937 raised the general age limit to fifteen, and diminished the scope of the exceptional provisions applying to Asiatic countries.

In 1831, in the preliminary sparring and consultations between those representing the employers' interests and those in favour of the workers—even at that time recognized as a necessary pre-requisite for sound legislation—the workers had come forward with a basic demand for a ten-and-a-half hours' Bill. Hobhouse and Morpeth, however, had raised the figure in their proposal to eleven in the hope of securing the support of the employers for it. This hope was vain. The first battle in the Hundred Years War for a reasonable working week was lost. At an employers' meeting in Halifax in October 1831, the stony-hearted fathers of the textile industry voiced their disapproval and alarm in an uncompromising resolution. This contained the expression, couched in the sober language of the business man, of their apprehension regarding the effects of the proposed reform, not only upon the home market, but also upon the foreign.

"It will raise," they said, "the price of goods to the consumers, which will affect the home trade considerably, and will produce the most serious effects upon the prosperity of the district by tending to foster the manufactures of foreign nations, our trade with whom depends upon the cheap and advantageous terms at which we now supply them with goods, and whose manufacturers would

be enabled, by an advance of price, successfully to compete with the British merchants."¹

Here clearly and uncompromisingly stated is an early example of the standard argument against the imposition by law of improved labour conditions in any industry. The century-old theme song, solemnly intoned by the employers' chorus, runs as follows:

"The industry cannot afford reform, for it will raise prices so much that the product will become unsaleable. The consequent shrinkage will cause so much unemployment that, however miserable he may be at the moment, the last state of the worker will be worse than the first.

"Even if our own enlightened nation succeeds, by its energy and competence, in dealing with the danger to the home market, it cannot possibly hope to maintain its sales abroad in competition with nations which do not adopt the high standard proposed for us.

"Do not kill the goose that lays the golden eggs."

Throughout the history of social progress, both national and international, these two compelling arguments have flashed out, like the bright swords from the scabbards of the executioners, to lop off the heads of the temerarious prophets of change. At first, when scandals were crying and reforms exiguous, these economic arguments were simply and quite rightly overridden. The reforms were imposed and the goose, though losing a few of its feathers, went steadily and protestingly on with the process of auriferous deposit. By so doing, it may perhaps be observed, it induced in the minds of future reformers a certain distrust of its admonitory cackle, which distrust,

¹ S. Kydd, *Factory Legislation*, I, p. 109. (Quoted by J. W. Follows in his thesis "Antecedents of the International Labour Organization," p. 35.)

though it has frequently proved both founded and unfounded, has certainly rendered expert and balanced discussion of the dangers inherent in reform a matter of considerable difficulty.

In general, perhaps, it is fair to say, that during the century, although frequently sentenced to death, often *in extremis*, at times even compelled to reduce the gold content of the egg, and at times to don the party-coloured and Nessus textured upper garments of uncompromising *régimes*, nevertheless, the bird does seem to have developed through the years an extraordinary facility for surviving starvation, overstuffing, ideological strangulation, political synchronization, and thunder and blunder on the left and right.

A hundred years later we find the hardy descendants of the protesting Yorkshire textile employers producing a modern version of the original argument and adding special emphasis on the international aspects.

"Is it likely," writes the Secretary of the Federation of Master Cotton Spinners' Association to the Editor of the *Manchester Guardian* in the month of March 1937, "that British employers will be enamoured of a reduction in working hours which they know will be rigidly compulsory when their competitors abroad enjoy almost unrestricted elasticity in the application of the nominal hours permitted to be worked? Latitude, and not exactitude, can best serve the interests of a still great exporting industry which is seeking by all the means within its power full time employment for all its workers as well as the reclamation of lost world markets."

The solemn chant is intoned again, the *dies irae* of the industrial pontiffs, warning the reverent shareholders and the affrighted wage-earners of the wrath to come if the almighty god of profit be provoked beyond endurance by the impious heresies of unbelievers, and prophesying that the national industrial fabric will

collapse amidst the glowing cinders of unorthodox legislation.

The argument is the same as that of a century ago, plus the addition of a certain distrust—based upon an admixture of sad experience and a certain self-righteousness—of the respect of other nations for their own laws and international undertakings.

Right through the history of social progress, the force of these arguments has been held to be as potent, as perilous, and as inevitable as the force of gravity. Like the force of gravity also, these arguments have seen occasional dramatic and terrifying vindications of their power: they rendered the early flights of the social legislators as unsatisfactory, as inefficient, and as alarming as the efforts of the first aviators to lift themselves and their passengers above the everyday earth.

If the employers had a powerful argument, and succeeded in emasculating the Hobhouse Bill, the workers retained a mighty lever. Public opinion was aroused.

“The great beacon light God sets in all, the conscience of each bosom” slowly began to illumine the nation. Thus it was that in the minds of humane legislators, desirous of improvement for the workers, slightly incredulous of the completely insurmountable nature of the alleged obstacles, yet anxious to avoid real loss of business and of their own political reputation: in the thoughts of those who were shocked by the misery of the workers—and there were many employers amongst these: in the inchoate perplexity of the vast well-meaning mass of the nation, and more sharply defined in the spirit of the workers’ leaders themselves, there began to take shape the idea that it might after all be practicable to find an answer to those who regarded a possible rise in the cost of production, coupled with the potential loss of national and international trade, as an insuperable barrier to

desirable reforms, and that, to continue the comparison, it might after all be within the bounds of human genius to find a formula—and eventually to construct a machine—which should conquer the employers' arguments, as Lilienthal, Montgolfier, Maxim and the Wrights were nullifying the force of gravity: in other words, that it might be possible to build a social flying machine which should lift the workers from the industrial morass.

CHAPTER II

THE FORERUNNERS

"Imagination hath a grasp of joy
Finer than sense."

—ROBERT BRIDGES.
Return of Ulysses.

I

THE first conception of the international aspects of industrial social progress and the earliest rough plans for some sort of international labour organization grew from the recognition of the misery of the national industrial workers, which produced an urge for improved national working conditions, and from the unwelcome realization that a basis of national legislation, supplemented by scientific improvements in and better conduct of the industries themselves was not enough and must be completed—if really substantial progress was to be made—by international procedure for the elimination of unfair competition.

The men who first had some vision of this reality and who first became enamoured of the international method were diverse and interesting. The constructions of their first imaginative efforts to achieve what, in view of its originality and difficulty of execution must have appeared to them as formidable a problem as the conquest of the air, bear as much resemblance to the complicated organization which exists to-day as Lilienthal's glider and Montgolfier's balloon do to Maya and Mercury and the Graf Zeppelin.

Very few of us know the names of these men and the original machines they constructed are housed in no museum or Smithsonian Institute; yet the names and exploits of the pioneers of international social progress should in any sane world be as famous and as honoured as those of the heroes of early aviation. That they are not is an advertisement of the deficiencies of education and it also underlines the regrettable fact that mankind is so inured to economic misery and so familiar with social oppression that it has no desire to let its mind dwell on such things. It seems on the contrary in an understandable urge for "escape," to reserve its applause, its publicities, its biographies and its rewards for the film actor, the boxer, the musician, the soldier, the sailor and the Dictator and to abandon the reputation of the legislator, the social worker, the doctor, the economist and the scientist to the discovery and appreciation of the research student.

The names of men such as Robert Owen, Ashley, Peel, John Russell, Charles Hindley, Villermé, Blanqui, Daniel Legrand, Ducpétiaux, Maresca, Hahn, Audiganne Villeneuve-Bargemont and Lamennais—to name but a few—who gave their lives to the study of the rudiments of social progress are comparatively unknown and in few standard history books will the schoolboy learn that the German Emperor Wilhelm II and Bismarck, the Iron Chancellor, were concerned in an early effort to obtain concerted international action to improve social conditions.

II. ROBERT OWEN AND CHARLES HINDLEY

"A crank is a little thing that makes revolutions."
Anonymous saying.

The most famous of the pioneers in this field was perhaps Robert Owen, who was born in 1771 and came to

London at the age of ten as apprentice to a draper. During his gradual rise from apprentice to journeyman and from journeyman to manager, he not only married the mill-owner's daughter in the proper success story tradition, but also studied and pondered tremendous questions of religion, human personality, original sin and the like, which have perplexed the thinkers and idealists of the world since the beginning of time.

Robert Owen, however, had a vein of practicality—unfortunately exhausted before his life was ended—and this enabled him to rise to become the leading spirit in a successful spinning factory set up at New Lanark in Scotland. In this factory he began to put into practice his social and humanitarian theories and he developed these particularly with regard to the child workers in his establishment.

His experiments were mostly based on the belief that kindness pays better than cruelty, and that the best foundation for good factory discipline is the stimulation of intelligent interest in the work to be done.

Owen became famous in Britain and on the continent and the greatest interest was displayed in his work. In his search for converts to his philosophy, which was based on a desire for universal philanthropy—for he was really more of a philanthropist than a social technician or at any rate than an exponent of international social legislation—he spared neither himself nor his friends. He cultivated the society of great men, even to the extent of lending them considerable sums of money so as to be able to lure them into visiting his factory; he wrote, lectured and argued, doing all that he could to obtain support for his exalted ideas.

Owen's career was curious. For a time he was a *succès fou*: then, after being a prosperous paternalist and reformer, his ideas ran away with him and the fanatical and visionary side of his nature was allowed to

develop until it destroyed the rest. He attacked established religion, ran foul of *The Times* newspaper and, losing sight of the dictum that politics is the art of the possible, reaped the inevitable reward of imprudence: inevitably his star waned, his influence decreased and it was not long before he came to be classed by contemporary opinion with those fanatics of whom Voltaire—a very opposite character who died seven years after Owen was born—was compelled to observe, “Is it not a shameful thing that the fanatics have all the zeal and the wise have none?”

From practical idealist to rejected visionary was perhaps a mournful progress, but history has considerably revised the contemporary verdict and there is no doubt that Owen induced much study of the problems of labour, of distribution and of child welfare; he undoubtedly had a very considerable uplifting effect on both contemporary and subsequent thought and action. The success of New Lanark went perhaps to his head and caused him to think that he had obtained a universal panacea, whereas what he had accomplished was really only a successful demonstration. The world is always more interested in a concrete result than in a philosophical disquisition.

As one of the earliest prophets of the idea of an international labour organization, however, his efforts to enlist the aid of the Powers meeting at the Conference of the *Sainte Alliance* at Aix-la-Chapelle in 1818 are of the greatest interest. Owen sent to this Conference two Memorials in which he asked for “the introduction in all countries of measures to protect the workers against the ignorance and exploitation of which they are the victims.” He also requested Delegates to name a Labour Commission to bring about what he demanded.

The Conference, like many others before and since, was absorbed in the discussion of military problems and took

no official cognizance of his Memorials, whilst *The Times* correspondent, true to form, considered "that he would not succeed better in proselytizing Their Majesties than the Quakers who went to Rome to convert the Pope."¹

Spiritually somewhat akin to Owen but of a more practical character, was Charles Hindley, a Moravian Minister who lived in England from 1796 to 1857 and who had been called upon, owing to the death of his brother, to take over a spinning factory in Lancashire.

Hindley devoted his life to efforts at reform somewhat similar to those of Owen but perhaps more practically expressed even if less strikingly demonstrated, for he did his utmost to persuade his fellow members of Parliament to pass improved factory legislation.

During his campaign he was questioned by a Committee dubious of the result of his suggested reforms and it was in his conversations with this Committee that there occurred the first clearly formulated reference to the necessity and possibility of international treaties covering the establishment of common standards for labour conditions. When a certain Mr. Tufnell, member of a Royal Commission appointed to investigate the factory question, interrogated him on the inevitable point concerning foreign competition, Hindley made a striking and historic reply. "Should it, however," he said, "unfortunately happen that the excessive competition by foreigners should endanger our trade unless we employed our people longer than was advisable for their own comfort and for the good of society, I think it would be as proper a subject of treaty with foreign nations as the annihilation of the slave trade."²

Plus ça change. . . . The dislocation in European and

¹ *The Times*, 9 October 1818. (Quoted by Follows, *op. cit.*)

² *Hansard*, 22 March 1844.

world trade by the introduction of the totalitarian method of over-working one's own people for their eventual benefit in terms of political aggrandizement and to the detriment of the standards of life of others is surely just the same "proper subject of treaty."

Another of Hindley's sayings is worthy of reproduction both for democratic and totalitarian readers: "As we have taught the world to overwork itself, we ought to set the generous example of showing them that they ought to restrict the hours of labour."

Hindley was a lover of peace. He often protested against the burden of armaments and drafted a plan for disarmament. He presided at the first International Peace Congress which took place in London in 1841 and he was one of those who espoused the ideals of the Chartist movement.

He was a good man.

Let us leave him with his epitaph: "A Friend of the Poor, he laboured, not in vain, to shorten their toil and increase their knowledge."

III. CONTINENTAL REFORMERS

"Look on thy country: look on fertile France
And see the cities and the towns defaced
By wasting ruin of the cruel foe."

—SHAKESPEARE.
King Henry VI.

On the continent of Europe similar conditions had produced similar reactions and the logical Latin genius began to wrestle with the same dilemma. Villermé, a doctor, Blanqui and Villeneuve-Bargemont, both deputies, and a host of others began to stir up the industrialists to take an interest in social politics and to study the problems of industrial politics, for in France at that time neither Liberty, Equality nor Fraternity prevented

children of six and seven years of age from being worked in factories for fifteen and sixteen hours a day for a daily wage of a few centimes.

The continental forerunners were men of the noblest character, and it may perhaps be argued that their methods were slightly more practical—more *terre à terre* and less subject to the vagueness of idealism—than was the case with their Anglo-Saxon compeers. Villermé, who was born in Paris in 1782, was a surgeon in the army of Napoleon. After spending some years caring for the wounded amidst the horrors and grandeur of the Napoleonic wars, he turned his attention to the study of prison labour, and through that interest, as many have done after him, became intensely occupied with wider social questions. Commissioned by the Academy of Moral and Political Sciences to investigate the conditions of factory labour in the textile mills, he published various volumes on the results of his inquiry, and it may perhaps be of interest to quote this extract from that part of his work which dealt with child labour.

“Children remain standing sixteen to seventeen hours a day, at least thirteen of which are in a closed room with practically no change of position or attitude. That is no longer a task, it is a torture. . . . How can these unfortunate ones who are able to snatch scarcely a few moments sleep endure such misery and such fatigue.”¹

Villermé's works attracted great attention and it is quite possible that through him that saintly character Daniel Legrand first became interested in the idea for international action that his predecessors and contemporaries had foreshadowed: for the fear of foreign competition was far from being the monopoly of one side of the Channel and it was in fact Daniel Legrand who was

¹ *Tableau de l'Etat Physique et Moral des ouvriers employés dans les manufactures de Coton de Laine et de Soie.* (Quoted and translated by Follows, *op. cit.*)

the first to draft embryonic but practical proposals for some form of international labour law.

About a decade after Charles Hindley's efforts to circumvent the foreign competition argument and slightly subsequent to the peak period of the activities of Villermé and Blanqui, Daniel Legrand published a final appeal and sent it to the Governments of the most important industrial countries.

He called his communication "A Respectful Appeal addressed to the Governments of the Industrial Countries for the purpose of provoking an International Law on Industrial Work, whose dispositions should be set up by their Delegates convened to a Conference on the occasion of the Universal Exhibition in Paris."

His Appeal stated plainly that international regulation was the only method by which moral and material benefits might be extended to the working classes without the manufacturers incurring losses. But the many hundreds of princes, politicians, diplomats, generals, kings and emperors to whom Legrand dispatched his letters and appeals did not appear to be more moved by them than had been their colleagues by Owen's Memorials.

But not all the seed fell by the wayside or on stony ground or was choked by the thorns of indifference.

If Daniel Legrand had been a Roman Catholic he would certainly have been canonized, and if the religions of the world could meet together in conference to establish an international and mutually accepted calendar of saints, his name would surely provoke no opposition. He was born in Switzerland in 1783. His education completed, he returned to Basle, where he became an apprentice in a factory which made ribbons and which was the property of his father. In 1804, with some of his Swiss workers, he moved to Alsace, and it was there that he began to interest himself in the age-old problem of technological unemployment or the displacement of men

by machines, which even in those days was as terrifying a puzzle as it is to-day. Later on, together with a kindred spirit, a man who combined religion and advanced ideas, one Pastor Oberlin, he moved his colony of ribbon-makers to the Vosges. There modern factories like those at New Lanark were set up and there he wrote the first of his memoirs on labour conditions.

In his efforts to stimulate uplifting rivalry and international emulation in social questions, he showed his deep knowledge of the well-springs of human conduct. The method he used of demanding of men that they should not be behind their neighbours in their industrial conduct is one that he shared with Robert Owen. Developed by the improvement of means of communication, the tremendous power of the Press and the general increase not only of knowledge but of realization of the fact of world industrial interdependence, it is the method of the International Labour Office to-day and as such it has fulfilled his dream that it could become a lever—and not the least important one—in the raising of world standards.

“Keeping up with the Joneses,” as the American phrase has it—that is to say, mass obedience to the ephemeral dictates of fashion and consumption in accordance with the admonitions of the modern advertisement, is the daemon of modern industrial consumption in the U.S.A. and the other highly industrialized countries. It is not an impeccable motive and it is sustained by methods which are often highly undesirable. It is some consolation to think that a similar urge can also be utilized in somewhat higher fields to bring about general acceptance of high moral and civic standards in the world community and to obtain agreement for the implications of the good neighbour polity.

It would take too long to deal properly with each

and every one of this early band of devoted pioneers. Ducpétiaux, the Belgian patriot and expert on prison reform, who devoted his life to social problems and completed the first scheme for the "International Association for the Progress of Moral and Social Sciences"; Maresca, his convert and fellow countryman; Dr. Hahn, the German draper, and Audiganne, a French official—all men of noble character, nourished the idea in their works and in their lives. Nor were the workers' leaders of the day unconscious of the international elements which conditioned their aspirations. They soon realized the necessity of international labour legislation and passed many resolutions in favour of it in their meetings in the latter part of the last century.

The sparks of genius and philanthropy struck by the continual hammering of these early reformers kept flying upwards till they finally ignited the vague idealism of the educated classes, and, at last, in 1857, at the Congress of Frankfort—known as the Congrès International de Bienfaisance—there was lighted a flame which like that referred to in the noble words of the martyred Bishop Latimer was "by God's grace never to be put out." Gradually over the years the prophets and preachers converted the ruling classes. The economic theory of *laissez faire*, which is probably responsible for more human misery than almost any other theory except that of forcible collectivization, began to lose some of its absolute domination. In France, in Germany, in Switzerland, in Great Britain, in the universities as in the Parliaments, it began to be felt that the progress acquired in the social domain by the new industrial working classes could only be maintained and developed if action was encouraged in the international field. Eventually, towards the end of the nineteenth century, Kaiser Wilhelm II, powerful monarch of an increasingly in-

dustrialized country, ruthlessly pirated an initiative of the Swiss Government and, despite the opposition of Bismarck, called the first International Labour Conference. This was held in Berlin in 1890. It was not in a position to take binding decisions but it did consider and adopt resolutions about the limitation of the hours of work of women and children and also concerning work in mines and the question of a weekly rest day.

CHAPTER III

THE IDEA EVOLVES

"There was an Ape in the days that were earlier;
Centuries passed, and his hair became curlier;
Centuries more gave a thumb to his wrist,—
Then he was Man,—and a Positivist."

—MORTIMER COLLINS.

I. PRE-WAR MODEL

TEN years later, in the opening year of the twentieth century, the purely theoretical and speculative period came to an end. The idea hatched out at last, for in Paris there was created the International Association for the Legal Protection of Workers. This Association, the foundations of which had been laid at a Congress in Brussels three years earlier, was composed of politicians, professors, officials and workers' leaders. Some of them lived to see and play a prominent part in the formation and work of the International Labour Organization, and others again are still active in the work of that Office.

The main object of the International Association was to "serve as a link between those who, in the different industrial countries, consider legislation for the protection of working people to be necessary and to organize an International Labour Office charged with the duty of publishing in French, German, and English, a periodical collection of the labour legislation in all countries, and

to secure the convocation of international congresses on labour legislation."

The Association began to work on a scientific basis, and, in order to provide the information which was indispensable as a preliminary to legislative action, it set up in Basle the permanent Office provided for, whose task it was to centralize documentation, and organize international study and research on labour questions.

As soon as the scientific activities of the Office had begun to bear fruit, the next step was taken, and in 1905 the Swiss Government convoked a Conference of Technical Experts. These experts selected for treatment by the proposed new system of international labour treaties two somewhat different subjects. The first was the question of how to prevent the use of white phosphorus in the manufacture of matches, for phosphorus necrosis—or, as it was more popularly called, "phossy jaw"—a terrifying disease which attacked the workers employed in that industry and dehumanized their countenances, was a sufficiently dramatic evil to stifle the protests of economists, and, as it had been considerably studied in the various countries, was ripe for international treatment.

The second was the wider question of the abolition of night work for women.

The experts worked away at their texts, which they eventually concluded, and in 1906, still in Basle, the diplomats were called in to give legal and proper form to what were then adopted as the first multilateral international social treaties, dealing with labour questions.

"All unconscious of their doom" the experts continued their work, and on the eve of the Great War the Association called a new Conference at Berne in order to construct further treaties. These were to deal with the limitation of the duration of the day work of women and children, and the prohibition of night work for children. The texts set up by the experts were to have

been adopted by a second Diplomatic Conference, but the date fixed for the holding of this was the year 1914.

It is difficult to overestimate the pioneer work accomplished by this international association. It was the first crystallization of the pious aspirations of many noble minds, and it really initiated sound technical study of the problem of the proper protection of the workers and of the unification of international methods for the improvement of their standards. It was, of course, a leisurely machine, of limited influence, and it covered only a comparatively small portion of the vast field of action which is now within the scope of the International Labour Organization. As an organization, it was far from being of exactly similar nature or possessing the character and powers of its successor. The experts who came to its Conferences could never be sure that their work would have any future, for they were entirely dependent upon the subsequent patronage of Governments for the adoption of their findings at a Diplomatic Conference, and, of course, the Delegates at this second Conference were quite free not only to accept, modify, or reject the texts referred to therein, but also to refuse to deal with all or a part of the proposed agenda. Its studies and documentary work were, however, of the greatest importance, and the conditions in which it worked were certainly as difficult as those which prompted the celebrated remark of Madame du Deffand concerning the difficulty of first steps.

II. 1914-1918. GROWTH IN ADVERSITY

"Not but wut abstract war is horrid—
 I sign to that with all my heart;
 But civilisation does get forrid
 Sometimes upon a powder cart."

—J. R. LOWELL.
The Biglow Papers.

In the years preceding the outbreak of war, the workers in a considerable number of industrial countries had succeeded in organizing themselves to a certain extent, and their leaders were naturally interested in the legal and international aspects of the Association at Basle, which, they felt, could hardly fail to have favourable reactions upon their own efforts.

When the war came and destroyed the Association as an effective force, the workers in the various countries did not lose sight of the idea of an international organization, and, in fact, redoubled their efforts in favour of it.

The American Federation of Labour in September 1914 launched a proposal tending to this end, which was adopted by the French C.G.T.; in its turn, the C.G.T. produced two Trade Union Conferences confined to the allied countries, and there the idea was again espoused. The first of these was held in London in 1915, there being a repetition of this Conference at Leeds in the following year. The workers' organizations of North and Central Europe held similar Conferences at Stockholm in 1917, and at Berne in 1918.

Most of these Conferences expressed the desire that when peace came, it should bring with it definite improvement in the status of the workers all over the world.

The phenomenon of the increasing interest in wartime of the workers' organizations in some form of international legislation and organization was, of course, due

to the increasing strength and importance of organized labour in the various countries, and to the realization by it—semi-conscious though it was—of the rôle of international trade and economic rivalry in the catastrophe that had beset the world.

During the long years of trial and suffering, when the industrial fabric of the warring countries was strained to the utmost by the demands made upon it, the national authorities spurred their workers on to new efforts and to greater sacrifices by informing them that the war in which they were engaged was a war for right and for social justice. In all the major countries the Governments of the day, in order to maintain their munition supplies, and to ensure the continuation of the indispensable industrial output, were forced to recognize the increasing power and importance of the element of labour, and, of course, where it was organized, they were compelled to recognize and parley with its leaders. Labour Ministries were created, Cabinet Offices were given to labour representatives and nominees, and a general policy of consultation of the workers' organizations regarding industrial and labour policies was inaugurated and developed.

Seized of the results of these various workers' meetings, and of the resolutions they had passed, which demanded that when the longed for and distant peace should come it should make working people in the world secure from some of the deleterious results of international industrial competition, the Governments were forced to pay increasing attention to such demands and to promise that something would be done.

A typical example of the claims that were formulated at the time is contained in a letter which in 1916 Mr. Appleton, representing the British Trade Unions, sent to the Prime Minister of Great Britain, and of which the peroration runs as follows:

"Nearly all other wars have ended with treaties which conserved the rights of kings, the boundaries of nations and the privileges of property. The poor people have had no part in the making of war or of peace: they have suffered, they have endured contumely, and they have died, but never yet has a monarch or statesman made their situation a determining factor in a Treaty of Peace. The time has arrived for better methods: for the consideration of the common rather than the particular interest; for the wide conception of human rights rather than the narrow one. . . ."¹

This was an eloquent appeal, but in truth it must be admitted that it did not really have much effect, largely because there was no well-established Minister in the Cabinet to whom such an appeal could be forwarded as being the "competent authority," for the letter was written in 1916—the same year that saw the creation in Great Britain of the Ministry of Labour.

So it was that when the Peace Conference was finally called, there was a general feeling that something must be done to implement the promises made. Labour was in no mood to be trifled with: millions of demobilized soldiers were awaiting reincorporation into industrial life, with ideas and outlooks very different from those which they had when they left it.

Events in Russia had alarmed even the statesmen who called themselves victorious, and the conviction grew that social action was inevitable. It is only fair to add that there was also in the minds of men who had been bowed down by the appalling pressure of war for four years a profound conviction that the new era must be an improvement on the old, and that the chastened spirit of

¹ *The Origins of the International Labour Organization*, Vol. I, p. 65. Columbia University Press.

humanity must seek to celebrate the end of the nightmare by constructive efforts to improve the lot of mankind through international action, and by removing as far as possible that social injustice which was dimly beginning to be recognized as a root cause of the horror which had ceased.

So, for the idea of the International Labour Office, with the Armistice ended the period of gestation, and at Versailles began the pangs of birth.

In these unhappy days, when it is only too natural to point a scornful finger at the lamentable picture of a Europe torn by "conflicting ideologies" armed to the teeth through the waste of its patrimony, and apparently ready at any moment to revert to the methods of the jungle, it is interesting, and perhaps comforting, to recall the fact that the idea of collaboration between the nations for the purpose of raising industrial standards and social conditions was of purely European origin, that it survived various bloody wars, and that all the precursors were Europeans. Nothing new in this respect had ever come out of Africa, and the immemorial culture of Asia had never, even in the works of the sages of China, succeeded in formulating any practical idea, or any workable theory for international action to improve the conditions of the workers.

The United States Government, through its Commission on Labour Statistics, had participated in the preliminary Brussels Conference of 1897, and had become an Associated and Contributing Member of the Basle Office, to which from 1902 to 1910 it paid a subsidy of 200 dollars a year, later increasing this sum to 1,000 dollars. But curiously enough, none of the great contemporary American statesmen—not even Abraham Lincoln, who was so occupied with the analogous problem of disunion amongst the States of his own country—seem to have been

attracted by, or even to have understood this dynamic idea in the same way as the various Europeans who gave their lives to it. This is probably due to various causes, the first being the feeling generally prevalent that America was outside the problems of the European industrial world, and could ignore the results of this competition on American wages and conditions: the second was the fact that the American labour movement since its inception had never been so enamoured of legislation as a cure for its various ills as had been the corresponding movements in Europe. Lastly, it is perhaps necessary to record as a contributory cause the emphasis in the America of the time on the ideal of rugged individualism and high wages, which were the two major elements in industrial relations in the States, and which owed their sway to factors such as constant immigration, the vast extent of the country, and the necessity for the untrammelled exploitation of the vast resources of a young and optimistic nation.

In fact, it was not until well on in the war years that the United States labour movement began to take a keen interest in possible post-war international social action. Gradually, however, as America became increasingly industrialized, and as its own composition, with the various States of the Union competing with each other industrially under different legislative conditions, began to approximate to that of Europe, recognition of interdependence, and of the necessity of some degree of uniformity grew up. During the Peace Conference it became temporarily stronger. With the rejection by America of the League of Nations—a greater blow to that institution than any which has subsequently been dealt it by the deeds and defection of the dictators—it suffered a great, though temporary setback. In the period of prosperity it lay quiescent. Gradually it began to recover its strength, and in the great depression with its woeful travail, with its

searchings of heart, its re-examination of ideals and the wave of social consciousness which it aroused, impetus enough was gathered to make American membership of the International Labour Organization — another example of the New World being called in to redress the balance of the old—a political possibility, which—despite the connection of the Organization with the League of Nations—was finally consummated by President Roosevelt in 1935 without one in ten thousand of the American industrial population being aware of it.

It may well prove to be the major international event in the post-war years.

CHAPTER IV

PREPARING FOR PEACE

"According to the fair play of the world
Let me have audience."

—SHAKESPEARE.

WHEN the mighty struggle was over, the Versailles Conference, that ephemeral monument whose architecture sought to combine the clashing *motifs* of idealism and ill will, of revenge and reconstruction, of old cheating and new dealing, attracted a mighty concourse to its long deliberation where the foundations of peace were laid on the sands of illusion.

Delegates, diplomats, lawyers, experts, specialists, secretaries, soldiers, sailors, tinkers, tailors, rich men, poor men—they were as varied as the lists recited by children when they count their plumstones in search of an augury for the future. And their procedure when they got there was almost as haphazard.

The motives were as mixed as the men. There were the legions of French logic warring with the adepts of Anglo-Saxon compromise: there were American idealists writhing in the clutches of Balkan logrollers: there were professors struggling with financiers: admirals arguing with patriarchs: generals at grips with economists: minorities posing as majorities: representatives of newly invented or recently resuscitated countries seeking recognition and delegates of ancient but amputated empires seeking reconstruction: and there were all the henchmen

of hegemony. To leaven the lump there was Woodrow Wilson pleading with monarchs and prime ministers in similar phraseology to that put by Shakespeare into the mouth of the unfortunate citizen of Angiers when he adjured the rival rulers of France and England, "Hear us, great kings: vouchsafe awhile to stay and I shall show peace and fair faced League"; but unfortunately Woodrow Wilson, though a prophet and a plenipotentiary abroad had become at home a politician out of touch with reality, a president without power.

In addition, however, to Wilson, Lord Robert Cecil and those who were struggling to obtain recognition for the ideals of the League, there were certain Delegates, and advisers who had brought something more than the usual diplomatic material in their baggage. These were the representatives—for the first time at a diplomatic Conference of this sort—of production, of distribution and of those branches of the various Civil Services which in the different countries were concerned with the problems of the worker, of the employer and of that industry which had financed the war and which now had to envisage the peace.

There was Mr. Barnes of Great Britain, with Sir Malcolm Delevingne, Mr. Harold Butler and Mr. Edward Phelan, both the latter destined to play a great rôle in the history of the International Labour Organization; there was M. Arthur Fontaine, the incarnation of the official genius of France with his noble head and vast culture; there was Mr. Gompers, the president of the American Federation of Labour, with his lined and powerful face, his shrewd political intelligence, his cigar and his distrust of Europe; there was Professor Shotwell, who had turned from the study of history to the making of it; there was Mr. Vandervelde, who had devoted his life to labour problems; M. Jouhaux the well-known labour leader; Professor Mahaim of Belgium, already a

veteran in the field in view of his work in the Belgian section of the International Association for Labour Legislation; there was the ill-starred Benes of Czechoslovakia; a celebrated lawyer from Cuba and numerous other Delegates from different countries.

Some of these men brought first drafts for the establishment of the International Labour Organization, fairly detailed sketches of the industrial flying machine dreamed of by Owen and his fellows.

No longer, however, were these proposals the monopoly of the visionaries as were the Owen Memorials at the Conference of Aix-la-Chapelle. They were not written on private notepaper, nor scribbled in the public rooms of hotels nor on the tables of cafés. On the contrary, they were secret and important documents bearing the crests of powerful departments of Governments, which even in the stress of wartime had decided, when contemplating the problem of future peace, to send "fair-play orders and make compromise" in the matter of international social progress. They were in fact the results of careful preparation by highly placed officials aided by trained administrators and technical staffs, who, in the recesses of their ministries, out of sight of the battlefields but conscious of their horror and their awful legacy of wounds and waste, had for a long time been wondering what they were going to do "in this connection."

How had the presence of these Delegates and experts with their advanced proposals come about?

In the first place, they were the result, as has been shown, of the increasingly important part played by Labour in the Governments of the belligerent countries and particularly in the French and British Governments. They were, however, by no means confined to these Governments, for it should never be forgotten that a similar situation in Germany had led to a parallel result.

In March of 1918 the German Government, still

uneasily victorious, at the Plenary Session of the Reichstag—the session which accepted the Russian Peace Treaty—formally resolved to “request the Imperial Chancellor, when concluding further treaties of peace, to endeavour to obtain agreements between the treaty-making powers covering minimum demands in the field of labour protection and social insurance and thus lay the foundation for further development in this field.” It should be added that at the end of the war after a terrible blockade, in the bitter hour of downfall, with urgent problems awaiting solution on every side, isolated, hemmed in and humiliated, the Germans still found spirit and energy enough to establish a comprehensive social programme tending towards international order, which they hoped—in vain—they would be called upon to discuss with the other nations at the Conference.

The time may come again when Germany will remember with pride this facet of her history.

During the war, collaboration between the French and British Governments had by no means been confined to purely military or munitions questions but had ranged over the whole field of what is now known as war potential. The problem of the international regulation of labour conditions had been the subject of particular study by the authorities in England and France, where the civilian administrations had had more time to consider the problems of the forthcoming peace than had the military leaders and who, perhaps in reaction to the horrible present, had devoted much thought to possible improvements for the future.

In the early part of November 1918, when it became fairly clear that hostilities would soon come to an end, Sir Malcolm Delevingne, who was then in charge of industrial questions in the Home Office, wrote to the Director of Labour in France, M. Arthur Fontaine, who had been a prominent member of the Association at Berne

and who had played an important part in the organization of bilateral treaties on labour questions between France and other countries. Sir Malcolm suggested to M. Fontaine that the question of international labour regulation should be discussed at the Peace Conference and M. Fontaine found himself very much in agreement. These two old colleagues of the Berne Association were certainly the two chief authors of the proposal that the Peace Conference should deal with labour questions.

Their efforts had been greatly assisted by a resolution passed by the Inter-Allied Labour and Socialist Conference called by Mr. Arthur Henderson in February 1918. This Conference had before it a memorandum on war aims which was the general expression of Labour's views on a possible peace. The Conference accepted the memorandum and stated:

"The Conference is of opinion that the working class having made such sacrifices during the war are entitled to take part in securing a democratic peace and that M. Albert Thomas of France, M. Emile Vandervelde of Belgium and Mr. Arthur Henderson of Great Britain be appointed as a Commission to secure from all the Governments the promise that at least one representative of Labour and Socialism will be included in the official representation at any Government Conference."

The preparations made by the French Government had a considerable background. The French Government had ratified the two international labour treaties produced by the Berne Association and had brought its national legislation into harmony with them. It had agreed to the Franco-Italian Treaty of 1904 which dealt on a liberal basis with such questions as workmen's compensation, protection of women and children, factory inspection and the like and it had made similar agreements with Belgium, Luxemburg and Great Britain.

Working on these lines even as far back as July 1917,

at the darkest moment of the war, M. Ribot, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, and M. Leon Bourgeois, Minister of Labour Affairs and Social Welfare, decided to set up a Committee of the Ministry of Labour to consider what points might be made the subject of international agreements after peace was concluded.

This Committee listed a number of points which were in fact afterwards included in the final draft of the International Labour Organization which was approved by the Peace Conference and for which similar British proposals had formed the foundation and the basis of discussion. As soon as the Armistice was concluded, the French Government at once took up these matters. Various Committees were called which adopted Draft Resolutions inviting the Chamber of Deputies to request the Government to "propose and support" at the Peace Conference the inclusion in the Peace Treaty of clauses designed to enforce humane conditions of labour by means of international labour legislation.

There were in fact two Committees working in the field, the one composed of the National Association for Labour Legislation, which was a branch of the Berne Association, the other being the Labour Committee of the Chamber of Deputies. These Committees continued to sit whilst the Peace Conference was actually in session, and the decisions they came to covered recommendations for inclusion in the treaties of peace of clauses providing, firstly, for the continued application of the reforms recommended by the Berne Conference in 1913, which had not been able to receive diplomatic sanction owing to the war; secondly, for an International Labour Conference of workers' and employers' Delegates to be set up to prepare further multilateral labour treaties; thirdly, for machinery for arbitration regarding the application of the conventions or labour treaties to be drawn up; and fourthly, for an International Labour Office to be set up

and be financed by the States Members, to be charged, among other things, with statistical and research work and with the task of making comparative studies of the legislation passed by the Governments as a result of the international labour treaties to which they might have agreed.

Such then was the previous preparation. If the International Labour Organization has proved to be one of the more enduring results of the Peace Conference, it is certainly due to the careful preparation of its sponsors, who, with the military, were really the only participants who came to that great feast of tongues with fairly clear ideas about what they wanted, for in this case the advocate of international social progress, like the soldier, came to the Conference "armed with resolution, told his soft tale and was a thriving wooer."

CHAPTER V

PEACE PUDDING

"Where in nice balance truth with gold she weighs
And solid pudding against empty praise."

—POPE.
Dunciad.

I

ON January 25th the Peace Conference, overjoyed at last to be able to secure a measure of agreement amidst the general bickering and dispute, decided at a plenary session to study the question of international labour legislation.

The terms of the resolution were as follows: "That a Commission composed of two representatives of each of the five Great Powers and five representatives to be elected by the other Powers represented at the Peace Conference, be appointed to inquire into the conditions of employment from the international aspect and to consider the means necessary to secure common action on matters affecting conditions of employment; and to recommend the form of a permanent agency to continue such inquiry in co-operation with and under the direction of the League of Nations."

This Committee was composed of fifteen members. It was decided that Belgium should send two representatives and Cuba, Czechoslovakia and Poland one representative each. The Committee had to make proposals concerning the nature of the future permanent institution and

to consider plans for obtaining agreed international action.

There are two points to note regarding the composition of this Committee and in connection with its terms of reference. The first is the fact of American representation and the second the mention of the League of Nations.

The American Delegation had brought with it to the Conference various memoranda which had been prepared under the authority of Professor Felix Frankfurter of Harvard University, now a Judge of the Supreme Court of the U.S.A. and at that time General Director of the War Labour Policies Board of the United States, and they were studied in the American Delegation by Professor Shotwell, to whom it fell at a later date to deal in the Committee with the serious problems which arose concerning the possibility of American collaboration in the proposed organization.

As far as the entry on the labour stage of the League of Nations is concerned, it is interesting to note that the first draft of the resolution constituting the Committee which had been proposed by the British Delegation for the consideration of the Council of Ten—composed of the Prime and Foreign Ministers of the U.S.A., Great Britain, France, Italy and Japan—contained no reference to the League. One may speculate on the motives and arguments which eventually led to the final form of the resolution which established for the first time in a final text that close connection between the International Labour Organization and the League which still survives despite their varying fortunes.

Mr. Edward Phelan, now Deputy Director of the International Labour Office and at that time Assistant Secretary of the Labour Committee—he had come to Versailles as the Secretary to the Labour Section of the British Delegation—writing in the standard work on the subject explains the point as follows: “The United States

presumably saw the opportunity of strengthening the appeal of the League by associating it with activities so concrete and so humane as those envisaged for the International Labour Organization."¹ *Tempora mutantur*, and it is curious to note the complete reversal of that policy which had to be adopted when in 1935 the American Government decided to join the International Labour Organization. The motives for this decision were, as has been said, increasing American recognition of social interdependence, enlarged social consciousness at home and a certain alarm at the influence which the International Labour Organization had obtained in the Latin American world, which though geographically American had culturally remained closer to Europe. On this occasion the greatest pains had to be taken to emphasize the autonomous nature of the Organization and to minimize the fact of its entanglement with the League.

On the other hand, in the careful preliminary work and planning which had been done by Sir Malcolm Delevingne, Mr. Harold Butler and Mr. Phelan himself inside the British Delegation—work which really constituted the practical basis for the whole affair—the desirability of an umbilical cord with the projected League had obviously been considered, for in the same work, the same author, dealing with the composition of the Labour Section of the British Delegation when commenting the problem of the integration of the work of the Labour Section with the activities of the Delegation as a whole, does not hesitate to say, "It would have appeared logical to incorporate it in the section set up to deal with the question of the establishment of the League of Nations, which was to work under the general direction of Lord Robert Cecil. It was decided, however, that the Labour Section should be an independent section

¹ *The Origins of the International Labour Organization*, p. 125. Columbia University Press.

and should work under the direction of the Rt. Hon. G. N. Barnes."¹

It is clear from this that the possible advantages of linking their objective with the great plan for the League were clearly discerned by those who were sponsoring the idea of the utilization of the Peace Conference for the construction of the international industrial machine which had been dreamed of so long. This is very understandable for at the time of the Peace Conference men's minds were, after all, more attracted to the idea of a great plan to end war than by proposals to make a machine to ensure better industrial conditions.

The long term importance of the two ideas was recognized to be similar, but the results of the war were present in the imagination of all whereas the horrors of peace had receded. Which of the two sets of propagandists first decided to seek alliance with the other must therefore be a matter of speculation and it may well be that the initiatives were equal and more or less as spontaneous as they were inevitable, for in any case no impediment to the marriage of true minds was admitted, and it was not long before mutual study by the two groups of idealists showed that they were in fact working along the same lines and that actually they had got hold of two ends of the same idea.

The one end was perhaps the more beautiful, the more radiant as the sun of the Armistice shining on the last drops of the black storm of war produced before the eager gaze of the stricken nations the brilliant rainbow of the League of Nations in its present form; the other was less iridescent, a more homely conception perhaps, but one destined to illuminate—if only with a farthing dip at first—the miserable homes of millions of workers.

Thus at last in the workshop were assembled the blue

¹ Op. cit.

prints, the tools of precision, the selected materials, the trained mechanics, the experienced fitters, the engineers and the draughtsmen, all ready to produce the machine.

Here was the great occasion longed for by Owen and his peers, an International Peace Conference, the minds of the Delegates shocked by the war out of the complacent scepticism of peace, apprehensive of the new spirit abroad and determined if it were possible to turn one trick in that New Deal for humanity which—although the phrase came later, born of a human tragedy as great if not as glorious as that of the war—was what the thinking people of the world—the very few who were not blinded by grief, greed or the lust for revenge—vainly hoped would result from this Assembly.

And so in a room of a French palace—now the official residence of the Minister of Labour but which had formerly housed the loves and splendours of a King of France—the fifteen members of the Commission on International Labour Legislation and their staff began, under the chairmanship of Mr. Gompers, the only member of the Commission who could claim directly to represent a vast section of organized labour, to apply the ponderous methods of diplomatic procedure and democratic discussion to the task in hand.

The British draft was the basis of discussion.

If Robert Owen and Daniel Legrand could have been in that ornate room they would, after the first flush of pleasurable paternity, have been appalled at the complexity and disappointed at the indirect nature of the plans evolved, for it is one thing to have a brilliant idea for a flying machine and quite another to produce an aeroplane that will get off the ground, that will not be too expensive, that will perform its appointed voyage, deliver its passengers and merchandise in safety and repeat the performance at stated intervals after having

obtained all the necessary permissions for flight over foreign countries.

The real miracles of machinery, as of democracy, are the devices for the transmission of power and the harnessing of energy.

The power and the energy were there, the desire for a better industrial world and the determination that the Moloch of mechanization and the juggernaut of private profit unrestricted by legislation should cease to claim their victims by the million.

But how was this new power to be canalized?

How to transmit this world desire into effective action?

II. PROBLEMS OF PEACE

It was not long before the Commission realized the formidable nature of the great obstacles that Legrand and Owen had almost ignored.

In any international Conference, behind the scenes always, sometimes openly evoked but always dominant, the bogey of diplomats, the despair of experts, the *memento mori* of convivial experts, the snake in the grass, the nigger in the woodpile, implacable as Nemesis, the friend of tergiversation, delay and obstruction, the pantomorphic prostitute—brazen in the honoured robes of patriotism—of selfish reaction, international social enemy No. 1, lies the established juridical conception of complete and unlimited national sovereignty.

Put in less abusive and possibly fairer words, the term really indicates the sacred right of every nation to settle its own affairs in its own way, to paddle its own canoe along the turbulent waters of existence and to self-determine—to use the vague phraseology of idealism—the conditions of its own life regardless of the fact of increasing international interdependence.

As an authority on international affairs wrote recently in *The Times* newspaper, "no thinking person can seriously dispute that it is State Sovereignty and the anarchy it creates in a shrinking world which is the basic cause of our main troubles to-day. The barriers to trade raised by the State, not capitalism, are the main causes of the unemployment and the economic chaos which constitute the breeding ground for Communism and Fascism. The anarchy of sovereignty is the root cause of competition in armaments, the return to power politics, the dethronement of morality by expediency, the uncontrollable rise in taxation and of wars and rumours of wars."¹

This fetish of national sovereignty unrestricted by anything, together with the concomitant problems of universality and sanctions, are the *Parcæ* which preside over the destinies of all international Conferences and our Commission very soon found itself involved in their web.

The new organization which the members of the Committee were endeavouring to set up could not, they knew, of itself impose fair standards in industry. It could not of its own authority and by its inherent powers lay down the industrial law for the world and arrange for the proper punishment of delinquents, nor could it wave a magic wand and raise wages and shorten hours in backward countries. An international organization it was soon realized—and the British Delegation had been compelled to admit the difficulty in their draft proposals—could not be its own direct executive agent all over the world. The agents of the International Labour Organization could not circulate the globe insisting peremptorily on the immediate payment of fair wages, compelling compensation for workers involved in industrial accidents or closing factories which employed children at night.

The machine would have to work through the nations,

¹ Lord Lothian in a letter to *The Times*, 30 July 1938.

its component parts—grind how they might—and could only decide what its members would accept.

Said the national representatives there present: "We are not omnipotent gods. We have not got full powers to bind our countries irrevocably to your texts and treaties. Behind us are our masters, the politicians and the Parliaments, the wary senators, the Press Lords and the rulers, and those who influence them, and *they* will discuss these things not as we are doing in a quiet room at Versailles, but in the light of the appetites and interests of those who put them where they are and who may put them out."

"We cannot," they explained to the insistently demanding workers' representatives, "go too far in the recognition of the point of view of others lest we should be judged as having neglected our own, and if that happens they will reject your text and all our work will be wasted. The most we can do is to consult them as much as we can and agree provisionally to what we consider they could reasonably accept, and give you our signature as a sign and a token that we will do our best to get them to accept."

Such, of course, are the conditions of all international Assemblies and they hinder the representatives of democracy—of which system they are the characteristics—as well as the mouthpieces of the dictators; their recapitulation should preface any judgment of the results of an international Conference, but, alas, all too frequently this is not the case and the unfortunate international agencies are criticized for failing to perform miracles which the States Members of the Organization involved would be the first to reject.

Too often the journalist who must see in any such meeting a cause for the excitement and sensation which produce the income of his proprietor—there must be conflict, victory, clash and defeat and always the sword of

sensation and the fake weight of propaganda must depress the scales of carefully balanced compromise—is not interested in explaining or describing the inherent limitations of the subject-matter but only in extracting excitement from the deliberations and the result, so that, in order to make the black blacker and the white whiter, he ascribes to the international gathering intentions and possibilities which it could never have had, with the unfortunate result that the general public, encouraged to expect earthshaking results, irrevocable decisions and far-reaching action, turns away disappointed and inclined to follow the brightly coloured illusion of unilateral national solutions and unduly to depreciate the possibilities of international action.

It is perhaps then as well that the activities of the Labour Commission were not the subject of great publicity and that more exciting material was available for those avid for sensation. Had this been otherwise the instrument they produced might have gone the way of many others evolved at the same time. As it was they worked and did their best in a fairly tranquil atmosphere, and when all is considered their final text was a marvel of ingenious compromise and resolute idealism; it showed practical insight of the highest quality regarding what, in view of the limitations imposed by the existence of the national sovereignties, might be really workable and what was illusion.

They argued and investigated, compromised and agreed, amended, extended and contended until at last all the important questions such as the major objectives, the connection of the new organization with the League, the rôles and functions of the Employers' and Workers' Delegates, the status of the British Dominions in the Organization, the nature of the International Labour Conference, the composition of the Delegations to attend it, the system of producing multilateral labour treaties.

the obligations of the States to submit these treaties to their Parliaments and a hundred and one other knotty points were settled.

At last the machine was made ready and with the necessary ratifications forthcoming the new social flying machine was completed and eventually obtained its certificate of airworthiness.

Before it could be taken out of the hangar there was one grave set-back. The United States which had played such a prominent rôle in the construction of the machine—having indeed succeeded after the most delicate negotiations in radically changing some of the principal features in order to improve the possibility of its acceptance by Congress, for Congress was feeling the traditional sadness of the genus *homo Americanus* after European contacts of a brief and exciting nature—finally refused to have anything to do with the product of the Commission, declaring that its Delegates had been running after strange gods in Paris. They declared their baby illegitimate and dumped it on the European doorstep where it was taken in, fed and educated. Many years after, when it had attained the stature of vigorous manhood, the great depression induced an attitude of repentance and a new spirit, so that sixteen years later the prodigal father returned amid the rejoicing of the nations.

PART II
GOVERNMENTS, WORKERS, EMPLOYERS AND
OFFICIALS

“ In married life, three is company, and two is none.”

—OSCAR WILDE.

The Importance of Being Earnest.

CHAPTER VI

PREAMBLE AND GENERAL PRINCIPLES

" Would you repeat that again, Sir, for it sounds sœ jonorous that the words droon the ideas? "

—JOHN WILSON.
Noctes.

I. SPECIFICATION

ONE day in May, that month of promise, the designs for the new machine were released by the proud but dubious authors for criticism by the few who were sufficiently interested in social matters to turn for a moment from some of the other and more advertised inventions emanating from the same workshop.

At first sight the plans appeared to provide for many curious features not usually found in designs which had been standardized previously. Those who studied them expressed the gravest doubts regarding the ability of any machine constructed on such lines to fly at all. When the announcement was made that in a very short time the plane was scheduled to duplicate the performance of the Mayo composite machine, take off from the back of its as yet unborn twin craft, the League of Nations, which in the future was also responsible for the difficult operation of supplying it with petrol whilst in the air, fly across the Atlantic and give an exhibition of international social aerobatics in Washington, astonishment turned to open incredulity.

One should, perhaps, not blame these early sceptics too much, and if it may be permitted to continue to describe the apparatus as if it really were a type of social bomber designed to blast away the citadels of industrial oppression, it will readily be recognized that surprise was justified. The craft stood revealed as a large tri-motored amphibian triplane. It had, of course, already been established that triplanes are more sluggish to control and far slower in flight than are biplanes or monoplanes, but—as the designers explained—in this case stability and not speed was the essence of the social contract, and it had been found necessary, in view of the heavy load to be carried, to have not less than three supporting surfaces, one to uplift the Governments, another to raise the workers and a third to hoist the employers.

For similar reasons there were three motors and three propellers of variable pitch: the workers' propeller was set as if the machine were a helicopter designed to rise perpendicularly into the air; that of the Governments was fixed at a more usual angle so as to prevent "stalling," whilst that of the employers was fitted with an ingenious arrangement whereby when the plane reached a certain height and speed, an automatic device reversed its pitch so that the progress of the ship would be reduced to a rate that made landing possible even in the most primitive aerodrome.

The three motors were also of original design. That of the Governments had more than forty-five cylinders all of differing bore and stroke: the employers' engine had an abnormally large compression chamber and a special carburettor designed to allow the use of a particularly rich mixture: the workers' engine had a special supercharger, an aluminium fly-wheel and no silencer.

The cooling of all three motors was perhaps the most striking feature of all, for it was accomplished by a system of intercommunicating open discussion valves, based on

a new principle by which the hot air from all three engines was forced into the floats, plane surfaces and shock absorbers so as to ensure greater buoyancy and resilience. Transmission was through well greased international cogs made of tempered metal.

Steering was effected by instructions radioed in two languages through loud-speakers to the chief pilot from a large and commodious cabin set aside for the thirty-two navigation and route finding experts collectively known as the Governing Body, and the bomb-rack contained a full load of a new type of delayed action, slow-burning, propaganda bomb capable unless promptly extinguished of eating its way through even the best protected ministry.

Let us, however, leave this somewhat mechanical analogy and the impressions of the dumbfounded critics and undertake a more serious examination of the official specification issued by the builders and discuss the charter of the International Labour Organization.

II

The peace writers who produced the Preamble to the Constitution of the International Labour Organization were obviously imbued with the solemnity of the occasion for the opening words of their exordium possess a scriptural sonority, a dogmatic drive and a conviction of infallibility which seem to belong more to the ancient epochs when from temples and mountain-tops, prophets and lawgivers conveyed their messages and announced their precepts to the listening multitudes than to modern times when doubtful democrats, deafening dictators and proletarian purgers compete for the abuse of the air.

Now a preamble is for the enunciation of guiding

principles. What are the principles set out in the stately language of the forty odd articles of the Constitution of the International Labour Organization?

"Whereas the League of Nations has for its object the establishment of universal peace, and such a peace can be established only if it is based upon social justice;

"Whereas conditions of labour exist involving such injustice, hardship and privation to large numbers of people as to procure unrest so great that the peace and harmony of the world are imperilled. . . ."

This is the opening salvo. Later on when the range has been obtained the target is straddled by broadsides proclaiming a number of basic and general principles. This first statement, however, definitely lays down, as if it were an axiom, that peace is dependent upon social justice. This is an uncompromising statement, for it assumes not only that when people are contented at home, that is to say if they are getting good wages and labour conditions, they will not be liable to make war abroad, but also that if they are *not* contented at home they *will* be inclined to make war.

It is perhaps a pity that this proposition is not more extensively discussed, for if we admit the assumption, then it should surely follow that the wars of the past have been caused principally by the nations who had the worst social conditions. It is obviously true of *civil wars*, but not all foreign wars, past and actual, confirm this deduction, and many go far to deny it. In support of it, however, one may quote Napoleon's famous message to his troops:

"Vous êtes nus, mal nourris; le gouvernement vous doit beaucoup, il ne peut rien vous donner. Votre patience, le courage que vous montrez sont admirables mais ils ne vous procurent aucune gloire, aucun éclat ne rejaillit sur vous. Je veux vous conduire dans les plus fertiles plaines du monde: de riches provinces, de grandes

villes seront en votre pouvoir: vous y trouverez honneur, gloire et richesses. Manqueriez-vous de courage ou de constance?"

Napoleon's frankness is refreshing. There is nothing about oppressed minorities or destroying ideological menaces or sacred racial destiny.

It is certainly a fact that the *régimes* which at present appear to menace world peace are not those whose economic condition is the most flourishing though, of course, even the most butterless protagonist of these *régimes* would never admit that they provided less social justice than those of their rivals. The main causes of war are indeed difficult to isolate, but in fact, it may be fair to say that most wars are caused by persons who are endeavouring by mistaken methods to obtain a greater share of social justice for their own people and that their mistake consists in thinking and acting as if it were possible to obtain social justice by stealing it away from other people and by inflicting anti-social injustice on those who do not agree with them. It would appear, therefore, that there is some justification for the criticism of those who claim that the opening words of the Preamble resulted as much from a desire to justify the connection of the International Labour Organization with the League of Nations as from any very searching analysis of the exact nature of the reactions of bad labour conditions upon the frequency of war.

Be that as it may, nobody will seek to deny that the converse of the proposition is true beyond doubt and that if peace is not entirely dependent upon social justice, social justice must certainly depend upon peace for its full realization—provided also, however, that that plenty which is popularly supposed to wait upon peace be not left out of the argument.

The events of to-day have afforded abundant proof of this, for the devotion of huge sums in various countries

to armaments which might have been spent on social improvement, is evidence enough.

But what is this social justice of which so much is written and so much spoken? Is it just a winsome phrase like "collective security," its sister in temporary misfortune, a mocking will-o'-the-wisp useful for election halls and Assembly speeches but never for the factory and the home?

Is it to remain for ever a desirable but apparently unattainable panacea for humanity's ills? Is it perhaps impossible to define exactly, being merely an "impalpable congeries of hopes and fears"? If it did exist would humanity approve of it and would it continue to approve of it? Would it produce a machine-made egalitarianism bringing with it the dull depression of human effort until initiative and invention disappeared from the face of the earth? Or does it admit the eternal continuation of inequality and admitted differentiation in reward and privilege? Is the lip service paid to it in certain quarters based on an attitude similar to that which prompted La Rochefoucauld to define justice as "only a lively apprehension lest we should be deprived of what belongs to us"?

Whatever may be the answer to these questions, one may look in vain for a clear definition or even for a mention of the phrase in that vast compendium of human wisdom the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, for in the apposite volume, though it ranges with magnificent precision and fine impartiality from "sarsaparilla" to "sorcery" no mention of "social justice" is made. Social architecture is described and illustrated, social philosophy and social psychology are dwelt on at length: there are admirable papers on social science, the social contract and even on social insects, but there is nothing about social justice.

If, pursuing lexicographic research, one looks for evidence as to what this juxtaposition of an intellectual

adjective with an idealistic noun may be intended to convey, it is possible to establish amongst the myriad uses of the word social, one which describes it as meaning "of or pertaining to the relations between capital and labour." As for justice, two definitions emerge: Justice is a term used in the abstract for the quality of being or doing what is just, i.e. right in law and equity. The French for once are less logical and precise and more abstract, for they define it as "*L'esprit qui préside chez l'homme au respect des droits d'autrui et détermine chez lui des jugements équitables.*"

What then are the elements of social justice? Obviously, the phrase is intended to convey the notion of respect for law which is something and for equity or fairness which is much more and this respect is to reign in the relations between all the elements in society but particularly as regards the relations between capital and labour, between employer and employee. The scope is wide: an unwarranted strike might be regarded as being quite as socially unjust as the sweating of workers, and justice is necessary for the employer as for the worker in view of the fact of unfair competition, though of course in practice the bad effects of its absence are more easily passed on to the community in one case than in another.

To obtain a workable conception of what the Preamble meant by its references to social justice, it is, however, probably better to abandon the "sounding jargon of the schools," for as Goldsmith says, "this same philosophy is a good horse in the stable but an arrant jade on a journey," and seek a phrase from those politicians who are skilled in depicting in language understood of the electorate, the humbler heaven which their return to power will bring about. The idea in brief was that there should be a new deal and that it should be a square deal.

Possibly because they felt that the phrase was Utopian

and that in the phrase of Joubert, the moralist, "it is sometimes easier to do one's duty than to know what it is" the fathers of the Constitution courageously proceeded to make a list of what might in the practical world of modern labour conditions constitute an advance towards their ideal.

They laid down that social justice for the worker would provide for him at least the following conditions:

The duration of his working hours should be regulated and an eight hour day with a forty-eight hour week was fixed as desirable minimum standard.

The worker should have a weekly rest day of at least twenty-four hours which should include Sunday, whenever practicable.

The partners in industry, workers and employers should be allowed rights of association, that is to say, the right of banding themselves together in trade unions and employers' associations for all lawful purposes.

Our average worker should be paid enough "to maintain a reasonable standard of life." (Even at Versailles they shrank from the appalling task of defining what might be "reasonable wages" and cleverly begged the question by adding "as this is understood in their time and country," a phrase which was destined to beget a healthy and numerous progeny in subsequent discussions in Geneva.)

The worker should be protected by insurance or some other method against sickness, disease and injury arising out of his employment.

There should be special codes for the protection in employment of children, young persons and women and special provisions for the requirements of old age.

Workers working in countries other than their own should, wherever possible, enjoy the same advantages

as the nationals of the country in which they are working.

Men and women should receive equal remuneration for work of equal value.

There should be good systems of factory inspection and the method by which the worker obtains his employment should be subject to proper regulations.

In addition to this list of practical ideals, the Preamble and the general principles set out in the Constitution contain certain philosophical or doctrinal considerations, one of the most important of which is the declaration that labour "should not be regarded merely as an article of commerce," words which would certainly have obtained the approval of Robert Owen and his co-pioneers.

Somewhat affrighted at the vast scope of the world programme which they had set up, possibly with lingering doubts—induced by the study of the programme—in their minds as to the real possibility of implanting common and universal standards and feeling perhaps with Shakespeare "Oh how full of briers is this working-day world" the authors endeavoured to disarm possible critics by admitting that they "recognize that differences of climate, habits and customs of economic opportunity and industrial tradition make strict uniformity in the conditions of labour difficult of immediate attainment." After this, thinking that perhaps they had gone too far towards admitting the terrifying difficulties that arise

"Where obstinacy takes his sturdy stand
To disconcert what policy has planned,"

they took heart of grace again and went on record to the effect that "they think that there are methods and principles for regulating labour conditions which *all*

industrial communities should endeavour to apply so far as their special circumstances will permit."

Finally, like all good and experienced draughtsmen, with a foreknowledge of the obstacles that the legalistic adversaries of the new organization would not fail to set up and in order to provide for the confusion of anybody who in the future might claim that the new Office was not competent to do anything not specifically referred to in the Constitution, the authors declared with a blend of modesty and satisfaction: "Without claiming that these methods and principles are either complete or final, the High Contracting Parties are of opinion that they are well fitted to guide the policy of the League of Nations; and that if adopted by industrial communities who are Members of the League, and safeguarded in practice by an adequate system of inspection, they will confer lasting benefits upon the wage earners of the world."

To their credit it must be said that the High Contracting Parties did not seek to evade the old difficulty of international competition which had beset the early prophets. For the first time, it was posed, admitted and utilized in a diplomatic document which openly stated:

"Whereas also the failure of any nation to adopt humane conditions of labour is an obstacle in the way of other nations which desire to improve the conditions in their own countries."

Here is the appeal for universality. Every reform aiming at social progress must impose on a nation certain sacrifices at the first moment of its adoption before its accompanying benefits can be garnered. In a *régime* of world economic rivalry it is still a fact that the progressive nation—at least in the beginning as has been said—will find itself in a disadvantageous position as compared with the backward nations wherever competition occurs. In order to prevent as far as possible the paralysing effect

PREAMBLE AND GENERAL PRINCIPLES 77

of fear of this disadvantage from strangling all social initiative and from imposing the dilapidation of social conquests already obtained, efforts must be made to enable the nations to advance hand in hand.

That was the principal reason why "*The High Contracting Parties, moved by sentiments of justice and humanity as well as by the desire to secure the permanent peace of the world*" agreed to set up the International Labour Organization.

CHAPTER VII

THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR CONFERENCE

" This Council I establish, pure from bribe,
Revered and keen to act."

—ÆSCHYLUS.
Eumenides.

I

HAVING conjured up their vision of a tripartite and Olympian world of which they may have hoped that some future Pindar would sing again:

" There the golden sisters reign
From Themis sprung—Eunomia pure,
Safe justice and congenial peace,"

the Constitution laid down the methods by which unlimited competition and industrial oppression were to be brought under social control.

They began by defining the structure of the International Labour Organization, and this, although it has the same initials, is by no means exactly the same as the International Labour Office. The new organization was subdivided into three main organs: 1. the International Labour Conference; 2. the Governing Body; and 3. the International Labour Office itself.

The Conference was to meet once a year at least and it was to deal internationally with one or more questions of importance in the general scheme of labour legislation

and industrial organization. The task of the Conference was to draft and obtain initial agreement for an international labour treaty on the point in question.

What was the object of such a treaty?

It was to establish a reasonable minimum standard—taking into consideration differences of climate, custom and expediency—which was to be capable of general acceptance when referred for consideration to the national Parliaments or competent authorities of the States Members, and which when accepted by them, after adaptation and reaffirmation of existing national laws or the passing of any necessary new measures, would serve certain high purposes.

What were these purposes?

The first, by producing a common accepted standard concerning the points incorporated in the treaty, was to encourage and stimulate backward or negligent nations to adopt a more becoming level in the matter of their treatment of their workers. It is obvious that if the more backward nations could be induced to adopt the new average standard, the danger of unfair competition by them to the detriment of nations who already had *nationally* accepted the average standard would be diminished.

Similarly, any State favourably contemplating the reform set out in the treaty would be enabled to adopt them without undue fear of unfair competition and could therefore legislate in greater security.

Another purpose more indirect but equally important was that, in any country where the issue dealt with in the treaty was the subject of heated controversy between the conflicting interests affected by a new national draft law, the unhappy national officials and legislators, rowelled by the spurs of workers' leaders pressing for advance yet bitted, curbed—and sometimes even hamstrung—by embattled employers, could seek refuge not

in inaction, tergiversation or delay, but in the steady jogtrot gait of the reasonable standard laid down by the International Labour Conference. For the harassed official or legislator could say to his warring Capulets and Montagues, "This cause has already been judged, and judged by technicians as well as ideologues. Here is the verdict of the international industrial world—a judgment which has obtained a two-thirds majority of expert world opinion in favour of it—and I propose to incorporate it in our national legislation with due regard to our national peculiarities."

Here, it will be observed, is a subtle sapping of the fortress of unlimited national sovereignty, and so far in practice it has been the only method—with the addition of another element which will be dealt with later—of reducing the obstructive power of that frowning stronghold.

But why, it may be asked, should any country which already possessed legislation equal or superior to the terms of the treaty worry about ratifying such an instrument?

That there would always be a number of such nations is obvious, for, as will be seen later, no reform could hope to pass the Conference and receive the *imprimatur* of its most important members unless a considerable number of the more important industrial States were already applying in their own laws at least 80 per cent. of the standard set up by the treaty.

To this question there are two answers.

The first is that, by an official act of ratification, a State, by force of example, adds to the efficacy of international labour legislation, to the body of such legislation, to the content of international social progress and to the world appeal of the standard set up. Ratification of an international labour treaty adds to the health of the world as a whole, for it is a public profession of faith and the

social religion is no different from any other in its need for solemn acts of worship and testimony.

The second answer is that, although in a well-organized country national legislation may afford a fairly secure anchor for the workers' social conquests, yet, even in democratic countries, laws can speedily be changed, wages reduced, hours of work increased and benefits diminished. This frequently happens in times of crisis. But once a national reform has been the subject of an international ratification an irrevocable guarantee has been given that for at any rate ten years—for this is the usual duration of the International Labour Office treaties—the standard set up will not be diminished. It is not difficult to see that from the point of view of the workers at least, there are advantages in a ratified treaty which double anchors their gains, considerably exceeding those in a national law.

What is the peculiar character of this Conference, this Parliament, which was to endeavour to bring international order into labour legislation which in the world up to 1920 was something of a "codeless myriad of precedent, a wilderness of single instances"?

First of all the Conference was to be tripartite. There were to be Delegates from the Governments, from the workers and from the employers. During the Versailles discussions there had been many bitter arguments as to the relative voting strengths which were to be allowed in the Delegations. The Governments felt that they should have at least parity with the joint strength of the left and right wings and so it was finally settled. The workers and employers, however, remained convinced that as equal partners in the trinity—though they recognized the Government claim to elder brotherhood in the case of any Government which they controlled—they should each have as many votes as the Governments.

This aspect of the Constitution has probably been one

of the most criticized. In actual practice, however, seeing that as no Conference is stronger than the Committees it sets up to do its preliminary work and whose reports it must usually adopt, a compromise has been found, for the composition of the Committees of the International Labour Conference is based on the 1:1:1 and not on the 2:1:1 system as regards their voting strength. Here is an example of successful practice coming to the rescue of controversial theory.

In this Conference, it will be said, however, it is all very well to provide for the representation of labour, but how can this be assured, for although employers are usually well organized everywhere there are many countries where this is certainly not the case for labour. Those who laid down the rules for the International Labour Conference, which are based on democratic theory, were at once brought sharply up against the practical difficulty presented by this position. A State cannot exist without a Government and it is perfectly easy for a Government to appoint officials to represent it. But a labour movement can exist in a State without having a very clear or unified form; it may be permanent or political or powerful or proscribed or parasitic or polluted.

What were the harassed officials, called upon to pick the persons who were to go to the Labour Conference to represent labour, to do when it came to choosing from the large numbers of vocal claimants who regarded themselves as the only persons entitled to represent the working masses?

The framers of the Constitution decided that the principle of the independence of the workers' and employers' organizations was a vital one and laid down that the members of the Organization should undertake to nominate Delegates to represent the employers and the workpeople "chosen in agreement with the industrial organizations, if such organizations exist, which are *most*

representative of employers or workpeople as the case may be," in the respective countries.

In order that this proviso should not be evaded by those who had accepted the obligation to send properly constituted Delegations each year to the Conference, it was decided that the credentials of Delegates and advisers should be subject to scrutiny by the Conference and that the Conference might, by a two-thirds majority, refuse to admit any Delegate or adviser considered by it not to have been nominated in accordance with the meaning of the words quoted above.

It must not be forgotten that the original conception of the International Labour Organization was of an international democratic machine and that is why the challenging word "most" was used to stiffen the easygoing "representative." Later on it may be possible to refer to some of the difficulties caused by the opportunities afforded by this proviso for the workers' Delegates of democratic countries to challenge the "representative" character of workers' Delegates sent to the Conference by certain States Members which had adopted totalitarian or semi-analogous forms of government unforeseen by the framers of the Constitution.

Seeing that Delegates could not be expected to be expert on all the questions which might be discussed at the Conference, provision was made for a sufficient number of advisers to accompany each Delegation for the purpose of rendering expert advice on each of the technical questions on the agenda of the Conference, and these advisers were supposed also to be chosen from the most representative organizations.

It has already been stated that the most important mechanical problem in successful democracy is that of transmission. How is the force generated by the vague and inchoate aspirations euphemistically referred to as

“ the will of the people ” to be concentrated, harnessed, directed, controlled and governed so that it results in efficient action?

The first requisite for successful transmission is the speedy and efficient canalization of majority opinion, for sooner or later the many must ineluctably delegate their powers to the few, the chorus must abdicate in favour of the tenor and individual leaders or spokesmen must voice the opinions of the constituent parts of the whole body. A difficult enough problem in national democracies, in an international assembly of a tripartite character some rather special method of obtaining “ party discipline ” seemed absolutely essential if complications and undue delay were to be avoided, and so it was that there grew up, with the division of the Conference into Government Delegates and Delegates of workers and employers, what is called the “ group system. ” This merely means that the members of each of three groups *usually*—but not invariably, particularly of later years—work together, vote together and negotiate together as corporate bodies, though of course the corporate character is more pronounced in the right and left wings than in the Government group.

This system, though it is by no means absolute or impeccable, did provide a practical method of getting action from the Conference. It enabled opinion to be voiced by one person instead of many and, by giving certain leaders the authority and experience necessary for the conduct of intricate, important and technical negotiations, it made possible expert and expeditious handling of complicated situations which otherwise would have dragged on eternally. It is written in Ecclesiastes that a threefold cord is not easily broken and the decisions arrived at by the interwoven strands of Government, employer and worker representation are usually of sufficient tensile strength to render snapping or unravelling

by any obstreperous and tough-minded individualist a matter of the greatest difficulty and unpopularity.

Thus organized, the Conference was at liberty to adopt international labour treaties or recommendations, the difference between these two instruments being that the treaty is a more binding instrument than the recommendation, seeing that it provides for ratification and a system of mutual control of application, whereas the recommendation is more in the nature of an exhortation to Governments to model their policies in general agreement with an accepted international standard worked out in considerable technical detail.

II

The Labour Conference could not, as has been explained, definitely bind the States Members to apply immediately the terms of the treaties or recommendations passed by it with the necessary two-thirds majority.

The Constitution, however, provided a subtle method of getting through at least the outer forts and barbed-wire entanglements of the defensive lines of unlimited national sovereignty. This method provided a new and interesting diplomatic system for making sure that the Parliaments and competent authorities of the nations concerned should at least be forced to decide publicly whether or not they would agree to and apply the findings of the Conference. For the Constitution lays down, and this is perhaps the most important specific obligation undertaken by the States Members of the organization, that:

“ Each of the members undertakes that it will, within the period of one year at most from the closing of the session of the Conference, or if it is impossible owing to exceptional circumstances to do so within the period of

one year, then at the earliest practicable moment and in no case later than 18 months from the closing of the session of the Conference, bring the recommendation or draft convention (treaty) before the authority or authorities within whose competence the matter lies, for the enactment of legislation or other action."

The intention was to furnish an efficient means of dragging officials, diplomats and Cabinets before the bar of public opinion and of making them state their reasons for not accepting what the social conscience of the world—or two-thirds of it—had adopted as an average standard. The efficacy of this scheme has been considerable, but is of course dependent on the existence of healthy and un-suppressed national and international public opinion. It has added great reality to the deliberations of the Labour Conference, for the certainty of the whole matter coming before the bar of public opinion at a later stage has made Government Delegates extremely careful regarding the attitude that they take publicly at the Conference on any important labour question and has meant that Governments have not been able merely to bury the treaties passed by the Conference.

The establishment of this obligation constitutes the most ingenious and successful attempt that has yet been made to smuggle social justice through the customs and frontier posts of State sovereignty.

If a world standard is to be average, it follows automatically that some national practice must be superior and other inferior. In order that no acquired rights might be diminished in any country by the adoption of an international labour treaty, and in order to make this clear, the Constitution lays down in paragraph 2 of Article 19 that "in no case shall any member be asked or required as a result of the adoption of any recommendation or draft convention by the Conference, to

lessen the protection afforded by its existing legislation to the workers concerned."

Once the treaty is accepted and ratified by the Governments of the States Members, the chain of interdependence becomes complete. Special procedures exist which enable a form of mutual control and even of punitive measures to cover the case of persistent non-application. In the struggle against official contumacy, however, and in view of the temporary abrogation of concerted sanctions as a practical measure in international politics, the most valuable system for ensuring application has been that provided by the obligation to provide annual reports on the application of all ratified treaties for discussion by a commission of the Conference. For, in spite of the general deterioration of moral values and the diminished efficiency of international undertakings, respectability still has a certain appeal and few States are quite indifferent to public criticism for having gone back on their solemn word in a matter affecting the well-being of their workers.

In addition to its legislative activities and its routine functions, the Conference also provides a valuable opportunity for the review of world social progress and for the pooling of mutual experience by the technicians and Delegates who attend it. The discussions on the Annual Report made by the Director of the Office are varied and interesting and are by no means the least valuable of its proceedings.

CHAPTER VIII
THE GOVERNING BODY

" For just experience tells, in every soil
That those who think must govern those that toil,
And all that Freedom's highest aims can reach
Is but to lay proportioned loads on each."

—GOLDSMITH.
The Vicar of Wakefield.

IF the General Conference of the States Members of the International Labour Organization may be described as being similar to the general assembly of the shareholders of a public company, the Governing Body may roughly be referred to as equivalent to the board of directors. It has, in addition, something of the functions of a general staff, a judicial committee, a financial controlling organ, a committee of initiative and a board of navigation.

It is a tripartite organization and was originally conceived as having twenty-four members, consisting of the representatives of twelve Governments and six employers' and six workers' members.

In 1934, after complicated diplomatic negotiations which lasted for over ten years, it was enlarged in order to provide for an increase in the non-European representation and is at present composed of sixteen Government representatives, eight employers' members and eight workers' members.

This change in the Constitution of the International

Labour Office has been the only change which it has been possible to bring about since the formation of the Organization, and it is perhaps a mournful commentary on the rigidity of the Constitution that in a world which changes with such startling rapidity, it is so difficult to adopt those modifications which inevitably become necessary in any growing organization. The need for some method of easier reform of the Constitution than is at present available is obvious, and in the present state of political turmoil greater facilities for amendment and adaptation are needed if the Organization is to continue to function efficiently in a changing world.

Eight of the governmental members of the Governing Body are permanent members representing the eight States recognized as being of the greatest industrial importance in the world. This importance is established after taking into consideration various factors, such as the industrial population, industrial output, area of the country, size of its budget, amount of its contribution to the International Labour Organization, the extent of its railways and mercantile marine, and so on, and the decision in the event of any dispute regarding the degree of industrial importance of any country is fixed by the Governing Body itself in the first place.

In order to provide for increased representation on this important body, it has been agreed that any Government may appoint a deputy member. Such deputy members are entitled to be present at all meetings, but they have not the power to vote except in the absence and at the request of the titular member who appoints them.

The other eight Government members are elected by the governmental Delegates to the Conference, and although no hard and fast rules exist, fairly successful efforts have been made to give as representative a character as possible to the Government Group, so that no large area of the world may be without its spokesman.

In addition to the eight States of chief industrial importance, which are at present Canada, France, Great Britain, India, Italy,¹ Japan,¹ the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R., the eight States which in 1939 occupy the elected seats are Brazil, Chile, China, Mexico, Norway, Poland, Spain and Yugoslavia.

The workers' and employers' members, who also have their substitute members, are elected by the workers' and the employers' Delegates to the Conference, and the duration of the mandate for all elected seats is three years. In the case of employers' and workers' members, however, persons are elected nominally, whereas in the case of the Government seats States are elected. Thus, in theory, an Englishman elected as employers' Delegate does not exclusively represent industry from Great Britain but is one of eight persons representing world industry.

The Governing Body is thus a fair-sized permanent international organization of a tripartite character, possessing functions independent both of the International Labour Office and the International Labour Conference. It acts as an intermediate and co-ordinating organ between the Conference and the Office. One of its most important activities is to function as a steering committee for the Conference, and in this capacity it is called upon in the first place to decide what subjects are to be placed on the agenda of the Conference each year as being suitable for incorporation in the labour treaties, and when the Conference has finished its work, any resolutions adopted by it are sent in the first place to the Governing Body, which has to decide what action is to be taken by the Office in connection with them.

Perhaps its most important individual activity, however, is the examination of the yearly reports sent in by

¹ The resignation of Japan and Italy from the Organization and consequently from the Governing Body become due on 3.11.40 and 15.12.39 respectively, when the places will be filled.

the States dealing with the application of the treaties they have ratified. Any complaints—and complaints may be made by any organization of workers or employers or by the Government of any States Member—covering alleged non-application of ratified treaties are dealt with in the first instance by the Governing Body in accordance with its established procedure. This function of control of the application of ratified treaties has two main branches. First of all, the Governing Body is called upon to make sure that the legislation of a State which has ratified a labour treaty is really in conformity with that treaty. If there is no legislation, the Governing Body may investigate whether the industrial practice as laid down in collective agreements between employers and workers guarantees a substantial application of any particular treaty.

The Governing Body, however, is not satisfied with merely certifying the existence of proper legislation but endeavours to make sure that such legislation is effectively applied. By a system of collaboration with the International Labour Office and the International Labour Conference which sets up a special committee for this purpose, every care is taken to make sure that within the limits of possibility obligations assumed are in fact carried out.

The Governing Body establishes the budget of the Organization and appoints the Director of the International Labour Office, who is responsible to it alone. Its functions of guidance, control and selection render it a most important international body and on its smooth functioning depend not only the success of the International Labour Conference but also the possibility of fruitful action by the International Labour Office.

The Governing Body elects its own President, who is usually a Member of its Government Group: he is assisted by two Vice-Presidents, one from the Employers'

and one from the Workers' Group. These three persons usually act together as the Officers of the Governing Body and as such have certain special functions in times of crisis and in connection with the conduct of important affairs: they are usually consulted by the Director of the International Labour Office regarding important decisions or events in the life of that Organization.

The President and the Vice-Presidents are therefore of the greatest importance in the life of the Organization as a whole for they are called upon in addition to their intimate contact with the Office, to play leading rôles; usually as group leaders in the case of workers and employers in the work of the Conference where their knowledge of the Organization as a whole and their previous technical experience renders their leadership—together with that of the Chiefs of the three groups in the Conference itself—assured and efficient and seldom seriously challenged.

CHAPTER IX

THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR OFFICE

"The sovereignty of man lieth hid in knowledge."

—BACON.

In Praise of Knowledge.

I. THE STAFF

"By mutual confidence and mutual aid

Great Deeds are done and great discoveries made."

—POPE.

Iliad.

THE officials of the International Labour Office are international Civil Servants. There are some four hundred of them, and they are of forty-three different nationalities. Each one of them, on taking up permanent service, has to make a declaration of loyalty to the institution in these terms:

"I solemnly undertake to exercise in all loyalty, discretion, and conscience, the functions that have been entrusted to me as . . . of the International Labour Office, to discharge my functions and regulate my conduct with the interests of the International Labour Organization alone in view, and not to seek or receive instructions from any Government or other authority external to the International Labour Office."

It is obvious to anyone who is at all familiar with international life that the ideal of absolute loyalty to

an international organization is one which must be very hard completely to fulfil. Must there not often be a conflict of loyalties, a struggle between that natural patriotism which is still the greatest force in the world to-day, and the lofty ideals of international collaboration?

Is it possible, for instance, for an international official to endeavour with all his might to further a policy which has been adopted by a majority decision against the active opposition of the country of which he remains a national?

In this present world of bitterly conflicting "ideologies," is a body of efficient "mercenary idealists"—a description which has been applied to the Geneva staff—a practical possibility?

Is it permissible for an official to use his international position so as to make sure that his country receives the earliest and most reliable information about what other countries may be doing in certain fields, so that thereby it may get value for its subscription?

Is it legitimate to use the International Labour Office for the moral and cultural aggrandizement of a particular country?

Here are some typical examples of day-to-day problems of conduct that perplex those responsible for the conduct of the International Labour Office. There are some who proclaim that the official should be entirely divorced from national life, its aims, and its ideals, and should give unqualified and undivided allegiance to the International Labour Office. The completely denationalized international man may be a creature of the future, but in the world to-day, even in view of its growing refugee population, he is not a possibility for many reasons.

He cannot, for example, dispense with a national passport, even when he travels on duty; for so far the international organizations have not succeeded in obtaining the right to issue their own passports; he must eventu-

ally retire, after his work is over, to some country: his children cannot be guaranteed an international existence, and must therefore adopt national education and careers. The very essence of his work must often be the maintenance of good relations between the authorities, services, and organizations of his own country and the International Labour Office, and it is obviously necessary, therefore, that he should be trusted by the national authorities and retain their respect and confidence.

At the present stage of the world's development, national authorities do not trust completely denationalized persons, for it is felt that the decisions and conclusions of such people must lack reality and responsibility. Even if strong human sentiment did not dictate it, therefore, which, of course, it always does, self-interest requires the maintenance of certain vital bonds in the case of the international official with his country of origin; for a part of his job must often be to retain the confidence of persons in high position in that country.

It is perhaps a curious thing that officials of the International Labour Office should still be subject in certain cases to compulsory military service in their own countries, or should be officers on the reserve. But a little reflection will show that it is impossible to avoid this seeming anomaly if a practical efficient international staff is to be maintained, composed of the best available material, and capable of carrying out the work of the Office, and maintaining efficient relations with its members.

Pages and pages have been written, and will continue to be written, on this vexed question of national and international compatibilities; officials themselves have indoctrinated and criticized, discussed and pronounced, compromised and refused to compromise; international committees have sat to square the circle, and have consecrated ingenious solutions in tortured texts; but no

crystal-clear and completely satisfactory code has ever resulted. Latin logic, uncompromising Scandinavian idealism, totalitarian irredentism, Anglo-Saxon vague evasion, Oriental indirection, Semitic science, Aryan astuteness, and the day-to-day necessities of getting on with the job have, however, all contributed to the production of an effective working compromise which has succeeded in producing "l'homme moyen international," and in checking excesses either in the direction of subservience to national Governments, or in that of inhuman alienation of national character, temperament, and aspirations.

Of course, the saving clause in this Byzantine conflict of conscience is the fact of the membership of a given nationality in the International Labour Office, which enables the official of the country concerned to still his doubts by saying "whilst my country remains a member of this Organization, I am enabled to assume that it approves of my presence there and, as the Office will not insist on my doing anything that my conscience does not approve without giving me a chance either to resign or to transfer the objectionable duty to somebody else, I can accept my international instructions in tranquillity." When this situation no longer obtains, and the State leaves the International Labour Organization, then, of course, an entirely new and painful position arises, which is usually settled by the individual—very often after much agony of mind—in accordance with the dictates of his own conception of his duty.

A most striking example of the settlement of this everlasting conflict in favour of the international as against the national conception of what is proper conduct for an international official was provided early in the history of the Organization by Albert Thomas, its brilliant first Director.

The French Government had opposed the competence

of the International Labour Office regarding agricultural questions. In other words, the French Government claimed that the Constitution of the Office did not allow it to legislate internationally for agricultural workers. This was obviously a very serious matter for the Office, as it meant the exclusion of millions of workers from the protective measures designed by the Office, and would have prevented the Office from interesting itself in their conditions of work, and from making effective studies of their social situation. That the French Government took such pains to prevent the Office from establishing its competence in this particular field was perhaps a compliment to its influence, for, if the Government had not thought that Office action would have resulted in some change of a radical, and, therefore, probably of an expensive character, it would hardly have taken so much trouble to try to prevent action. The case went to the Permanent Court at The Hague, where it was hotly argued, the Director pleading personally against the lawyers of France.

Albert Thomas had been a prominent French politician, and at that time certainly had not given up all intention of returning to national politics. Nobody with any knowledge of electoral methods anywhere, and of the intensity of democratic political passion, would have any difficulty in realizing what a very important hostage to fortune Albert Thomas had given by his attitude.

The Office won the day; its agricultural competence was established, and later on this resulted in a good many international treaties regarding agricultural workers being accepted by the International Labour Conference, and subsequently ratified by a considerable number of agricultural States.

The agricultural section of the Office is at the moment one of the most important, and countries in which agri-

culture plays a prominent rôle in the national economy have remained faithful members of the Organization.

Thus, in the Homeric days of the Office, was established a fine tradition, which did much to set a standard that has not been entirely whittled away by later developments.

There is another aspect of the conditions of international civil service which is peculiar to it, and perhaps not unworthy of notice, in view of the internal difficulties it causes.

The official languages of the Office and of the Organization are French and English. The work of the Office requires a high degree of linguistic and technical ability in the preparation of the documents for the Governing Body and the Conference, and, of course, in the day-to-day research and other work of the Office, particularly, for example, in the case of those gifted officials, the Geneva interpreters.

That being so, it becomes at once obvious that a perfect knowledge of English or French, or both, is a necessary requisite for employment in the Office. Even in the more technical branches—and technicians very quickly establish a curious jargon which they, if no one else, understand—the results of the inquiries have eventually to be incorporated in a document correctly couched either in French or in English, and this means that even the most gifted technician is at a disadvantage if he is unable to use correctly one or other of the official languages.

Now it is difficult to know English and French better than people whose mother-tongue is either one or the other. As a considerable number of posts have to be filled by competitive examination in order to ensure the engagement of the best officials available, it is clear that—and this was particularly the case when the Office was hurriedly established in 1919—the proportion of successful candidates from countries speaking either of

the official languages is bound to be in excess of those from other countries.

There exist, of course, from time to time, brilliant examples of linguistic ability in the non-English or non-French speaking countries, but their number must necessarily be limited. Furthermore, as regards that competition for promotion which must be a feature of any successful civil service, it is obvious that persons who have some difficulty with the official languages, even though they may have a fair knowledge of them allied to considerable intellectual ability, must—unless the dice are loaded in favour of nationality and against sheer ability—be handicapped in competition with those officials who are not subject to such disadvantage.

Thus, in the early days, it inevitably resulted that the proportion of English, French, and Swiss officials was very high, and this proportion was further increased by the fact that the countries speaking the official languages had in most cases attained a considerable degree of industrial importance which, in its turn, meant that they had available in their national ministries a fairly large stock of officials of technical ability for transfer to the new international service.

Obviously, however, it is impossible to run an international office without endeavouring to obtain as wide as possible a representation in the staff of the various nationalities represented by the States Members, and continual efforts must be made to endeavour to satisfy the legitimate claims of all those States Members whose representation is small, but whose contributions seem, at any rate to them, very large.

From the point of view of those in the international service, this situation has resulted in a good deal of inevitable hardship concerning questions of grading and promotion, always a difficult problem even in services in which the nationality factor does not enter.

Many officials have, in fact, been appointed more on account of their nationality and political pull than because it was thought that they were up to the international standard of efficiency. They were, in fact, not the best men for the job, but the best Ruritanian for the post reserved for Ruritania, and, of course, prestige being what it is, Ruritanian support for the Office depends upon the Ruritanian post being as good as anybody else's, and slightly better than those reserved for the immediate neighbours.

Similar considerations have applied to promotion as well as to appointments, and many loyal, valuable, and efficient members of the staff who have served the Office since the beginning have seen the promotion earned by them awarded to imported persons pistoned into high posts on account of the exigencies of nationality. Of course, some account was taken of this special disability when the general conditions of international service were fixed as regards salary and stability, but as the advantages conceded apply equally to the efficient hard workers, and to those whose nationality is their shield and buckler, this is not of much consolation to the former category. Such is the moral situation of the international official, often perplexing in principle, but seldom insoluble in practice.

Many illusions are current about the official who works in Geneva. It is perhaps easier to say what he is not than to describe exactly what he is: he is not an overpaid Sybarite working in an ivory tower, nor is he a degenerate traitor plotting the downfall of his own country; he is seldom a complete fanatic or a hopeless bureaucrat; he is neither a Machiavellian diplomat nor a nefarious person who endeavours to drown the national consciousness of the visiting Delegate in a liquid and lavish hospitality; he is not usually an ideologue without technical

ability, nor a technician without horizons; he is seldom a polyglot superman, an unpatriotic cosmopolitan, a professional revolutionary, or a servile conformist. He is an average man or woman doing a definite and difficult job with certain compensations and certain disadvantages, very much like men and women in the national foreign offices and labour ministries all over the world, and, like Thomas Hardy, he and his colleagues find their solace:

“Not from noting life’s conditions,
Not from heeding Time’s monitions,
But in cleaving to the Dream
And in gazing at the gleam
Whereby grey things golden seem.”

II. THE WORK

“Method is good in all things, order governs the world,
and the Devil is the author of confusion.”

—SWIFT.
Letters.

The functions of the Office, which works under the leadership of the Director, who is the head of the Office, and who is responsible for appointing the staff, are in the main connected with the secretarial, research, informative, and publishing activities of the Organization.

The Office is an “industrial and labour intelligence department at the disposal of Governments”; it may be used as a training centre for Government officials who wish to inform themselves of the latest international practice as regards industrial matters, or who come from countries which are only beginning to face the problems of industry, and wish to obtain experience in their handling.

It receives and answers countless individual requests from officials, students, professors, persons who wish to

write in newspapers or to speak in Parliament, and from those simply curious persons,

“ Whose taste exact for faultless fact
Amounts to a disease.”

The International Labour Office is thus a consultant and research Organization at the disposal of its members. It is also more, for Albert Thomas started a great tradition when he insisted that the Office should always hold its own institutional view—the opinion of the Office on all the important questions brought before it. This opinion may not always prevail, but it always has weight.

From the International Labour Office, like the friars of the great brotherhoods of medieval times, who went out into all the countries of the world spreading the discoveries of science, culture, and religion, travel the expert officials of the International Labour Office. They cross the Atlantic to place at the disposal of a Social Security Board in the United States of America the hard-learned lessons of European experience in insurance. They travel to Argentina and Latin America to discuss with the local officials the results of comparative studies on colonization and migration; they go to Venezuela to advise on the establishment of a comprehensive labour code, to the Balkans and the Baltic, and to many other newly industrialized countries just beginning to climb the rickety ladder of social progress, with the mission of implanting the fruits of long experience in the more elementary branches of industrial hygiene, housing, and nutrition. To the Orient and the Occident, to the North and to the South, these experts travel, treating with the national authorities the problems of labour regulation, the special conditions necessary for women and children, the duration of a reasonable working day in tropical, temperate, and colder climes, and the types of reform which may be introduced into the humming hives of Asia

in view of the special economic and social conditions prevailing. They come back to Geneva with their own theoretical knowledge enriched by first-hand experience of practical problems of government, experience which will later prevent an international labour treaty from being too rarefied in character, too advanced or too backward or too theoretical, to be able to obtain national sanction.

In the months following their voyages, long letters about the dull things that matter are carried in aeroplanes to all the most inaccessible parts of the world, and heavy publications are carried by plodding camels and protesting camions to distant and neglected provincial labour departments, where at last they have an uplifting effect on the lives of millions.

The Office provides not only the indispensable Secretariat for the yearly sessions of the International Labour Conference, but also does the preliminary and indispensable fact-finding and research, such, for example, as the comparison of existing law and practice in the countries of the world as regards any particular subject which may be necessary for the proper formulation of a workable international agreement. For example, a Government may be drafting legislation on sickness insurance: it may wish to know exactly how other countries have dealt with the problem; if by any chance it wishes to have reciprocity arrangements with other countries for equality of treatment of its nationals living in these countries and of their nationals living in its country, it may be necessary to receive proper and impartial information about what really happens in the countries with which it wishes to deal; the International Labour Office supplies the information scientifically and impartially. As Professor Adolf Keller has said: "The Office is in the first place the store-house of all that is known by the present genera-

tion concerning the conditions of human labour. Any one wishing to know how much a South African gold miner earns, how a Chinese coolie lives, what the timber floaters in Finland do, how Indian women are employed in mines, how English miners struggle through life, or what are the conditions of work on board ship, will find the answer to the questions in the files of the Office, and in the brains of its officials."

Another observer remarked that the Office has even been able to reveal remarkable facts concerning such a vexed question as the economic productivity of a wife, for he noted in one of its studies—that on "Women in the Economy of the United States"—it was able to establish that the value of the production of a typical farmer's wife in the State of Michigan, estimated over a period of thirty years, totalled £7,000, and that on the basis of comparison with the Michigan farmer's wife British housewives show a production of £27,000 million sterling, or an annual value of £8,800 million. As the astonished commentator remarked when he wrote his report: "All other forms of business shrink to insignificance in comparison, the biggest business in Great Britain is housewifery."

The researches of the Office, however, are not confined to subjects which are on the agenda of a forthcoming Conference, or which have already been made the subject of an international labour treaty. It takes a permanent interest in the great basic and long-term problems of industry, labour, agriculture, and commerce, and since these problems in themselves are often the sport of economics, complex finance, and also ideology as well, the Office closely follows developments in every important subject in all fields which may affect the questions in which it is primarily interested.

Over and above the functions which are necessary preliminaries to the proceedings of the Conference, the

adoption of labour treaties, and the securing of their ratification and application, the Constitution provides as one of the main activities of the Office "the collection and distribution of information on all subjects relating to the international adjustment of conditions of industrial life and labour, and the editing and publishing in French and English, and in such other languages as the Governing Body may think desirable of a periodical dealing with problems of industry and employment of international interest."

The library of the Office is the most complete of its kind in the world. Its catalogue includes about 400,000 books and pamphlets in more than 30 languages, and the number would increase by some 600 new works every week, if everything was retained which was sent in to it. In addition, nearly 5,000 periodicals, from more than 100 countries, and in 45 languages, are received by the Office, and used by its various services for their information and for reference.

The unrivalled resources of the Office are placed at the disposal of the world, chiefly by means of its own publications. These include a weekly paper, *Industrial and Labour Information*, a monthly review, *The International Labour Review*, texts and translations of new laws relating to labour, *Legislative Series*, two year-books—*The I.L.O. Year-Book*, and *The Year-Book of Labour Statistics*, and a number of non-periodical works—*Studies and Reports*—embodying the results of special investigations, or of the day-to-day research work of the Office. Nearly all of these publications are issued in English and French, and many are reproduced in German, Spanish, Japanese, and other languages. A complete set of the publications issued in an average year comprise about 30,000 printed pages.

In order to maintain direct and continuous contact with various countries, the International Labour Office

has established Branch Offices in China, France, Great Britain, India, and the United States.

There are also National Correspondents in the capitals of Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Chile, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Mexico, Poland, Rumania, Spain, Uruguay, Venezuela, and Yugoslavia.

The Office's activities are housed in a building of uncompromising exterior standing on a site given by the Swiss Government on the shores of the lake.

All this costs, in an average year, some half a million pounds, and it is paid for by the States Members on a *pro rata* basis devised upon a complicated estimate of the relative wealth and importance of the States Members. The greater part of these subscriptions are paid in the first place to the Treasurer of the League of Nations as part of the ordinary League subscription, but States which are not members of the League, such as the U.S.A. and Brazil, for example, pay their fees direct to the Office.

CHAPTER X
ACHIEVEMENT

"Much done and more designed and more desired."
—WORDSWORTH.
Evening Walk.

THE International Labour Organization has now been in service for twenty years. What has it accomplished for the nations?

The intention of the International Labour Organization was to try to obtain improvement in labour standards everywhere by the joint endeavours of Governments, Employers and Workers.

Have the members, who twenty years ago started

"with united thoughts and counsels, equal hope
and hazard in the glorious enterprise,"

really profited by all the international effort that has concentrated around the International Labour Organization since its beginning?

A glance at the world indicates that it has not transported them all from earth to an industrial paradise. Let us see what it has been able to achieve through its chief instrument, the setting up of international labour treaties and recommendations.

Viewing the shipwreck of human happiness that followed the industrial revolution and the unleashing of the terrifying forces of greed and exploitation—the dragon crop of great scientific discoveries and technical progress—the International Labour Organization adopted

that time-honoured rule of the sea—"Women and Children first."

WOMEN AND CHILDREN

The international code established by the International Labour Organization for the protection of women and children contains eleven international treaties, and a number of recommendations which have been widely, one might almost say universally, ratified and applied. Here is a brief summary of this code, which lays down that:

"A system of compulsory widows' and orphans' insurance should be established for industrial or commercial workers, etc.

"A system of compulsory widows' and orphans' insurance should be established for agricultural workers.

"Children under 14 should not be employed in industry.

"No one under 18 should be employed in industry at night.

"Children under 14 should not be employed in agriculture if their school attendance would suffer thereby.

"Children under 14 should not be employed on vessels. No one under 18 should work as a trimmer or stoker on a vessel.

"Children under 14 should not be employed in non-industrial occupations.

"Women should not be employed in industry or commerce for six weeks before and six weeks after childbirth, and should be paid maternity benefits.

"Women should not work in industry at night.

"Women should not be employed on underground work in mines."

There is no doubt that following the increasing acceptance of this code, an immense improvement has taken place in the status and condition of working women and children all over the world. This acceptance is a direct result of international effort, which provided reasonable standards and reasonable security from competition and criticism for those who were prepared to adopt them. It will have a similar effect in future, no matter what the future may bring.

SOCIAL INSURANCE

There is no more valuable antidote to the poisons of industrialization, no stouter armour against the slings and arrows of outrageous economy, no more efficient and democratic weapon in the armoury of social progress than insurance. Through it the worker can be protected against accident, disease, unemployment and old age. He cannot, of course, be protected against death, but his family can at least be spared the crushing effect of funeral expenses on a small budget at the very moment when the chief source of revenue disappears. Insurance has so far provided the only successful method of obtaining collective social security. It is a scientific development of the age-old relation between the herd and the individual. It succeeds where other forms of collective security have so far failed because it insists on an immediate and continuing sacrifice from the individual *before* and not when the necessity for protection arises.

In fourteen international treaties, which have been given over a hundred ratifications by States Members, the International Labour Organization has codified in efficient instruments the most important aspects of social insurance. Its experts are acknowledged to possess the greatest body of knowledge in all branches of this great social art which has ever yet been accumulated by any

single organization: they have given expert advice to national institutions all over the world in all stages of development, from the complex streamline models of the super-industrial countries to the more primitive improvisations of States that are beginning to suffer the growing pains of industry. This is a subject which is constantly changing as the tireless ingenuity of the human mind seeks fresh solutions both for the new and for the familiar problems in the field, which range from the method of providing medical assistance in rural areas to systems for the efficient maintenance and investment of gigantic financial reserves.

At one of its most successful meetings, the Conference of American States Members of the International Labour Organization held at Santiago-de-Chile in January 1936—which incidentally provided the first reasonable solution of the problem of regional activity in a universal organization—the Conference passed a draft resolution setting forth the fundamental principles of social insurance, which will remain an authoritative and almost biblical statement for the world for many years to come. It admirably sums up the aims and doctrine of the Office in this field. It reads as follows:

Fundamental Principles of Social Insurance

1. Wage earners obtain the means of livelihood for themselves and their families by the regular exercise of a trade in the service of an employer, and any cessation or interruption in their work, whether resulting from industrial accident, sickness, old age, invalidity, premature death or involuntary unemployment, destroys the economic basis of the wage-earning family and causes hardship and privation for the worker and his dependants.
2. A system of labour regulations to be true to the

dictates of humanity and to the principle of social justice must secure the effective protection of the workers against occupational and social risks.

3. The establishment of compulsory social insurance, as fifty years of experience have shown, is at once the most rational and the most effective means of affording to the workers the security to which they are entitled.

4. Consequently the social legislation of every country should provide one or more schemes of compulsory social insurance covering the risks of industrial accident and occupational disease, sickness, maternity, old age, invalidity, premature death and involuntary unemployment.

5. Every social insurance scheme should aim at:

- (a) Preventing as far as possible the premature loss of earning capacity;
- (b) Curing or alleviating incapacity for work, in order to enable the worker to resume his occupation;
- (c) Providing, by the grant of cash benefits, at least partial compensation for the pecuniary loss resulting from the interruption or cessation of painful activity.

SEAMEN

Throughout the ages the life of the sailor has been regarded with mingled sympathy and apprehension by the landsman. "Those who go to the sea are only four inches from death," said the Greeks, and though the distance has perhaps been slightly increased since then, it is still not great.

The International Labour Office has done its best to supplement the effort of that Providence which is popu-

larly supposed to sit up aloft to keep watch over the life of poor Jack, and now, thanks largely to its work, there is an international code for seamen. This, even if it cannot entirely prevent the disasters which occur when some "furie or malicious hagge lets loose the Eolian bag," does at least endeavour to diminish the dangers of shipwreck due to lack of sufficient man-power in vessels using the high seas or to lack of sufficient skill amongst improperly qualified officers. Furthermore, if the shipwrecked sailor succeeds finally in evading the evil spell of the "malicious hagge," and gets safely somewhere ashore, an international treaty provides for the continuance of his wages for a period up to two months.

The seamen's code, by a series of nine international treaties, provides amongst other things for the diminution of two of the greatest evils which beset the sailor ashore, namely, those of crimping and pimping. Thus, there is a treaty to provide for the establishment of proper employment agencies and for efforts to ensure fair and easily comprehensible articles of association, whilst a particularly important recommendation provides for the welfare of seamen in port. Another important treaty deals with the question of repatriation at the conclusion of a voyage; yet another with the vital question of hours of work on board ship and manning, that is to say, the establishment of a reasonably sufficient crew for the size of the vessel concerned; others again deal with the setting up of standards for the minimum professional capacity for officers and with the complicated question of holidays with pay for seamen.

If anybody considers that international legislation on, for example, the question of manning is unnecessary, he has only to look at the official reports of recent maritime disasters. Here, for example, is an extract taken from the report of the Board of Trade Inquiry into the loss of the British oil tanker *La Crescenta*, which went down

with all her crew early in December 1934. The official report states:

"In either of the emergencies to which reference has been made one serious factor in the possible saving of the ship was the man-power available both of the engine-room staff and deck hands.

"Why five engineers, four firemen, and two greasers were considered a proper staff in 1930, and in 1934 three engineers, four firemen, and one greaser, is as difficult to understand as it is to suppose that to dispense in the latter years with the ship's carpenter, the boatswain, two stewards, a cook and a cabin boy could have no serious effect on the sufficiency of the crew as a whole to do the ship's work and also to have reasonable intervals for rest."¹

The International Labour Organization, then, has done its best to prevent the sailor from what Smollett referred to as "earning his money like a horse and spending it like an ass."

AGRICULTURAL WORKERS

It is easy, as sailors so often do, to turn one's thoughts from the sea to the farm. The work of the International Labour Office for agricultural workers—another great subdivision of the world of toil—has also been important. Reference has already been made to the success of Albert Thomas, the first Director, when he established the competence of the Organization to deal with agricultural questions against the opposition of the French Government of the time. The construction of an international agricultural code, however, obviously presents much

¹ *I.L.O. The Unregarded Revolution*, p. 64. (Quoted by Kathleen Gibberd.)

greater difficulties than is the case for ordinary industrial workers and for the special categories already mentioned. Although in this important branch of human activity, as in all others, the tendency has been towards greater rationalization and mechanization, and although the effects of these processes have nowhere produced deeper or more radical changes, yet the tilling of the soil still differs vastly from the ordinary processes of manufacture. Agriculture is necessarily subject to all kinds of special conditions, which make, for example, the fixing of hours of work, organization of unemployment, insurance, protection against accident and sickness and the problem of labour inspection very much more complicated than in the case of industry, commerce or mining.

The work of the Organization as regards agricultural workers has, therefore, largely consisted in endeavouring to extend and adapt treaties—such, for example, as those on insurance and women's and children's work—to them, and in providing separate instruments in cases where the general treaties covering labour questions have excluded agricultural workers.

Some fourteen international instruments referring particularly to agriculture have been adopted by the Conference, including, in addition to those of the type outlined above, treaties and recommendations dealing with vocational education and living-in conditions.

In recent years, the Organization has set up an important Agricultural Committee, which is composed of a large and varied panel of experts representing all branches of agriculture and all parts of the world. The work of this Committee is one of the most interesting of the more modern developments of the Organization, which will perhaps in future years be called upon to take an even more active interest in questions a little outside the ordinary industrial orbit, such as rural hygiene and nutrition.

NATIVE LABOUR

Another of the important and specialized activities of the International Labour Organization is that which deals with the problem of native labour in Africa, and it is particularly in connection with the gradual suppression and curtailment of compulsory labour for indigenous workers that the Office has succeeded in placing definite successes to its credit.

This activity results from declarations in the Peace Treaties to the effect that the well-being and development of backward peoples form a sacred trust of civilization.

The International Labour Office has a special department for the study of native labour problems, and through its research work and treaties on this subject it has gone very far towards securing the complete abolition of forced labour for private profit, a practice not far removed from slavery, which lent itself to remarkable abuses.

Where forced labour as a temporary measure is still allowed to be used by the local administrations in undertakings of a public works' character that are of a beneficial nature for the inhabitants, strict practical codes for its regulation have been elaborated, and are applied in agreement with the native labour services of the various colonial Powers. The Office has also succeeded in obtaining general agreement for international ameliorative measures concerning the whole question of recruiting and the general conditions of native labour.

MIGRANTS

Yet another category of workers of a very international type is that of migrant workers. The Organization has passed a number of treaties providing for the medical

inspection of migrants, for the proper compilation of migration statistics, for the protection of female migrants travelling from one country to another, and—a more recent development—through its technical services has greatly contributed to the elaboration of improved technique dealing with the difficult problem of emigrant settlement and colonization.

WHITE-COLLAR WORKERS

The Office deals also with professional workers, employees and all the gamut of what are known as white-collar workers. Here again, it has been able to stimulate better conditions of employment and to set up organizations allowing of international discussion of problems common to such workers in all countries, such, for example, as the vexed question of dismissal indemnities, and the rights of association.

THE MAIN BODY

However interesting and important may have been the work of the Organization on behalf of all these special categories, naturally its most important effort has been in favour of what may be described as the industrial infantry, the vast armies of workers in all the manifold branches of light and heavy industry, mining and transport.

In dealing with this, the hard core of the industrial problem, important treaties have been set up on such questions as hours of work, rights of association, industrial hygiene, night work in bakeries, minimum wage-fixing machinery, marking of weight on packages transported by vessels—the idea being to prevent injury to the workers who have to handle them—holidays with pay—a reform which is gradually becoming generalized

and which already affects many millions of workers in the different countries—labour inspection and, in the field of safety, protection of dockers against accidents and special safety provisions in the building trade.

The question of hours of work alone, one of the most difficult and important of all questions in industrial practice, has been discussed over and over again at International Labour Conferences. There is practically no sector of this problem which has not been explored by the International Labour Office experts and, apart from the technical aspects, it has naturally, in view of its repercussion on the costs of production and on the economic situation generally, been the subject of titanic ideological battles.

Its relation to the problems of technological unemployment, mechanization and fatigue in industry has been discussed and fought over again and again in the International Labour Conference, on the one hand by those who claim that reduction of hours of work will decrease unemployment and, on the other, by those who assert that by producing a rise in the cost of production it will increase it. The right of the workers to a part of the increased profits available owing to mechanization has also been a continuous theme in these discussions.

The battle is still raging, but already it can fairly be claimed that the International Labour Office has done a great deal to ensure the generalization of the eight-hour day, has protected workers who benefited from that system from having their hours prolonged in times of crisis and depression, and is slowly but surely educating the world to the real need for a progressive reduction of hours of work in view of the increasing mechanization and general speed-up of industry, which undoubtedly results in over-fatigue of a serious character in certain industries, a factor which must be admitted as being

deleterious to the general health and happiness of industrial communities.

Thanks very largely to the floodlighting of this question by the International Labour Office, there has been a gradual change in the attitude of progressive employers to this aspect of the problem of hours of work, and it is gradually being realized that the excessive hours of the old-fashioned enterprise actually decrease industrial efficiency. The introduction of pauses in the middle of work spells; the installation in factories of scientific methods of lighting and heating; the change-over from day-work schedules on a forty-eight hour week basis to shift systems covering a total working week of eighty-two hours; the lessening of the noise evil in the textile industry by the use of "ear defenders": all these reforms have proved effective in increasing output and efficiency and have received impulsion from the studies of the Office.

Some of its treaties in this field have received very sparse ratification, but disappointing though this may be to those who favour such measures, there is no doubt that the mere existence of an international labour treaty on the international statute book does a great deal to ensure a shortening of hours in individual industries and in individual countries as soon as circumstances permit and very much sooner than would have been the case if there had been no international pronouncement or interest taken in the situation.

The work of the Office in the field of labour and cost of living statistics, industrial safety and industrial hygiene, is recognized by experts all over the world as of the utmost importance and value. Diseases such as silicosis, lead poisoning and all the numerous ills which have accompanied the progress of modern industry have been studied at Geneva by competent experts during the

last twenty years, and the technical services of the Office have disseminated the results of the latest practice in the various countries. The Office has, through publications, study and conference, done much to ensure the further exploration of the subject and to make available for all the world the latest discoveries in treatment and prevention.

Sixty-two labour treaties and a considerable number of recommendations have been drawn up by the International Labour Office and the International Labour Conference.

Eight hundred and thirty ratifications of these treaties have been registered at Geneva. These treaties are subject to revision at the end of ten years, and in some cases their revision has already produced a certain elevation in the standards originally laid down. For the last thirteen years an effective system of mutual supervision of the application of these treaties has been instituted, and for many countries which were just beginning their industrial life, complete codes have been elaborated through the assistance of the International Labour Office.

As a result of the insurance treaties of the Office, dental clinics and medical centres have been established in many areas, which formerly were backward, and it is also true to say that in many countries greater harmony between Government, workers and employers has been established through their collaboration in Geneva than could otherwise have been the case.

The International Labour Conference has provided a world Parliament at which the voices of industry have been raised in order that the economic policies of Governments might be framed in such a way as to take their views into consideration.

The Report of the Director of the Conference is a social document of the greatest value: it is more than a yearly

summary of industrial and labour conditions and social progress, for in it the Director is enabled to make an appeal for support for those social policies without which the work of the Office cannot be complete.

Nor can the influence of the Organization in matters of labour legislation be limited to the actual number of ratifications registered. In many cases the International Labour Organization has promoted national labour legislation even though the nations concerned have not found it possible to ratify certain of its treaties.

For example, in consequence of the treaty on the night work of women which was adopted by the Conference in 1919, the Japanese Government decided to abolish the night work of women. A technical difficulty—the time when night might be said to begin—in the Japanese law renders it legally impossible for the Japanese Government to ratify the treaty on the basis of that legislation. In fact, however, Japanese practice is equivalent to that of the treaty, and that this is so is largely due to the influence of the international standards set up.

Again, labour legislation in Egypt has been definitely influenced by the various missions which the International Labour Office has sent to that country, although as yet Egypt, which has been a full member of the Organization for a short time only, has not found it possible to ratify any of the labour treaties set up.

It is thus not always easy as regards national legislation to distinguish cause and effect. The Hansards and official journals of the new industrial countries, as well as those of the older established members, abound in references to the publications of the International Labour Office and to the proceedings of its Conference.

The discussions that have followed the submission of the International Labour Organization treaties to Parliaments and competent authorities in accordance with the obligations of the Constitution, have very often, even if

ratification has not ensued, had the effect of so focussing public opinion upon the shortcomings of national legislation that effective national action has followed later.

Possibly, however, the most important of the imponderable results of the twenty years' work of the International Labour Organization has been the maintenance and increase of the recognition of the *importance* of labour and industrial problems. In many countries the ministries and departments dealing with these subjects used to be the Cinderellas of the national hierarchies and were quite frankly looked down upon by their longer established colleagues in the ministries of finance, foreign affairs and the like. When these latter departments found that their colleagues were occasionally being summoned to Geneva to attend meetings of committees and conferences as representatives of the nation, they began, to use the popular phrase, to sit up and take notice of labour and industry. When, furthermore, representatives of the International Labour Office enjoying diplomatic privileges visited their countries and were received by the highest in the State, the overworked and underpaid officials in embryonic labour departments, who in connection with these visits were often hastily summoned to advise ministers and dignitaries with whom previously they had had the greatest difficulty in obtaining contact, felt themselves fortified and began to chuck a higher and more hierarchical chest in their subsequent interviews with the treasuries and distributors of the national revenue. The same is true of employers' and workers' organizations, which, as a result of their coming into international prominence, obtained increased national importance.

Various classes of officials have contributed to the success of the International Labour Organization. However well organized and expert its international

staff may have been, and however brilliant the leadership inside the Organization, it should never be forgotten that the relations between the International Labour Office and the Conference and the Governing Body resemble those between a Civil Service and a national Parliament. Even the most brilliant Civil Servants cannot administer unworkable legislation and they cannot openly sponsor and initiate great reforms or pilot them through Parliamentary Committees. This is the province of the political side of things and unless it is well and efficiently done, Civil Servants are powerless. The Members of Parliament in this case are the national officials who come to the deliberations at Geneva. They come from Government services and from employers' and workers' organizations. Their contribution to the work and successes of the Office has been enormous and it has been made by men who have not received international remuneration for their work. Continually throughout the years they have used their intelligence, devotion and energy in committee, conference and group meeting, not always exclusively on behalf of the particular interest they represented but very often indeed on behalf of the ideals for which the International Labour Organization stands. They have collaborated with the Director and the higher officials of the Office freely and frankly. No organization can be greater than those who maintain it. The International Labour Organization has succeeded in attracting to its manifestations and activities some of the very finest types of the *national* international workers, employers and Civil Servants. Their contribution has been of primary importance.

The International Labour Office itself owes its success and existence to the work and activities of three remarkable men: Albert Thomas, dynamic Frenchman, idealist, politician and what the French call *l'homme complet* if ever there was one; Harold Butler, cast in a quieter,

scholarly mould, efficient and industrious administrator, a typical Civil Servant, who in his work succeeded in obtaining the esteem of all who were associated with him, and, like Albert Thomas, a man of wide and all-embracing interests, whose general output can seldom have been equalled; and, finally, Edward Phelan, an Irishman, trained in the strict tradition of the British Civil Service, who worked loyally with both Thomas and Butler, whose contribution to their success was more than considerable, and who succeeded in combining the brilliant qualities of both.

Outside the International Labour Office stands a monument to Albert Thomas. It is the work of the sculptor Paul Landowski. In this monument the workers of the world are evoked by a group of four statues. A European factory worker leans on the tongs which extract from the furnace the metal he is to forge; the African holds the hoe which he uses to break up the soil; the Asiatic is represented by a Chinese coolie, and the American by a fur-trapper. Round the plinth there are four bas-reliefs, and that facing the International Labour Office recalls Albert Thomas as thousands saw him speaking at the International Labour Conference. Above the monument are some words of his, which best explain the spirit which has produced the achievements of the International Labour Organization:

My life cannot be taken from me; I give it freely.
Courage and faith are needed for human organizations when they are first set on foot.

Labour should stand above all the battles of competition: it is not an article of commerce.

The men of my day have a sacred duty: to make peace.

PART III: THE FUTURE
DEMOCRATS, DICTATORS AND MEN OF
GOODWILL

"Though I don't like the crew, I won't sink the ship. I'll do my best to save the ship. I'll pump and heave and haul and do anything I can, though he that pulls with me were my enemy. The reason is plain. We are all in the ship and must sink or swim together."

—DIZOR.
The Review.

CHAPTER XI

THE FUTURE: COLLABORATION OR CHAOS?

" Brother, brother, we are both in the wrong."

—GAY.

Beggar's Opera.

THE upward surge of the International Labour Organization in the first fifteen years of its existence was caused by the universal reaction from war and the more general recognition of international interdependence: it was maintained by the innate and eternal desire of man satisfactorily to control the forces that his energies release. The urge to Utopias lies not only in the natural desire for happiness and contentment, but also in the human passion for regulation and control of the important factors in existence, and there are few more important factors in life than work and wages. Very few men are, of their nature, anarchists. Most believe in superior will and intelligence and are prepared to follow it, and in all who think, there is a permanent protest against the stupidity of waste, oppression and poverty in the midst of potential plenty, and in the machine age there is a rooted and increasing dislike of all forms of inefficiency. To this, as well as to other causes, is undoubtedly due the rise of authoritarian systems in countries where national conditions, character and temperament resulted in the stultification of democracy.

With the increased consciousness of the fact of interdependence—brought within the scope of the meanest

intelligence by the existence of the telegraph, the radio and the aeroplane—there was, at the beginning of the peace, a natural tendency to take too much for granted, that obstacles and barriers to efficient world organization no longer existed, and that the frowning walls of prejudice, self-sufficiency, obscurantism and obstruction would fall before the trumpet blasts of international conferences.

In the view of many, the Great War had been caused by insufficient democracy and lack of internationalism. That is why peace began with a general feeling that democracy and internationalism were two good things of which there could not be too much, and that if only there was enough of them all difficulties would disappear in a very short space of time.

Both the League and the International Labour Organization were supported by vast masses of war-weary and democratically trained people who sincerely thought that these new institutions were capable of performing miracles. Indeed, it is fair to say that if they had realized at the time the essential limitations of international action, they would not have been half so interested in the new machines which, in their turn, would certainly have lacked the initial push which launched them with such a fair and following wind. Those who did realize these limitations usually thought it politically unwise to do more than hint at their scepticism and for this it is difficult to blame them, for they would not have been listened to and would certainly have been vilified by the enthusiasts, for mankind, and particularly the Anglo-Saxon element, is still sufficiently uncivilized and undeveloped to prefer to live for the moment in a comfortable illusion rather than to accept and work upon the unpleasant inferences which result from the facing of disagreeable facts.

Both the League and the International Labour

Organization, then, began their operations in too optimistic an atmosphere and with too ambitious a conscious and unconscious programme, and their adherents were allowed and far too often encouraged by those who should have known better, to see in them a kind of international patent medicine capable of eliminating—without demanding radical and unpopular changes in the daily lives of the patients—all the various and long-standing ills of humanity in a few successive doses.

The League of Nations suffered more from this easy optimism than did the International Labour Organization. That was because the ideal of collective security always seemed—until the tests which broke it—something which would be achieved by such a vast majority of *other* nations that, when hastily considering its implications, no individual national ever quite realized that his own share might suddenly become unwelcome, alarming and perilous. In the case, however, of the ideal of social and industrial betterment which was the *raison d'être* of the International Labour Organization, even the most convincing visionary was unable entirely to persuade his audience that any nation could achieve satisfactory progress without considerable effort and sacrifice simply by taking repeated doses of the Geneva potions.

Furthermore, the International Labour Organization section of international public opinion was continually subjected to cold douches regarding practical possibilities administered by persons who were an integral part of the Organization itself, namely, case-hardened employers, hard-headed and unromantic public officials conscious of their responsibilities, and very often experienced trade-union officials, all of whom in their own countries had had bitter experience of the difficulties of running before you can walk and of the unexpected deficiencies in practice of even the most brilliantly argued panaceas for poverty.

Thus it was that the International Labour Organization started in a slightly more realistic atmosphere than did its parent organization, and from the beginning it had the great advantage of having to deal less with political spellbinders or evasive diplomats—though, of course, it had its own share of these—and more with technical experts interested in the international repercussions of their speciality.

This is one of the reasons why the International Labour Organization has succeeded in escaping, to a certain extent, the worst effects of the great wave of disillusion which at present threatens to engulf the League and which springs from a tardy realization of the present limitations of internationalism, of the inevitable weakness of international institutions, and of the necessity for individual and national sacrifice if they are to be preserved.

To a certain extent also, the International Labour Organization succeeded in conferring upon its members more positive benefits, skilled technical collaboration, reasonably acceptable international solutions for national labour problems and so on, than did the League, and it is, of course, a fact that no international institution can hope to survive if defection from it is unaccompanied by any loss of service or advantage or by any more serious disadvantage than freedom from the necessity of having to pay a subscription! If a new League arises it *must* provide definite and exclusive service advantages to members.

If, however, the International Labour Organization shares have to a certain extent escaped the general depreciation of League stock, yet, alas, it cannot be said that it is now in a stronger position than it was five years ago.

In spite of its really great achievements, in spite of its good renown in the democratic countries, even taking

into consideration its technical nature and possible non-political world appeal, which at one time brought it nearer complete universality than any comparable international institution, it too has come to a crisis in its affairs.

Even the great and heartening fact of successful and fully implemented North American membership, even the enthusiastic support of its work by the Latin-American nations, many of whom have ceased to belong to the League, even the tremendous and growing interest of the representatives of millions of Asiatic workers in the hope of social amelioration which it holds out for their constituents, even the continuing support of democracies great and small, even the liberal collaboration of countries in a middle position between the two conflicting ideologists, even all these cannot compensate for the absence of collaboration, not to mention membership, of the vast and powerful dictatorial nations in Europe. Sixteen million industrial workers in Germany are excluded from its sphere of influence. Four and a half million Italians no longer send any representatives to its deliberations, and Japan, the greatest industrial power in Asia, has ceased to collaborate.

These nations have abandoned the League, have laid aside democracy and are actively engaged in trying to persuade all the nations within their orbit to take the same course.

It is possible to imagine the International Labour Organization as a flourishing world institution even without the League, though industrial harmony cannot ever be independent of peace between the nations and a major war would deal the International Labour Organization such a staggering blow that it might cease to have any practical meaning; it would, in any case, necessitate the cessation of really important operations until the madness had ceased.

Social progress may continue even amidst a mad race for armaments because, by a curious law of compensation, rearmament does provide employment, and even a spurious and short-lived prosperity, though, of course, there must be eventually a deleterious reaction upon social standards.

But can the International Labour Organization expand when the influence of democracy is contracted? Is it so bound to democracy that it must sink or swim with it?

Is it possible for dictators and democracies to co-operate together in the International Labour Organization in its present form?

There are many who think that the very stuff of democracy is so interwoven in the fabric of the Constitution that it is almost impossible to contemplate the return of the dictatorships without so radically changing the character of the Organization that the democracies themselves would cease to regard it with either enthusiasm or interest.

The problem is obviously difficult, but perhaps not quite impossible of solution, for where there is a will there is a way. In these days of ideological conflict one should, perhaps, say as far as peaceful collaboration is concerned, where there is a bilateral will there is a way, an unsatisfactory way perhaps, but still a way. The essential is, as always in international questions, a spirit of compromise.

There is no doubt about the willingness of the responsible democratic elements in the Organization to do their utmost to make smooth the path of return for the dictatorships and even to serve up a few cherished principles with the fattened calf. Whether there are signs of a desire to return to collaboration on the part of the dictators is more difficult to say. So far there has been little evidence of it. Yet, on the other hand, there are some

indications that the great men are beginning to recognize the strength of respectability and the dangers of always appearing in the rôle of the intransigent iconoclast, internationally, and never in that of the constructive idealist striving in international collaboration for human betterment.

What is the alternative for the International Labour Organization to renewal of co-operation between it and the dictatorships? That the International Labour Organization should continue to be the International Labour Organization of the democratic States? Limited to this it would have a definite and useful future, provided that it was able to produce practical and positive results for its sponsors, and provided, of course, that its members were really convinced of its ideals and efficacy.

In view, however, of the extension of hours of work in some of the dictator countries, and of the fact of competition in world markets which results from this and from similar methods involving the sacrifice of social conquests at home in order to achieve trade domination abroad, it seems obvious that the International Labour Organization must find some method of protecting its democratic members from unfair and anti-social competition.¹ If it cannot do this, its achievement will be slight, it will be unable reasonably to ask its members to raise their standards still higher

¹ The existing law regarding hours of work in Germany provides, it is true, for an eight-hour standard day, but the exception clauses are extensive and provide many loopholes for longer hours, and in Japan the situation is even more unfavourable. Robert Ley, the leader of the German Labour Front at the end of 1938, rescinded until March 31 1939 the labour law clauses forbidding the working of fourteen to sixteen year olds on late night shift in factories, and the working of sixteen year olds on overnight shifts. This decree to step up production in big industries applies to rolling mills, steel plants, shipyards and other heavy industries.—New York *Herald Tribune*, December 30. Cf. also recent increases in hours of work in France.

and it might even be unable to prevent their progressive deterioration resulting from the necessity of keeping on competitive terms with States whose working populations accept sacrifices imposed and demanded of them by the philosophy and apparatus of the dictators.

A possible method of coping with this situation, which may well contain the very gravest dilemma for the democratic countries, would be to arrange through the International Labour Organization a system of social tariff preferences. It might perhaps be inadvisable—though it may also be inevitable—to contemplate the imposition of heavy special duties on products emanating from countries maintaining conditions equivalent to serfage or with very inferior social legislation, but it seems difficult to object to or regard as a *casus belli*—capable of justification even by a propaganda ministry—the establishment of positive advantages in favour of products coming from an association of States with good social standards internationally accepted and internationally controlled.

The establishment of a social index to regulate such preferences is not beyond the bounds of human ingenuity. It might contain a sliding scale and be weighted in respect of hours of work, social insurance, accident prevention and other important points in the social programme, including perhaps minimum wages. Those countries which had ratified the international labour treaties of the International Labour Organization would of course have no difficulty in establishing their rights to participation. In the case of other countries, including the dictator countries, some form of assessment and control of what they claim to be equivalent measures to those in force in the democratic countries would have to be established before they could be admitted to participation in the preferences set up.

The establishment of this method would, of course,

necessitate the revision of a good many trade treaties and might also encounter criticism from the devoted adherents of the most-favoured-nation clause. Matters in the present world, however, change with the greatest rapidity and a scheme of this sort may very soon become vitally necessary, not only for the preservation of the International Labour Organization but for the preservation of its members. It would in any case ensure fruitful activity for the International Labour Organization and would undoubtedly induce in the dictator countries a recognition of the necessity of reconsidering their attitude towards international collaboration.

But how many of the International Labour Organization members of to-day are really democratic, even if an elastic view of their *régimes* be accepted? In how many of them is the workers' movement really free, and how many of them send representatives of both left and right to the International Labour Conference and allow them to speak with real freedom about the social performance of their national Governments? It must never be forgotten that this is one of the real tests of membership and that without the contact and collaboration, free and unhindered of both partners in industry, the work of the International Labour Organization will cease to be as successful, as practical or as efficient as in the past.

If its work is confined to the deliberations of well-meaning technicians from Government services and proceeds without the assistance of those who really live in industry, it will lose at least fifty per cent. of its appeal and a still greater proportion of its efficiency.

If one examines for a moment the composition of the membership of the International Labour Organization as it was when Germany, Russia, Japan and Italy were members, that is to say, when it was practically universal, it will be found that its members could be divided roughly into four categories:

- I. Full democracies;
- II. Semi or suspended democracies;
- III. Authoritarian *régimes*;
- IV. Totalitarian *régimes*.

The members of the International Labour Office pay for its cost on the basis of a distribution of units which, for purposes of practical estimation, forms as good a guide as any other to the natural and general importance in the world of the States concerned. A typical distribution of a contributions budget on this basis shows that of a total of 1,145 units representing the total to be paid by all the countries in the world:

- 52.38% would be paid by States falling under Category I
- 9.78% would be paid by States falling under Category II
- 11.08% would be paid by States falling under Category III
- 26.76% would be paid by States falling under Category IV

However disagreeable the conclusion may be, it will be seen that the excision of all States in Category IV, plus the possibility of further defections from States in Categories II and III, really does make for a very incomplete institution.

As has been said, the desire of democracies for the renewal of collaboration by the States in Categories III and IV may be taken as definite. But again the question must be asked, "Is there any real chance that the dictatorships in Category IV may cease their present totally uncompromising attitude and arrive at a frame of mind sufficiently mellowed to enable them to contemplate negotiations concerning a return to collaboration?"

Can dictatorships ever compromise? And if they can, can they do so openly as would have to be the case in any question of return to the International Labour Organization. That is the question. Up to the present all the States in Category IV have utilized, at one moment or another, all the powers of their Press and their diplomacy

to diminish and weaken the influence of the International Labour Organization even in fields of human endeavour which almost any human being might admit as beneficial, whatever his ideology may be. These fields are those of the joint study of the problems of safety in industry, improvement in industrial hygiene, and the technical aspects of social insurance.

In the pursuit of the raising of their own standard of living which, though it may be obscured at times by political, sentimental and dramatic considerations, must be the aim of every Government, the dictators are elaborating forms of social technique which are giving results which, in certain cases, have been superior to those obtained by the more gentle and less dynamic methods in the democratic countries; such, for example, as the questions of housing and workers' leisure; to name but two.

That being so, can the totalitarian countries and their satellites really contemplate their continued absence from every form of practical technical and humanitarian world effort designed to uplift humanity? It seems in the long run impossible that vast and powerful nations, which have in the past contributed so much to human welfare in the domains of medical research, scientific discovery and the like, should refuse to collaborate internationally in social betterment.

Can the leaders of the populations of these States desire to remain as eternal world bogies, outside all kindly human intercourse and devoured by totalitarianism to such an extent that they are forced to remain completely isolated culturally from any differing form of *régime*? Will they not wish to collaborate one day with countries which are pursuing their ideals by another road? What will these great States do about international collaboration? Will they wish to confine it to nations of their own persuasion and endeavour to set up

a rival international social institution to the International Labour Organization? To do so would be just as foolish as for the democratic States to assume that they have nothing to learn from the dictators in the social field.

Will they continue their present hidden but untiring efforts to destroy the present structure of the International Labour Organization? In the furtherance of this aim they adopt the method of violent criticism and endeavour to seduce or bully from their allegiance the States in Categories II and III. They do not neglect the more subtle method of duplication by means of elaborately stage-managed congresses of some of the more technical activities of the International Labour Organization. Thus, for example, Conferences on housing, social insurance, workers' leisure and the like, have been organized openly as rivals to the activities of the International Labour Organization, and even States in Category I have sent Delegations to them. For the time being they have not succeeded in greatly diminishing the efficiency of the International Labour Office, but the time will obviously come when, if they wish to keep the International Labour Organization alive, the democracies will have—foreign as it may be to their nature and temperament—to say to the dictators, "No, gentlemen, we cannot collaborate with totalitarian organized international efforts unless you are prepared to play with us, or at least stop trying to destroy our own international machine." It should not be forgotten by the members of the International Labour Office that the technique of dictatorship relations as hitherto practised, has, with few exceptions, consisted in demanding reason from the rest of the world and in practising unreason abroad. "Come to our organizations and admire them," they say. "We will endeavour to destroy yours." That cannot go on indefinitely.

What are the lessons to be drawn from this by the International Labour Organization and its members? Firstly, the Organization must be determined not only to continue its existence, but to remain healthy and efficient. Secondly, it must be ready to bargain and to concede. Thirdly, it must demand the unflinching support of its members so that when bargaining does ensue it may be in a strong position.

It must say to its members in Categories II and III, "Be neither bullied nor seduced into the rival camp. He that is not for me is against me. If you do display weakness and limit your support, the International Labour Organization will be so weakened that the eventual bargain concerning the future of international social collaboration between the two sides may be one which will finally result in your own permanent transfer to Category IV."

It should add with particular reference to the States in Categories I and II: "In order to escape the accusation of complete isolation from all forms of international social and humanitarian work, the States in Category IV will doubtless invite you to Conferences and Congresses of a social character. At these manifestations they will as your hosts insinuate that it would not be polite to make any mention or to take any cognizance of what the International Labour Organization is doing in the social field. We understand the dilemma in which you find yourselves when faced with such invitations. It is simply that of the choice between reason and unreason as a method of dealing with unreasonable people. Go then, if you feel you must, but make your acceptance contingent upon the adoption by Category IV States of a similar attitude about the technical Conferences of the International Labour Organization. And when you get there, do not agree to suppress in deference to the susceptibility of your host, as you will be asked to do, all

mention of the great Organization of which you are a member. If you accept this subtle suggestion you will not really cause any impression but one of feebleness. Be impolite and speak up for the International Labour Organization. Category IV States are not impressed by politeness. To act thus will strengthen our hand and your hosts will really respect you much more. Above all, however, if you have only enough money to send Delegations to one Conference, send them to the one called by the Organization of which you are a member."

To the States in Category IV the message of the International Labour Organization must be: "We want you back. We recognize your achievements, but you do not dominate the field. The world is not yet entirely in Category IV. The part cannot be greater than the whole. The International Labour Organization intends to go on existing and working.

"You are so proud of your systems. Are you afraid to expose them internationally? Do you really think it possible to go on existing with the rest of the world regarding you as always unreasonable, always a danger, always insatiate and incapable of reasonable relations with Categories I, II and III in the field of international social endeavour? Such an attitude may appear reasonable for a time, may even be successful for a time, but in the long run the *inconvenients* of world dislike, disapproval and distrust will have a terrible effect upon your commerce, your national morale and your *régime*. What Abraham Lincoln said will remain true in the field of world relations: 'You cannot fool all the peoples all the time.' But you would be welcome back! "

The present period in international relations is so fraught with danger that it is impossible not to recognize that the Organization will certainly have to pass through some difficult years if it is to emerge from the

present welter of ideological and other conflicts in such a form as to enable it to function on a reasonable, universal and efficient basis and to fulfil the work of world-wide social betterment for which it was designed.

In foreign affairs, unceasing efforts are being made by those responsible for the direction of both small and great nations to find some system of mutual existence which would allow the peaceful development of legitimate interests without further bloodshed and destruction. To this end on all sides the possibility of adjustments and even of further concessions is being cautiously studied: concessions of ideology, concessions of prestige and even concessions of interests. All these are being contemplated to avoid sacrifices of blood. In the furnace of struggle, vituperation, propaganda and conflict, one conclusion on the democratic side is being slowly hammered into unyielding shape. It is that concessions must be bilateral and openly so. If the need for give and take in the delicate field of political foreign affairs is slowly obtaining increasing recognition, and if this recognition has so far succeeded in averting world war, surely it is not too much to hope that a similar feeling may begin to pervade what may be described as the foreign affairs of labour, industry and agriculture. If it can take root there, it will slowly spread and provide a basis for complete pacification and appeasement.

Surely it must be possible for the world to come together in fruitful collaboration in the domain of international labour technique so that problems common to all *régimes* may benefit from international study and from the pooling of national technical experience. If they were equally subject to foot-and-mouth disease even lambs and lions would agree to collaborate in technical measures for its suppression. Every nation wishes to improve the standards of its workers. It is as true to-day as it was in 1919 when the International Labour Organiza-

tion began, that maximum progress cannot be attained without international action to cope with the problems of competition and without the stimulus of international study and discussion to make available to all the experience of each.

The International Labour Organization is a great technical, social and humanitarian organization. Ways must be found to enable all the nations of the world to collaborate within it. If the world cannot agree upon a minimum of co-operation in order to realize progress in ideals which, though they may have in the different nations various forms and methods of expression, are surely common to all *régimes*, then indeed there is no future for humanity.

For the moment the debate continues, but the situation is not hopeless.

It is possible for totalitarian States to co-operate with the International Labour Organization.

Although it can hardly be said that Russia has ever played a full and satisfactory part in the work of the International Labour Organization which, it must be admitted, she joined under protest because membership of the International Labour Organization is obligatory upon League members, and although it is true that for many years her attitude towards the Organization was exactly similar to that of Germany to-day, yet she has collaborated to a limited extent.

Certain difficulties, such as the difficulty of separate worker and employer representation at the Conference, have been settled in a practical if not completely satisfying manner by the acceptance of persons in managerial capacities as employers and by the admission of State controlled trade union leaders as workers. Here is one example of difficulties overcome.

The history of the International Labour Organization, however, provides a more striking example of successful

membership by a totalitarian power which succeeded in surmounting all difficulties and in producing results of benefit not only to Italy but also to a good many of the democracies desirous of instituting certain social reforms on a world basis.

It is a fact that for many years Italy was a valued member of the International Labour Organization, and a more valuable member than many States in Categories I and II. Italy collaborated fully in the work of the International Labour Organization and succeeded in attaining a certain leadership therein. Italy coped successfully with the ideological disputes and protests which its presence in the Conference and in the Governing Body raised in view of the majority of democratic opinion in those organizations.

For many successive years the dispute between the Workers' Group and the Italian Government on the point as to whether or not a workers' representative from Italy might be admitted to full participation in the Conferences reverberated and thundered through the peaceful halls of Geneva.

It cannot be said that these disputes were entirely disadvantageous to the Italian cause. It may be affirmed that the Fascist Delegates made admirable use of the opportunities afforded them to obtain international publicity for their theories and results. One thing is certain, the competition between the extreme ideas of fascism and those of the Workers' Group in social questions resulted in a kind of competition in the espousing of social measures which, in its turn, had an uplifting and dynamic effect upon a considerable number of the States in Categories I, II and III, as well as on the activities of the Office itself.

If all the States in the world were now to be members of the International Labour Organization the States in Category IV would find themselves in a powerful posi-

tion. They would no longer be exposed to continual criticism from overwhelming majority groups but would find at least some echoes amongst States in Categories II and III. One may or may not regret this. It remains a fact. It is clear that the verbal battles, the rhetorical blasts and counterblasts which would ensue if the Category IV States were to return in their strength would be remarkable and would render the difficulty of presiding and conducting such debates extremely formidable, but in a very short time the discussion of technical questions and the necessity of joint action in technical and non-controversial fields would produce a certain toleration, for, after a time, even the most hardened ideologue, faced with a definite job of work, feels a tendency "to cut the cackle and get on with the 'osses." When it comes to voting, furthermore, that blessed surcease from parliamentary oratory, the various tendencies and cross-currents in the world which are not only ideological but result from geographical, economic and racial conditions also, would produce some strange bed-fellows. Certain modifications in the existing structure would be necessary, such, for example, as the reorganization of the staff so as to allow for Category IV participation. Category IV countries would, of course, have to be replaced on the Governing Body. The most difficult problem of all would be the representation of Category IV members on the Workers' and Employers' Groups of the Governing Body, for they would have to be elected by the Delegates to the Conference in which the Category IV countries would not necessarily have a majority.

These problems, however, are not beyond the well-known ingenuity of the Geneva conciliator and formula finder. If to this ingenuity is added the determination of the responsible elements in the countries of all categories, to find a solution, then the International Labour Organization may survive and function as a

universal organization, very much as its creators intended it to.

For the moment the emphasis must be upon maintaining the Organization in a healthy condition. The soil must be tilled and fertilized; the sowing of justice must go on even through the seven lean years, for one day—perhaps after a terrifying cataclysm, perhaps gently and imperceptibly—the climate will change and the crop will be bountiful.

The return of the dictators to world co-operation in the International Labour Organization would certainly be a powerful factor in appeasement. But even if there is another war comparable to that of 1914, when it is over the International Labour Organization will have to be restored, rebuilt and enlarged, if there is enough of civilization left above ground to make this possible, for it will be more necessary than ever.

INDEX

- Africa, native labour in, 117
 Agriculture, 99-100, 115-116
 Appleton, W. A., 41-42
 Ashley, Sir William James, 26
 Audiganne, 26, 34

 Barnes, Rt. Hon. G. N., 48, 58
 Benes, Ex-President, 49
 Bismarck, 26, 35
 Blanqui, Louis, 26, 30, 32
 Bourgeois, Leon, 52
 Butler, Harold, 48, 57, 124

 Cecil, Lord Robert, 48, 57
 Children and women, labour
 conditions of, 17, 19, 35, 38,
 51, 106, 110-111, 122
 Congrès International de Bien-
 faisance, Frankfort 1857, 34

 Delevingne, Sir Malcolm, 17,
 48, 50-51, 57
 Disease, Industrial, 38, 120
 Dupcétiaux, 26, 34

 Egypt, 122
 Employers, opposition to
 shorter working week, 19-22;
 Hindley's reply to argument,
 29

 Follows, J. W., references to his
 thesis "Antecedents of the
 International Labour Organ-
 ization," 20, 29, 31
 Fontaine, Arthur, 48, 50-51

 France, 30-33, 34, 49, 50, 51-52,
 91, 98-100
 Franco-Italian Treaty 1904, 51
 Frankfurter, Professor Felix, 56

 Germany, 34, 35, 49-50, 132,
 135
 Gompers, Samuel, 48, 59
 Great War, the, 38-42, 130

 Hahn, Dr., 26, 34
 Henderson, Arthur, 51
 Hindley, Charles, 26, 29-30, 32
 Hobhouse, Sir John Cam, 18,
 19
 Hobhouse Bill, the, 18, 22
 Hours of work, 119-120

 India, 19, 91
 Insurance, Social, 111-113
 Inter-Allied Labour and Social-
 ist Conference 1918, 51
 International Association for the
 Legal Protection of Workers,
 37-40, 49, 50-51, 52
 International Labour Confer-
 ence, first, Berlin 1890, 35
 International Labour Organiza-
 tion Treaty, first, Washing-
 ton 1919, 19
 International Peace Congress,
 first, London 1841, 30
 Italy, 35, 91, 139, 145

 Japan, 19, 56, 91, 122, 133, 135
 Jouhaux, M., 48

- Justice, definitions of. *See* Peace and Social Justice
- Keller, Professor Adolf, 105-106
- Lamennais, Hughes de, 26
- Landowski, Paul, 125
- League of Nations, 44, 48, 55-58, 63, 67, 70, 71, 76, 108, 130-132
- Legrand, Daniel, 26, 31-33, 59, 60
- Ley, Robert, 135
- Lothian, Lord, 61
- Mahaim, Professor, 48
- Mareska, 26, 34
- Ministry of Labour, creation of, 1916, 42
- Morpeth, 18, 19
- Napoleon, message to his troops, 70-71
- Oberlin, Pastor, 33
- Owen, Robert, 26-29, 32, 33, 49, 59, 60, 75
- Peace and Social Justice, the question of their interdependence, 70-75, 130
- Phelan, Edward, 48, 56, 57, 125
- Ribot, Alexandre, 52
- Roosevelt, President, 45
- Russell, John, 26
- Russia, 42, 91, 144
- Seamen, labour conditions of, 113-115
- Shotwell, Professor, 48, 56
- Switzerland, 34, 38
- Technical experts, conference of, Basle 1905, 38
- Thomas, Albert, 51, 98-99, 104, 115, 124-125
- Times, The*, 28, 29, 61
- Totalitarian countries, their attitude to the International Labour Organization, 137-142
- Trade Union Conferences, 1915-1918, 40
- U.S.A., 33, 43-45, 56-57, 64, 91, 108, 133; American Federation of Labour, 40, 48
- Vandervelde, Emile, 48, 51
- Versailles Peace Conference, 42-59, 117
- Villeneuve-Bargemont, 26, 30
- Villermé, 26, 30, 31, 32
- Wilhelm II, Kaiser, 26, 34

INDEX

- Africa, native labour in, 117
 Agriculture, 99-100, 115-116
 Appleton, W. A., 41-42
 Ashley, Sir William James, 26
 Audiganne, 26, 34

 Barnes, Rt. Hon. G. N., 48, 58
 Benes, Ex-President, 49
 Bismarck, 26, 35
 Blanqui, Louis, 26, 30, 32
 Bourgeois, Leon, 52
 Butler, Harold, 48, 57, 124

 Cecil, Lord Robert, 48, 57
 Children and women, labour
 conditions of, 17, 19, 35, 38,
 51, 106, 110-111, 122
 Congrès International de Bien-
 faisance, Frankfort 1857, 34

 Delevingne, Sir Malcolm, 17,
 48, 50-51, 57
 Disease, Industrial, 38, 120
 Ducpétiaux, 26, 34

 Egypt, 122
 Employers, opposition to
 shorter working week, 19-22;
 Hindley's reply to argument,
 29

 Follows, J. W., references to his
 thesis "Antecedents of the
 International Labour Organ-
 ization," 20, 29, 31
 Fontaine, Arthur, 48, 50-51

 France, 30-33, 34, 49, 50, 51-52,
 91, 98-100
 Franco-Italian Treaty 1904, 51
 Frankfurter, Professor Felix, 56

 Germany, 34, 35, 49-50, 132,
 135
 Gompers, Samuel, 48, 59
 Great War, the, 38-41, 130

 Hahn, Dr., 26, 34
 Henderson, Arthur, 51
 Hindley, Charles, 26, 29-30, 32
 Hobhouse, Sir John Cam, 18,
 19
 Hobhouse Bill, the, 18, 22
 Hours of work, 119-120

 India, 19, 91
 Insurance, Social, 111-113
 Inter-Allied Labour and Social-
 ist Conference 1918, 51
 International Association for the
 Legal Protection of Workers,
 37-40, 49, 50-51, 52
 International Labour Confer-
 ence, first, Berlin 1890, 35
 International Labour Organiza-
 tion Treaty, first, Washing-
 ton 1919, 19
 International Peace Congress,
 first, London 1841, 30
 Italy, 56, 91, 133, 145

 Japan, 19, 56, 91, 122, 133, 135
 Jouhaux, M., 48

- Justice, definitions of. *See* Peace and Social Justice
- Keller, Professor Adolf, 105-106
- Lamennais, Hughes de, 26
- Landowski, Paul, 125
- League of Nations, 44, 48, 55-58, 63, 67, 70, 71, 76, 108, 130-132
- Legrand, Daniel, 26, 31-33, 59, 60
- Ley, Robert, 135
- Lothian, Lord, 61
- Mahaim, Professor, 48
- Mareska, 26, 34
- Ministry of Labour, creation of, 1916, 42
- Morpeth, 18, 19
- Napoleon, message to his troops, 70-71
- Oberlin, Pastor, 33
- Owen, Robert, 26-29, 32, 33, 49, 59, 60, 75
- Peace and Social Justice, the question of their interdependence, 70-75, 130
- Phelan, Edward, 48, 56, 57, 125
- Ribot, Alexandre, 52
- Roosevelt, President, 45
- Russell, John, 26
- Russia, 42, 91, 144
- Seamen, labour conditions of, 113-115
- Shotwell, Professor, 48, 56
- Switzerland, 34, 38
- Technical experts, conference of, Basle 1905, 38
- Thomas, Albert, 51, 98-99, 104, 115, 124-125
- Times, The*, 28, 29, 61
- Totalitarian countries, their attitude to the International Labour Organization, 137-142
- Trade Union Conferences, 1915-1918, 40
- U.S.A., 33, 43-45, 56-57, 64, 91, 108, 133; American Federation of Labour, 40, 48
- Vandervelde, Emile, 48, 51
- Versailles Peace Conference, 42-59, 117
- Villeneuve-Bargemont, 26, 30
- Villermé, 26, 30, 31, 32
- Wilhelm II, Kaiser, 26, 34