

# The World's Industrial Parliament

BY

E. M. OLIVER

*Oxford University Extension Lecturer*

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

THE RT. HON. VISCOUNT BURNHAM.

*A short, popular account of the  
International Labour Office set  
up by the Covenant of the  
League of Nations. It should  
be of the greatest interest to all  
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welfare workers, and those  
who are looking for social  
reform throughout the world*

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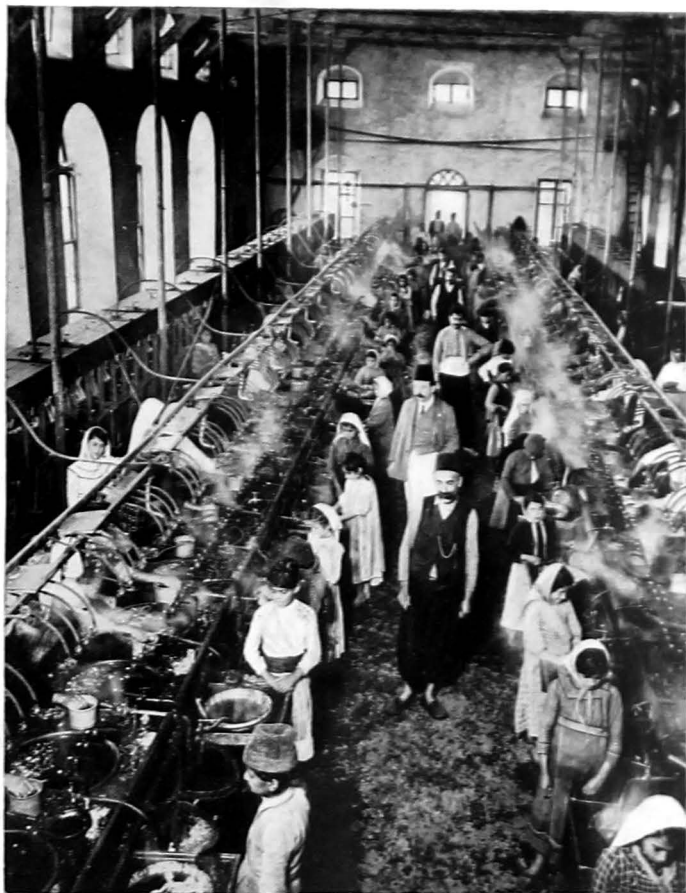
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# THE WORLD'S INDUSTRIAL PARLIAMENT





**CHILDREN AND SILK ON MOUNT LEBANON**

(See note on p. 45)

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# The World's Industrial Parliament

BEING A SHORT, POPULAR ACCOUNT OF THE  
INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION  
SET UP BY THE COVENANT OF  
THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

BY

E. M. OLIVER

OXFORD UNIVERSITY EXTENSION LECTURER

WITH A FOREWORD BY  
VISCOUNT BURNHAM

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## FOREWORD

IN the Treaty of Peace, which formally concluded the greatest war in history, the hopes and aspirations of mankind for a better ordering of things throughout the world were embodied in the Clauses and Covenants constituting the machinery of the League of Nations. They were designed to assuage and to reconcile national animosities and class antagonisms, and to deal with all industrial questions that affect the social welfare of the nations. The International Labour Organization, was set up as an essential and necessary part of the League, not unequal in its real importance to the political side. Its functions were divided between an office in continuous working as a clearing house of industrial information and a radiating centre of industrial inquiry and research, on the one hand, and an annual Conference on the other. In both aspects it has proved itself of sterling value in the relations of capital and labour throughout the industrial states of the world, and Great Britain has taken a leading hand in shaping its course and in increasing its usefulness. As she was the first of the Great States to become industrialized, so she is the most concerned in the humane development of industrial life, both in law and practice.

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"The strength of England," as Savage-Landor truly said a century ago, "lies not in armaments and invasion; it lies in the omnipotence of her industry, and in the vivifying energies of her high civilization." Her industries may no longer be omnipotent, but the energies of her civilization still penetrate the whole range of industry, and her example counts for more than any other in the enactment and administration of labour laws all over the world. With the consciousness of our responsibility in these matters that so closely affect the daily round of the world's work, Mrs. Oliver has set herself to explain this great experiment in international relations. She tells her story simply and well, and having regard to the complexities and contrasts in the laws and customs of labour administration this is no easy thing to do. The inspiration of it all is her well-informed and sympathetic imagination which sees men, women and children at work throughout the world in conditions often below the requirements of modern civilization, kept lower than they ought to be in each country through a fear of international competition. The way to remove the grounds of that fear is to get industrial conditions levelled up all over the world by international agreements to which governments, workers and employers are equally committed, and which they have drafted in common council. How that is done, in ways which do not infringe that national sovereignty of which modern states are still so jealous, is here told with a pleasing lack of technical jargon.

Presiding over two successive annual sessions of the International Labour Conference, I became convinced



## FOREWORD

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that this new contribution to international government is rapidly becoming what is certainly the most powerful lever yet designed for raising the level of industrial civilization. Its human appeal and its scientific soundness are both reflected in Mrs. Oliver's book. I commend *The World's Industrial Parliament* warmly, not only to employers of labour and to the organized workers themselves, but also to the men and women of the general public who are served in their thousand daily needs by industries that are spread the world over, and who sometimes wonder how best to ensure social betterment and equal justice on the same terms, and with similar opportunities for all who carry on the world's work.

BURNHAM.

*January 15, 1925*

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

MY chief sources of material in compiling this book have been, of course, the huge stock of pamphlets, special reports and Conference reports issued by the I.L.O. It would be tedious, and is unnecessary, to specify these in detail. Indeed, my chief excuse for writing this little book is the entire absence (so far as I have been able to discover) of any short, convenient handbook on the absorbingly interesting work of the International Labour Office. I have also consulted the *History of the Paris Conference*, Sir F. Treves's *Lake of Geneva*, M. Ruffin's *Carnet d'un Profane*, Mr. G. N. Barnes's *Address to the Manchester Engineers' Council in November 1923*, and Rabindranath Tagor's *Nationalism*.

My best thanks are also due to Mrs. Napier Malcolm for help with the chapter on Persia ; to Mr. Harding, of the Manchester League of Nations Union, and to Mr. Burge, of the International Labour Office in London, for reports published by the I.L.O., etc. ; to Captain Lothian Small, Labour Secretary to the League of Nations Union, for much valuable help ; and lastly, to the Editor of the *Manchester*

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*Guardian*, for allowing me to quote the following most apt passage from a recent leading article :

We all know that the chief difficulty in improving labour conditions in one country has always been the fear that other countries would become more dangerous competitors. A hundred years ago British employers resisted the effort to shorten the terrible hours worked in our factories on the ground that foreign competition made it too risky an experiment. This was the chief obstacle in the path of men like Shaftesbury and Fielden. To-day, when British industry occupies a less advantageous position, that argument will be used with greater force, and reformers recognize that if the one advantage that the workers have preserved of the improvements that followed the war is to be kept, the battle must not be fought in one country only. The battle is being fought with varying success. It happens that the first Labour Government finds to its hand a weapon that did not exist when Parliament passed the Ten Hours Bill. The International Labour Office, like the League of Nations, of which it is an organ, will be weak or strong according to the wishes and resolution of the Governments that take part in its work. With this weapon a strong and determined Labour Government can defeat the most dangerous of all the attacks on the 8-hour day—the attack on the 8-hour day in Germany. In this case the German capitalist can appeal to the French politician who fears that reparations will suffer if the 8-hour day is kept. The British Labour Government must take the firmest stand on this question, or break faith with the workers here. If the leading industrial nation on the Continent is allowed to relapse, for any reason or on any plea, the cause of labour will be vitally injured throughout Europe. We hope that the Government will choose the most powerful spokesman it can find for Geneva, and that it will give a lead to labour all over the world by fighting this battle as if the issue was in form, as it is in fact, a British issue.

ALTRINCHAM,  
May, 1924.

E. M. O.

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# THE WORLD'S INDUSTRIAL PARLIAMENT

## CHAPTER I

### WHAT IS THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION?

WHAT is the International Labour Organization for? To secure better, more humane and more uniform conditions of labour throughout the world. Its business is "to bring about, in all states, the passing of international labour laws which (with due regard to differences of climate, manners and custom) shall tend to become uniform throughout the world. In this way, the states desirous of progress will not be unfairly handicapped by states which exploit their workers. It is its duty by study, by inquiry and by propaganda, to seek to raise the condition of the workers everywhere; to make of them men freer, happier, better taught, more capable of thought and action, and to create that finer civilization which alone can ensure peace."<sup>1</sup>

"Oh," says the man in the street, with a shrug of his shoulders, "it's all right, I suppose. Let those do

<sup>1</sup> From a leaflet issued by the I.L.O. at Geneva.

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it who are interested in that sort of thing. It's no concern of mine."

"Another society of well-meaning cranks and busy-bodies, wanting to interfere with my business," says the average employer. "Don't expect *me* to be sympathetic, that's all!"

"It'll take me all my time to get decent conditions for our own fellows here in England," says the English workman. "You do our cause nothing but harm in trying to distract our energies by drawing the red herring of 'international labour legislation' across our path. I've no time to bother about conditions in Indian mines!"

But, in answer to the employer, one might say: "Are you not always complaining of the unfair competition of goods (e.g. cottons) made by sweated labour in Eastern countries? How can you ever finally overcome that except by persuading the Governments of those countries to introduce (*and enforce*) a really progressive system of factory laws? You laugh, and say: 'Who is to persuade them?' Certainly not you, as an individual, with your own axe to grind! It can only be done by an association representing all countries. This association must represent both employers and employed, for fairness' sake. But it must also have some official standing, representing the Governments as well, else the Governments will ignore it. Look how little (comparatively speaking) the unofficial Association for International Labour Legislation achieved in its twenty years' existence! Yet it must not have power to override the national Parliament in each country—that would never be tolerated.

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“ You concede that much, do you? Well, we have in fact outlined very clearly the existing I.L.O. at Geneva! ”

To the English working-man one might say: “ What then? Is your talk of fraternity with the workers of all other nations simply humbug? When it comes to the proof, have you no unselfish interest in the appalling conditions against which many of them are now struggling? Again, even from the selfish point of view, is not the competition created by *their* sweated labour one of the chief causes of *your* unemployment? How is it, then, that you are not taking a keener interest in the doings of your own International Labour Parliament? One would expect the workers’ tutorial classes and study circles all over England to be studying this as the essential, vital movement of our time, the focus of their ideals, both for internationalism and for better social conditions. Yet you say: ‘ It is run by capitalist Governments and therefore it is useless; we will have nothing to do with it! ’

“ Think again! From each country goes one man representing the employers, one chosen by the workers, and two representing the Government. In all countries where there is a Labour Government in power (as in your own) <sup>1</sup> that means three representatives of Labour as against (if you like to put it so!) one representative of Capital.

“ Besides, if the I.L.O. does represent the capitalist point of view (which seems to be an obsession with you!) how is it that it has secured the passing of laws to shorten the hours of work, to regulate conditions

<sup>1</sup> May, 1924.

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**in dangerous trades, to extend the benefits of social insurance, to protect women before and after child-birth, and to exclude children of tender age from all occupations?**

**“What we ask of you, as of everybody, is to be fair enough to study the record of the I.L.O. This book (which you can read in an hour) has been written for ‘the man in the street’; to give you and him a working idea of one of the greatest institutions of our time; one which is bound to move slowly, as public opinion does; and which has yet a wonderful record to show for its short life of four years.”**



## CHAPTER II

### HOW DID IT START? WHERE IS ITS HOME?

It was set up by the Treaty of Versailles. That alone is enough, of course, to make it stink in some people's nostrils! Yet, let us be fair, and admit that one part of a treaty may be good, whatever be our opinion about the rest of it. Listen to the preamble of Part XIII of the Treaty, and judge whether Truth inspired it, or not :

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 ;

And whereas conditions of labour exist involving such injustice, hardship and privation to large numbers of people as to produce unrest so great that the peace and harmony of the world are imperilled ; and an improvement of those conditions is urgently required. . . .

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 ;

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, agree to the following :

Then follow the articles defining the constitution of the I.L.O. Of these, article 392 says :

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The International Labour Office shall be established at the seat of the League of Nations as part of the organization of the League.

The Labour Parliament may be called, then, a branch of the League of Nations. But it is an entirely independent branch, except in so far as its expenses<sup>1</sup> are paid by the Secretary-General of the League, out of League funds. It has also the right to send representative witnesses to be present at any sitting of the International Court of Justice or of the Mandates Commission, when questions involving labour conditions or requiring expert labour knowledge, are being dealt with.

### THE HOME OF THE PARLIAMENT.

In all Europe, Switzerland is undoubtedly the country best fitted to be the centre of international effort and social advance. Geographically, it is central: politically it is the home of liberty and democratic government—the first republic in Europe. Thither, to its mountain fastnesses, have come in all ages the political refugees—often the finest intellects and noblest souls of the lands which cast them out. Here Calvin turned aside and laid one of the great foundation stones of the Reformation. Here, in a later age, Voltaire lived and wrote: his devastating philosophy penetrating through France to all the world, and shaking the foundations of the old Society, in preparation for the final upheaval of the French Revolution.

<sup>1</sup> Over and above the travelling and subsistence expenses of the delegates, which are paid directly by the Governments of the respective countries.

To Switzerland Mazzini, noblest of Italian patriots and first preacher of the true internationalism which is based on nationalism, fled for his life from the country which was not worthy of him. Truly, Switzerland has reason to boast herself the home of liberty of thought.

Moreover, this State is in itself a living example of the possibility of close and continuous co-operation between peoples of different race, language, temperament and religion. Three races, German, Italian and French, live here in harmony under one Government ; bound by the ties of a common love of liberty and hatred of tyranny ; welded by the strong history of their struggle against the foreign oppressor into one nation.

What country, then, could be more suitable as the home of the " Parliament of Man ? " Here, in Geneva, the League of Nations has its seat in the " Palace of the Nations " ; and close by is the great house of the International Labour Organization.

## CHAPTER III

### WHOSE IDEA WAS IT?

It is only fair to point out that this institution, containing so many hopeful possibilities, would not have been possible without the preliminary labours of the International Association for Labour Legislation.

This voluntary association was set up in 1900, as the outcome of several Conferences (Brussels 1856, Berlin 1890) which had passed rather ineffectual resolutions in favour of restricting hours of work, especially for women and children all over Europe. It organized a national section in most European countries to work for the standardizing of labour laws throughout the world. Its most notable achievement was the Berne Convention of 1906, which aimed chiefly at doing away with the use of the poisonous white phosphorus in the manufacture of matches. The conclusions of this Conference were eventually ratified by Great Britain, Denmark, France, Germany, Holland, Italy, Sweden and Luxemburg. But it was several years before even this was achieved. The machinery was very slow and clumsy. The delegates sent by the Governments were not plenipotentiaries, but technical experts; and their conclusions were of no legal importance whatsoever. The work had to be

duplicated several times before their conclusions were embodied in permanent treaties. After the Berne Conference dispersed, nothing remained; no permanent body to see that treaties were carried out, and to prepare the ground for future reforms. So those men who were earnestly in favour of standardizing labour conditions saw that some more permanent organization was needed, with official standing as well as expert knowledge.

Plans for such a permanent organization had already been discussed by internationalists before the Great War.

Wars have, of course, always strengthened national feeling and tended to put a stop to international action of any kind. Yet it is a remarkable fact, and proves how far we had already progressed in 1914, that even the greatest war in history was not able entirely to cut off the hostile nations from each other by the vertical lines of national sentiment. The horizontal currents of international sympathy and co-operation still struggled to find their old channels.

Thus we find in 1916 an Inter-allied Labour Conference meeting at Leeds, and demanding the creation of a permanent Labour organization. The International Conference of Labour Parties of 1917 at Stockholm endorsed this. Next year the International Conference of Labour Parties met in London, and laid down their programme, or charter of the principles on which peace ought to be concluded. This included "the international reform of factory legislation."

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At the conclusion of the war, the Socialist Party in every country was alienated from the Government, and intensely suspicious of its intentions. They believed that the only reforms which could result from the war must come by "the Moscow way." Their programme of world reconstruction (abandonment of imperialism, universal free trade, international factory reform, etc.) was based on Wilson's Fourteen Points; and when they saw these betrayed at Versailles, they were naturally loud in their protests. In the bitterness of their disgust, they were perhaps too quick to abandon all hope from the official I.L.O. which was now being set up by the Governments.

Here we come to the inner workings of the famous Conference of Paris in 1919. There has lately been too much wholesale condemnation of all the men who took part in that famous gathering. In spite of all the national and individual self-seeking which was only too apparent there, there was a wave of genuine idealism even among the diplomatists, who are sometimes credited with being "all head and no heart!" There was a consciousness of the supreme debt we all owed to the men in the ranks—to the living and to the dead—a feeling summed up in the saying that they wanted to give the former a country "fit for heroes" to go back to, and to live in.

"War makes clear building spaces," declared the Bishop of Winchester in a sermon on Reconstruction.<sup>1</sup> We, too, felt it at home: the desire and the need to make a fresh start, to build afresh, and to build strongly and truly while we had the chance. And

<sup>1</sup> Preached at St. Mary's, Oxford, August 1917.

the everyday life and labour of everyday working people was the broad, obvious, and most necessary foundation on which to build.

While the Conference of Governments was discussing these things at Paris, the unofficial International Labour Conference<sup>1</sup> was meeting at Berne, and drawing up an International Labour Charter. There was a certain amount of mutual suspicion or dislike between these two bodies. The more extreme Labour men looked with contempt on a Labour organization (the I.L.O.) set up by a Conference of "capitalist Governments": while the diehards on the other side, of the type who will never realize that any industrial legislation is necessary, considered the same I.L.O. as unnecessary and panicky, a sop thrown to Labour in different countries as a counter stroke to the alarmingly revolutionary proceedings at Berne! Nevertheless, there were idealists at Paris; and there was a certain amount of close communication and genuine co-operation between the two Conferences.

There were only two fully accredited Government representatives of Labour at the Paris Conference—Mr. G. N. Barnes from Great Britain, and M. Vandervelde from Belgium. Mr. Gompers, from the United States attended, but not as a plenipotentiary. It is betraying no secrets to say that the constitution of the I.L.O. as finally drafted was largely due to British influence—an achievement of which our country may be justly proud!

<sup>1</sup> i.e. An International Conference of Labour Parties.

## CHAPTER IV

### HOW IT WORKS

THE I.L.O. has three parts, corresponding roughly to our English Parliament, Cabinet, and permanent Civil Service. Let us consider the "Parliament" first. This meets at least once a year. In practice, the meetings already held include :

Washington	..	..	October 1919
Genoa	..	..	June 1920
Geneva	..	..	October 1921
Geneva	..	..	October 1922
Geneva	..	..	October 1923

The 1924 meeting was held at Geneva in June.<sup>1</sup> The meetings generally last only about four weeks—a short enough time for the annual "labour business" of the world.

You will notice that the meeting place, after shifting about the world at first, seems now to have settled at Geneva. Similarly, our first English kings seem to have liked a little variety, and used to hold their Parliaments at Winchester, Oxford, London, or wherever the Court happened to be! The growing body of permanent officials domiciled in London,

<sup>1</sup> For results of this Sixth Annual Session, see Appendix.



however, soon made evident the convenience of the capital as a permanent "rendezvous." Doubtless, it might be more interesting for delegates bent on combining pleasure with business, to make a tour of the capitals of the Old and New World! But the delegates, as one of their chairmen remarked, were "bent on achievement"; they had no time for anything but business, and there was no question but that this could most conveniently be transacted at Geneva, the home of the permanent secretariat of the I.L.O.

What sort of people are the delegates? I have already hinted at this in answer to the "average employer" (page 14). From each country go four delegates—one chosen by the employers' organizations, a second chosen in like manner by the workmen's organizations, and two chosen to represent the Government. Why so strong a representation of the Governments, do you ask? Well, these delegates have to vote on laws which (if passed by the Conference) they will have to take back and recommend to the Governments and Parliaments of their respective nations. Their recommendations would be of little use if they did not imply that a majority of other Governments were in favour of the measure. The English Cabinet might say: "Why should we feel compelled to introduce legislation (which may wreck us in the House of Commons) at the dictation of an unofficial body of employers and employed discussing their concerns at Geneva without having even heard our point of view?"

Some interesting difficulties have arisen occasionally

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in regard to delegates' credentials. For instance, in some industrially backward countries there are no sufficiently organized bodies either of employers or of workpeople to choose delegates. Then that country may either send a delegate whose credentials are constitutionally doubtful (and have to be examined by a Committee of the Conference), or they may simply send two Government delegates unaccompanied. But this is severely discouraged! An interesting point was raised in connection with a Fascist organization in Italy, which includes both employers and workers. The employers chose one delegate from their particular society; then the workers' delegate was elected by the Fascist association. An indignant mathematician immediately pointed out that the workers only had 0.5 of a representative, and the employers 1.5! Another interesting point. In the League of Nations Assembly, all three British delegates have only one vote between them; i.e. voting goes by nations. In the Labour Parliament, on the other hand, voting is by persons; each British delegate has the right to vote as he thinks fit. Some people may immediately conclude that all workers' delegates will of course vote in favour of every reform proposed, and all the employers against it. Even if they did so, the Government delegates as a whole would hold the balance as a neutral body of opinion, considering in their minds what is practicable as well as what is right, and outnumbering the extremists on either side. But, as a matter of fact, employers are not always absolutely class-selfish and short-sighted neither are the workers always without a statesman-

like realization of the practical difficulties involved in the path of reform! The latter do sometimes see the employers' point of view, though some people would have us believe the contrary. As a matter of fact, the debates, though often revealing very strong hostility and bitter feeling in some of the delegates towards particular measures, have been characterized by a great deal of that "round table feeling" which seems the only hope of settling disputes in the twentieth century, whether in industry at home or between nations abroad.<sup>1</sup>

The resolutions passed by the Conference take two forms :

(1) Draft Conventions (*these must have a two-thirds majority*). This is a very important provision. It makes all progress slower, but more sure, because more broadly based. Each member State pledges itself that every Draft Convention shall be laid by its Government before its national Parliament within twelve months (or at the most eighteen months) from the close of the session of the Conference. If the Parliament "ratifies" the principle contained in the Draft Convention, it is the duty of the Government to apply the provisions of the Convention to the country. If it fails to do so, the matter can be brought before the Permanent Court of International Justice.

<sup>1</sup> It is expressly laid down that women, equally with men, should be eligible, either as delegates or technical advisers. In questions especially affecting the labour of women and children, one at least of the advisers should be a woman. Several British women have, at different times, attended the sessions as advisers. Miss Margaret Bondfield has been the first woman to attend as a British Government delegate (1924).

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(2) Recommendations (which must also be passed by a two-thirds majority). These have no binding force whatever on the countries represented. They are simply what their name implies : recommendations. Both Draft Conventions and Recommendations *must* be reported in each country to the Parliament (or Legislative Assembly) within eighteen months. Thus an appeal to public opinion is secured.

The governing body is distantly like our Cabinet at home. Its chief work is to prepare agenda for the annual Conference. It also controls the work of the permanent staff in the I.L.O. office at Geneva. It consists of twenty-four persons—twelve for the Governments, six for employers, and six for workers. The twelve Government delegates are chosen in rather a curious fashion, the idea being to give a proportionate influence to the great industrial nations of the world. Of the twenty-four members of the present governing body, seven are from the British Empire. (In the Conference, of course, Great Britain has exactly the same number of votes as a little State like Hayti.) So, eight out of the twelve Government delegates are chosen by the eight leading industrial States, viz. : Great Britain, France, Belgium, Germany, Italy, India, Canada and Japan. It may be imagined that a good deal of rather acrimonious discussion was necessary before it could be decided which *were* the leading industrial nations !<sup>1</sup>

The Government delegates of the remaining countries choose the remaining four members of the Government group of the governing body. But

<sup>1</sup> But see p. 52.

they are far from satisfied with this arrangement!

The permanent secretariat or Civil Service is housed, as already stated, in a converted school at Geneva. A new building is in course of erection.

Here, a staff of about 300, under the able direction of M. Albert Thomas, are constantly at work on the spade-work necessary for "laying the foundations of social justice." And how terrific is the quantity of their work, and how dull its quality! Consider what it must mean, to spend your days constantly corresponding with Labour and employers' organizations in all countries, gathering in from them statistics—endless statistics concerning, e.g. the state of unemployment, the number of women and young persons engaged in agriculture, the provisions of insurance laws in different countries, employers' liability, the number of accidents in dangerous trades, doctors' reports on the incidence of industrial disease, indemnity for shipwrecked seamen, laws relating to factory inspectors, hours of labour, night work, conditions in mines, etc., etc. The very manner of collecting and comparing statistics from different countries on such a subject as emigration presented such difficulties that it had to be made the chief subject of a whole Conference (Geneva, 1922). But it is all necessary, for it is no use debating on remedies unless you have the facts of the evil present before you, and can judge the comparative success of remedies already tried. And therefore to those who have a vision of a better world for the oppressed, it would seem not inappropriate to apply to this

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daily drudgery of the I.L.O. at Geneva the words  
of Matthew Arnold :

—Of toil unsever'd from tranquillity  
Of labour which in lasting fruit outgrows  
Far noisier works, accomplish'd in repose  
Too great for haste, too high for rivalry.

CHAPTER V  
A TYPICAL CONFERENCE  
(GENEVA, 1921)

As already stated, there have been five Conferences—one every year—since the I.L.O. was set up. But it will be more interesting, and will give the ordinary reader more idea of what these Conferences are really like, if we describe one of them in detail, rather than attempt to outline the history of them all. In many features they resemble one another.

This Conference (1921) was the first to be held at Geneva. In 1919 the delegates had met at Washington, in 1920 at Genoa. But, by now, the advantages of Geneva had become obvious; and it seems likely to be the ordinary meeting-place for the future.

Geneva is a wonderful city—one would hesitate to call it the most beautiful in Switzerland, for that would be a dangerous statement in so beautiful a country! But it is quite beautiful enough for the ordinary visitor to acclaim it with delight as he arrives, from north, south, east or west. It lies at the western end of the lake which bears its name—a sheet of water 45 miles long, nearly 9 miles wide, with a depth, in some places, of over 1,000 feet. On fine days,

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the lake is like a calm blue mirror reflecting the eternal snows from the mountains which rise serene and majestic on its southern side, towering in the central distance to the grandeur of Mont Blanc. On the north side the mountains are lower, and their slopes are covered with vine-clad terraces. The Rhone, emerging from the lake, rushes through Geneva at a tremendous speed. It is somehow unlike any other river one has ever seen. As Ruskin says of it :

The Rhone flows like one lambent jewel ; its surface is nowhere, its ethereal self is everywhere, the iridescent rush and translucent strength of it blue to the shore, and radiant to the depth. Fifteen feet thick, of not flowing, but flying water ; not water neither, melted glacier rather, one should call it ; the force of the ice is with it, and the wreathing of the clouds, the gladness of the sky, and the continuance of Time. (*Præterite.*)

The city is modern, clean and up-to-date, yet with a wonderfully interesting history, into which we have not time to enter here.

But the men who were literally making history—the delegates to the Third Labour Parliament of the world—were housed—oh, bathos!—in a Kursaal or Variety Theatre lent for the occasion. This meeting-place offended the sensibilities of “some worthy Puritans—not all English!” as a mischievous French journalist remarked! However, this difficulty had to be overcome, for did not the Kursaal compare favourably on the score of economy, at any rate, with the meeting-place of the League of Nations Assembly, for which a rent of 60,000 francs had been paid?



The Assembly of the League, by the way, had only concluded its sittings three weeks previously. It is perhaps rather a mistake to have two Conferences so near together.<sup>1</sup> One writer thinks that the newspaper readers of the world can hardly stand the strain of having to assimilate technical international news from Geneva for three months on end. Judging by the small amount of space devoted in the English Press, at any rate, to the proceedings of either the Assembly or the I.L.O., I do not think my fellow-countrymen are likely to suffer from brain fag on this account!

At all events, the Kursaal included all that was wanted—rooms for Committee, for the Press, telephone, etc., and a commodious Central Hall. The big table in the latter was (for a wonder!) *not* covered in green baize, which would have been typical of the old diplomatic gatherings! This departure from precedent was regarded hopefully by many, as symbolical of the greater amount of freedom, life, movement, and the business-like earnestness which distinguished this Conference from the older diplomatic Congresses, or even the more formal sessions of the League of Nations Assembly!

The Conference was fortunate in securing as its chairman Lord Burnham, proprietor of the *Daily Telegraph*. Here was a man who professed himself beforehand very doubtful of the utility of any Labour Conference between the nations; but his experience as chairman at Geneva in 1921 converted him! All the delegates speak of him in terms of the highest praise: they seem to have found in him an ideal

<sup>1</sup> The interval is now much longer.

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President. Sympathetic, alert, tactful, business-like, serene, yet with a strong sense of humour and abundant common-sense, this plump, rosy-cheeked British chairman commanded the respect and directed the proceedings of 118 delegates from thirty-nine different States with tact and discretion. His knowledge of Parliamentary procedure was invaluable. Some of the delegates gave him the nickname "The Friend of Order," because he was so often banging his little auctioneer's hammer on the table and calling out, "Order! Order!" Under his business-like management no time was lost, and a really remarkable amount of work was accomplished in the short space of four weeks. As he himself remarked, "The delegates were intent on achievement"; and that was half the battle. "Your purpose is your power."

An eye-witness remarks: "Lord Burnham presides, but M. Albert Thomas directs." This "remarkable man" (as Lord Burnham calls him), the Director of the I.L.O. office, acted *ex officio* as Secretary to the Conference, and was, indeed, its life and soul. His eye was everywhere—on Lord Burnham as chairman, on every delegate, on his chief of staff, who followed his every movement with dog-like devotion. He seemed to feel the pulse of this Parliament in some mystical way—"with his antennæ," as someone expresses it. Did some mistake in procedure arise? He was instantly on the spot to correct it. Did some delegate propose a foolish amendment likely to wreck the carefully constructed work of a resolution which had taken many hours to prepare? He could

pounce in a moment on its weak spot. He could "sense" everything; his influence was all-pervading.

Then there was Mr. H. B. Butler, his second-in-command, with his smiling childlike face; M. Jonhaux, a workers' delegate, universally beloved, clever, logical, ever anxious to conciliate and find the middle path, but intensely shy. M. Mertens, of Belgium, was the latter's shadow—Damon to his Pythias, following his every word. Did M. Jonhaux exceed the time-limit for speeches, it was M. Mertens who always jumped to his feet to propose an extension in his favour. A man of obvious sincerity, which often touched his hearers more than the most brilliant eloquence.

Baldesi, secretary of the General Labour Federation in Italy, was a fiery spirit, consumed by his zeal for reform. He was "a devouring flame." "No need to look up his name in the catalogue," says one witness: "it was enough to know that here was the very soul of Italy breathing forth its fervour." A great contrast to him was the English Labour delegate, Poulton; very reserved and self-controlled, but tremendously concentrated in his speech. His influence was proportionately strong. On the other hand, Crawford, the South African delegate, was very discursive; prompt in proposing resolutions, but nearly as prompt in withdrawing them!

One of the most amusing figures was M. P——, whom some of the more flippant journalists nicknamed "the phantom employer." He intrigued all beholders by his extraordinary behaviour, his mysterious colloquies, sudden harsh laughs, and false starts. On one occasion, feeling obliged to mark his

disapproval of some of the proceedings by a very ostentatious withdrawal from the theatre, he retired to the stage box, and continued to follow the proceedings of the Conference by peeping through his fingers!

Other delegates included Mgr. Nolens, a clerical delegate from the Netherlands, who smoked fat cigars and "chattered like a magpie," but yet managed to introduce some sound philosophy into the discussions; Sir Montague Barlow, typically English, with a genuine breadth of outlook; and M. Fontaine, first Government delegate of France. He was learned, urbane and dignified, but wore a sad and resigned expression. No wonder! for a little bird who was busy at this and other Conferences, whispers that the French delegates are frequently getting into hot water at home, either for *not* obeying orders closely enough, or perhaps next day for conforming *too* strictly to the letter of their regulations and not "adapting themselves to the atmosphere they find" at Geneva!

Such is one difficulty for delegates. Another might be supposed to be the language difficulty. Yet this has been a blessing in disguise; for, all speeches having to be interpreted, a severe check has been put on merely rhetorical eloquence; and the delegates have tended to express themselves in as short, clear and business-like a fashion as possible. There was a universal desire to "get on with it."

Differences of national parliamentary procedure, and of national mentality, were also responsible for many obstacles; yet it was proved that these could be overcome by patience and tact, in the atmosphere

of good humour and sincerity which characterized all the doings of this Conference.

Two items on the agenda aroused fierce opposition, even before the Conference opened. One was the subject of the extension of social reform to agriculture. This was, indeed, intended to be the main work of the Conference. Its inclusion was hotly opposed by the Swiss Peasants' Union, and also by the French delegates, who really raised the question of the competence of the I.L.O. to deal with agriculture at all. When the Conference by its vote affirmed its competence, the French opposed the agricultural items of the agenda on the ground of inexpediency. The battle was fierce, and much strong feeling was aroused ; but eventually the reformers carried the day, and the principle that agricultural workers should enjoy the same benefits and social protection as other workers, was firmly established. The other subject of controversy was the use of white lead in painting, for inside and outside use. This substance, of course, is poisonous, and highly dangerous to the worker ; but many people honestly believed that it was impossible to find a substitute. Very bitter criticism had been directed against the I.L.O. before the Conference met. It was accused, not only of acting on insufficient evidence—a very serious charge against an office which is now the clearing-house of the world's social information—but also of deliberately favouring the paint-makers of one country as against another. But M. Thomas, responsible for the work of the Office, carried the war into the enemy's country, and replied so satisfactorily that the charge was dropped. The

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discussion on the proposed reforms was lengthy and technical; but the opposition (largely composed of the English paint manufacturers) gave way in the end.

### A NEW WAY OF ADOPTING CONVENTIONS.

As soon as the time allowed for submitting the Washington Conventions to the national authorities for ratification had passed, and very few nations had ratified any—that is, about the middle of 1921—two complaints against the I.L.O. began to be heard. One came from the workers who want International Labour Conventions ratified by all member nations, and are vexed at what they consider the small number of ratifications. The other complaint came from those who were opposed to ratification of certain Conventions, and who claimed that the method of preparing the Draft Conventions did not give the national Governments, employers, and workers sufficient opportunity of knowing what draft laws were being prepared by the International Conference for ultimate submission to the national Parliaments, before these draft laws reached their final form.

The 1924 Conference seems to have found the way out of the difficulty which meets both complaints. It decided to try an arrangement whereby the vote taken upon any Convention or Recommendation adopted in 1924 would be purely provisional, and the final vote would be held over until the 1925 Conference. That arrangement, allowing an actual text of a Draft Convention to be before all the parties concerned for a year before its final adoption is voted upon, should result in securing a final Convention which is more likely to receive immediate general ratification. It

was decided that proposals for a permanent scheme of first and second readings for Recommendations and Draft Conventions would be considered in 1925.

This new system was applied to several of the decisions of the Conference, as will be seen by the following list :

- (1) Recommendation on the development of facilities for the utilization of workers' spare time. Adopted, final vote : 79 to 16.
- (2) Draft Convention and Recommendation on equality of treatment of national and foreign workers as regards workmen's compensation for accidents. Adopted, provisional vote : 85 to 1.
- (3) Draft Convention on weekly suspension of work for twenty-four hours in glass-manufacturing processes where tank furnaces are used. Adopted, provisional vote : 68 to 22.
- (4) Draft Convention on night work in bakeries. Adopted, provisional vote : 73 to 15.

Two important resolutions were also adopted in regard to the prevention of anthrax and of unemployment. The unemployment discussion showed that great progress is being made towards laying bare the causes and therefore showing how to prevent this most tragic fact in the life of great industrial countries. It was shown to be closely connected with such seemingly different questions as unsteadiness in the price of goods, and of the exchange value of the money of different countries, and the way the banks give credit for running industry. But proofs of the connection between these things and unemployment were not clear enough to base any international Conventions upon, and the Labour Office was instructed to look further into the matter along with the Financial Committee of the League of Nations.

## CHAPTER VI

### ONE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION —THE REFORM OF THE PERSIAN CARPET INDUSTRY

THE world-famous Persian carpets are not all made in factories. Some are made in the homes of the villagers, where the whole family can take turns at the work. Others are even made by the wandering tribesmen, who stretch their looms horizontally over the ground, and the women sit on the growing carpet itself as they work. But let us visit a carpet-weaving factory in Kirman. As we approach the door, we hear child voices from within chanting a weird kind of song.

“Singing at their work! Cheery little souls!” says the globe-trotter, and passes on, well satisfied. Doubtless when he gets home he will write a book of travel, mentioning this pleasant incident. Later, when he hears of the pressure put by the I.L.O. on the Persian Government to reform conditions in these factories, he will, be one of those who write to the papers denouncing “such meddlesome interference.” But let him enter that same factory, and see for himself why the children sing, and under what conditions!

To begin with, there is no ventilation. It would



make the room too cold, and why should the employer be put to the expense of fires? Sanitary arrangements are non-existent. The factory is only lighted by the small skylight; if the children could look out of the windows their attention would wander, say the employers. No wonder! when most of them are at an age at which in England they would be attending a Kindergarten and not be expected to concentrate on one task for more than fifteen minutes at a time! The song that they sing is the pattern of the carpet: "One green, three reds, two blues, five greys," and so on, the rule of the threads. It is the only way in which these mites can remember it. How do they work? The big loom is stretched vertically on a frame; the children are seated on a narrow board, starting close to the ground, and moved upwards as the work goes on, till the tiny workers are many times their own height from the floor. They retain their precarious seat by doubling their little legs back under the narrow board; there is no rest for aching little backs. And here they sit—for how long? I cannot tell you what are the longest hours they ever work. But I know of the European doctor who managed to persuade the governor of Kerman to issue a decree *limiting* the hours of work of these children (*some not yet five years old*) to "from sunrise to sunset," i.e. an average of twelve hours a day! When that particular governor died, conditions relapsed into their former state, until the I.L.O. interfered. The children do not even get down for meals.

At last, at the end of the day, the signal is given to cease work. You expect the children, when the

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beam is lowered, to jump off and run away home, glad to be free. A few *can* do so. Most have much difficulty in unbending their cramped limbs at all! Some sit there huddled up and helpless, till a father or a brother arrives, to *carry* them home. Crippled already, and what wonder? Something can be done in some cases, and is done (when the mischief has not gone too far) to straighten the poor deformed little limbs and bodies in the mission hospitals. The future of the *girls* is grimly simple. They leave most often, at the age of nine or ten, to be married—deformed child wives, to whom but one fate is possible. The hour of their confinement spells certain death for them, and most probably for their puny babies. Could anything be more revoltingly horrible?

One employer, whose wife was ill, asked a medical missionary to attend her. He refused, until the employer should at least put windows in his factory. The latter did so with reluctance, and was surprised to find that the children worked better instead of worse! European missionaries have known for a long time of these conditions, of course, and have been working, so far as they could, for their amelioration, trying to educate Persian public opinion against them. But there is so little they can do, unless the Government will take it up.

The Persian employer is not a monster of cruelty. He is grossly ignorant concerning industrial welfare. He says, too, that he is bound to employ child-labour, because otherwise he could not compete against the home-weaving industry. Anyone who has read the history of factory legislation in our own country can

at once recognize here the echoes of the same spirit of fear inspired in the votaries of Mammon. "We would like to drive our workers less hard, and pay them more wages; but if we do, competition will ruin us, the industry cannot bear it, our living will be gone!" How often have we heard the tale!

Opium-smoking is very prevalent in this, as in many Persian cities. "Out of three, four smoke opium," is the strong Persian way of expressing it. The man or woman who smokes opium gradually becomes a wreck, physically and morally; the craving maddens him. He borrows money from the rich (often carpet-weavers) to buy his favourite drug, and pledges the labour of his children in return.

Persia became a member of the I.L.O. at its inception; and was represented at the Washington Conference of 1919. Owing to the very divergent conditions prevailing in Eastern countries, China, Persia and Siam were totally exempted from the provisions of the Draft Conventions relating to the 8-hour day, and the age of employment of child-labour. But it was only on condition that this exemption should be temporary, and that the whole question was to be considered at a future Conference. These countries accepted the principle of the protection of labour by factory legislation, and promised to keep the I.L.O. informed of their actions in that respect.

At the end of 1920 the I.L.O. was obliged to draw the attention of the Persian Government to the appalling conditions in the carpet factories of Kerman and the neighbourhood. No satisfactory reply having been received, the Office returned to the charge in

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July 1921; and in December of the same year they at last obtained from the Persian Government information that the local authorities had been ordered to enforce the following rules :

An 8-hour day for children under fourteen ;  
No child workers under eight years of age ;  
Factories to be properly lighted, ventilated and warmed ;  
Seats to be provided with a back-rest, and to be 11 inches from the ground, and at least 11 inches broad.

Fussy details, do you say? Read the history of factory legislation in your own country, and you will find there is no royal road, no easy short cut by which you can make the worst employers provide healthy conditions for their workers. You must go to endless trouble, you must lay down exact and minute rules, you must leave no loophole for escape; above all you must have an efficient system of factory inspectors. Does this yet exist in Persia? I should be glad if anyone could tell me.<sup>1</sup>

These laws are made for the worst employer, not the good man, nor the average one. The two last are protected by factory laws from the competition of unscrupulous rivals: they have much more cause to be grateful for such laws than to abuse them.

I have treated this subject in some detail, as a typical example of what the I.L.O. has accomplished. A full account of all its solid achievements would fill many volumes, which no one would read.

<sup>1</sup> The British Government (May 27, 1924) confirms the statement that conditions have been very materially improved as a result of the I.L.O.'s efforts.

## CHILDREN AND SILK ON MOUNT LEBANON

CHILDREN and silk and Mount Lebanon, but children of the tender years shown in the frontispiece working long days in a steaming factory preparing silk for the markets of the world, somehow disturb the lovelier associations of Mount Lebanon. The frontispiece, kindly supplied by Underwood, shows the largest silk-reeling plant in Syria on Mount Lebanon, where cocoons are being boiled to loosen the fibre ends. It is a reminder that the things of our everyday use come from the ends of the earth, and embody the labour of men and women and children of every race and at every stage of civilization and of industrialization.

In the making of silk the silkworm cocoons are subjected to heat to kill the chrysalis. After that they are carefully dried and sorted. Those of the same size and fibre, quality and shade, are put together. All off-colour, stained, pierced or unreelable cocoons are set aside for the spun silk trade. The cocoons are then ready for the preliminary process of raw silk production, the boiling operation we see going on in this long, dim Syrian factory.

There are several small native boiling and reeling plants scattered about Mount Lebanon. The plant shown in the picture, owned by a French company, is the only large modern establishment. It employs about four hundred boys and girls from the surrounding villages, and pays them from eight to twenty-five cents a day for very disagreeable work. It also buys up all the cocoons from the farms and villages for miles around, and secures enough to keep its plants running all the year.

It requires the service of a European supervisor and half a dozen native assistants to keep these young workers in order and busy. The younger children attend to the boiling, as we see them doing down the centre aisle of the factory. After the cocoon softens in the rising steam the outer husk comes off. Then the cocoons are transferred to trays of slightly cooler water on the back of the long table. There older boys and girls stir them about until the thread ends can be secured. These are collected and passed through to the boxed-on-turning-frames along the sides.

The life of these little folk is hard. Their tender hands are continually dipped into hot water in the tending of the cocoons, and they breathe all day long the noisome vapours in the steam rising from the boiling cocoons.

The International Labour Organization is based on the idea that the labourer is worthy of his hire, and aims at securing education rather than industrial employment for children. For the workers everywhere it tries to secure the best conditions that obtain anywhere, thus raising industrial civilizations which are below the best and mitigating unfair competition for the others.

## CHAPTER VII

### OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION

ONLY one small piece of work accomplished by the I.L.O. has been here treated in detail. To describe even the main features of its work in many lands, or in many departments of industrial life, would take far too long. On the other hand, merely to enumerate its achievements, is immediately to become tabular, statistical, dry-as-dust in fact; because so much knowledge and sympathetic imagination is needed to illumine these bare facts with a human interest! Yet we feel it must be done, because otherwise some of our readers might really run off with the idea that this vast organization only existed to effect occasional reforms in very out-of-the-way and backward countries like Persia.

So, take warning, every one, and skip this chapter if you cannot digest knowledge in a dry form!

The following tables, true in the main, may prove to be inaccurate in a few details for two reasons:

(1) It was not possible to mention all the specific exceptions to certain general rules. To have done so would have been to make it more difficult to present a *general impression* of the work accomplished by the I.L.O., to give which was the purpose of this chapter.

(2) In giving an account of a living organization such as the I.L.O (whose library of books, reports and pamphlets on social questions increases at the rate of about 800 a week !), it is extraordinary difficult to be up-to-date. So far as possible, the facts have been corrected up to the end of 1923.

#### DECISIONS OF THE WASHINGTON CONFERENCE, 1919

##### *The 8-hour Day and 48-hour Week.*

This standard of working hours (already fairly universal in Great Britain) was set up by a Draft Convention, as the general rule at any rate for European countries. Eastern nations were allowed certain exemptions, both on account of climatic conditions (which often render night work preferable to work in the noonday hours) and because, generally speaking, they were unused to any restrictions on hours of labour, and so could not be expected all at once to come into line with the most advanced countries. Thus, e.g., in Japan a 48-hour week became the rule for all workers under fifteen, and for all miners employed underground; a 57-hour week for workers over fifteen; and a 60-hour week for workers in the raw silk industry. India adopted a practically universal 60-hour week. China, Persia and Siam were granted a total exemption from this Draft Convention on condition that provisions to limit hours of work should be considered at a future Conference.

This Draft Convention has been ratified by Bulgaria, Czecko-Slovakia, Greece, India, Rumania, Austria. A Bill has been introduced by Argentine, Brazil, Chili, France, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, Netherlands, Spain.

It will be noticed that Great Britain's name is not on the list, though the 8-hour standard is probably more nearly a fact in this than in any other country. The reason alleged by the Government is that the 8-hour day practically obtains in most industries in virtue of voluntary agreements between the employers and the unions concerned (with various provisions and exceptions); and that to "butt in" on this carefully erected voluntary structure by a probably clumsy and inelastic legislative enactment would be to jeopardize

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what industrial peace still remains to us! The opponents of this view argue that Great Britain ought to be ready to sacrifice some personal convenience, so to speak, for the sake of setting an example to the more backward industrial nations, which naturally look to her as a leader. It is obvious that much can be said on both sides: and this is a good instance of the complications and practical difficulties which beset the work of the International Labour Office.

### *Work of Women before and after Childbirth.*

A Draft Convention provides women workers with six weeks' holiday before and after childbirth, with maintenance; and enacts that when nursing their infants they are to be allowed half an hour off work twice in the day for that purpose.

Ratified by: Bulgaria, Greece, Rumania, Spain. Bill introduced by: Argentine, Brazil, Chile, Cuba, Czecho-Slovakia, France, Germany, Hungary, Lithuania, Netherlands.

### *Unemployment.*

A Draft Convention lays down that:

(1) All member-states shall furnish up-to-date statistics of unemployment in their country within three months.

(2) Where they do not already exist, free public employment agencies (labour bureaus) are to be set up by the Government, or under Government control.

(3) Advisory committees of employers and workers are to be appointed in connection with these.

(4) States possessing an unemployment insurance scheme shall extend its benefits to alien workers within their borders.

Ratified by: Austria, Bulgaria, Denmark, Esthonia, Finland, Great Britain, Greece, India, Italy, Japan, Norway, Poland, Rumania, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland. Applied in Denmark and Japan.

Recommendations were passed:

(1) That fee-charging employment agencies should be abolished.

(2) Recruiting of bodies of workers in one country for work in another should only be allowed with the consent of the two Governments concerned, and after consultation with employers' and workers' bodies in each country.

(3) Unemployment insurance schemes to be everywhere set up, or subsidized, by Governments.



(4) All work under public authority to be reserved as far as possible for times of acute unemployment.

*Night Work of Women in Industry*

was forbidden between the hours of 10 p.m. and 5 a.m. by a Draft Convention.

Ratified by: Austria, Bulgaria, Czecko-Slovakia, Great Britain, Esthonia, Greece, India, Italy. Applied in Belgium and Switzerland. Bill introduced in Argentine, Brazil, Chili, France, Germany, Hungary, Lithuania, Spain.

*Anthrax.*

It was recommended that disinfection of hides should take place, whenever possible, at the port of export.

*Employment in Certain Unhealthy Processes*

(specified) was forbidden to women and young persons under eighteen: was safeguarded in certain processes involving the use of lead compounds.

*Factory Inspection.*

A recommendation advises that this should be set up where not already in existence. Also a Government service especially concerned with the health of the workers.

*Employment of Children under Fourteen in Industry*

was forbidden by a Draft Convention.

Ratified by: Bulgaria, Czecko-Slovakia, Greece, Netherlands, Finland, Rumania. Applied in Belgium, India, Switzerland. Bill introduced in Argentine, Brazil, Chili, Cuba, France, Germany, Lithuania, Spain.

*Night Work of Young Persons under Eighteen in Industry*

was forbidden by a Draft Convention.

Ratified by: Austria, Bulgaria, Denmark, Esthonia, Finland, Great Britain, Greece, India, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Rumania, Switzerland. Applied in Belgium. Bill introduced in Argentine, Brazil, Chili, Cuba, Czecko-Slovakia, France, Germany, Hungary, Lithuania, Spain.

WORK OF THE SECOND SESSION, GENOA, 1920

*Work of Children under Fourteen on Ships*

(except training ships) forbidden by Draft Convention. A register of all children employed under sixteen to be kept on each ship.

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Ratified by : Bulgaria, Denmark, Esthonia, Finland, Great Britain, Japan, Poland, Rumania, Spain, Sweden. Bill introduced in Argentine, Belgium, Chili, Cuba, Germany, Hungary, Lithuania.

### *Shipwrecked Seamen*

to be paid wages up to two months.

Ratified by : Bulgaria, Esthonia. Bill introduced in Argentine, Belgium, Chili, Cuba, France, Germany, Lithuania.

### *Employment.*

Public free labour exchanges for seamen to be set up by or subsidized by Government, where not already in existence.

Ratified by : Belgium, Bulgaria, Chili, Denmark, Esthonia, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Spain, Sweden. Bill introduced in Argentine, Chili, Cuba, Great Britain, Lithuania, Spain.

### *Hours of Work of Seamen.*

On this important and much vexed question no agreement was reached ; the Conference failing to obtain the requisite two-thirds majority for passing a Draft Convention, by two-thirds of a vote !

## THIRD SESSION, GENEVA, 1921 (AGRICULTURE)

### *Unemployment in Agriculture.*

A recommendation advised that Governments should

- (1) encourage improved methods of cultivating unworked land,
- (2) encourage transport facilities for unemployed workers,
- (3) develop supplementary employments in seasonal industries,
- (4) encourage co-operative action by the provision of credits.

### *Accident Insurance.*

By a Draft Convention, agricultural workers are to have the same benefits as workers in other industries.

Ratified by : Denmark, Esthonia, Great Britain, Poland, Sweden, Irish Free State. Bill introduced by Bulgaria, Chili, Germany, Hungary, Spain.

### *Other Social Insurance*

(against sickness, invalidity, old age, etc.). Same extension recommended.

*Women and Childbirth.*

Same extension recommended. (Benefits prescribed at Washington.)

*Night Work of Women and Young Persons.*

Modified extension recommended.

*Employment of Children in Agriculture*

not to be allowed to interfere with school attendance.

Draft Convention, ratified by: Austria, Czecko-Slovakia, Esthonia, Japan, Poland, Sweden. Bill introduced by Bulgaria, Chili, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Spain.

*Living-in Conditions of Agricultural Workers.*

Recommendation urges suitable regulation.

*Technical Agricultural Education.*

Recommendation urges that it should be encouraged and made really available for the workers.

*Right of Association*

to be the same as in other industries.

Draft Convention, ratified by: Austria, Czecko-Slovakia, Esthonia, Finland, Great Britain, Irish Free State, Poland, Sweden. Bill introduced by Bulgaria, Chili, Germany, Latvia, Spain.

*Maritime Employment as Trimmers and Stokers*

of young persons forbidden by Draft Convention.

Ratified by: Esthonia, India, Poland, Rumania, Spain. Ratification authorized by Great Britain, Italy, Netherlands. Bill introduced by Bulgaria, Chili, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Sweden.

*Compulsory Medical Examination*

of young persons employed at sea, once a year.

Draft Convention, ratified by: Esthonia, India, Japan, Poland, Rumania, Spain. Ratification authorized by Great Britain, Italy, Norway. Bill introduced by Bulgaria, Chili, Cuba, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Sweden.

*Weekly Rest of Twenty-four Consecutive Hours in Industry.*

Draft Convention, ratified by: Esthonia, Greece, Poland, Rumania. Applied in India. Recommended in commerce. Bill introduced by Bulgaria, Germany, Latvia, Switzerland.

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### *Use of White Lead in Internal Painting*

(with certain exceptions) forbidden by Draft Convention to take effect in 1927.

Ratified by: Austria, Czecko-Slovakia, Esthonia, Greece, Poland, Spain, Sweden. Bill introduced by Bulgaria, Chili, Cuba, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, Latvia.

### FOURTH SESSION, GENEVA, 1922

Reform and enlargement of the Governing Body of the I.L.O., so as to provide better representation for non-European countries.

### *Emigration.*

A Recommendation asks the Governments to communicate at least once a year to the I.L.O. at Geneva up-to-date information regarding :

- (1) Legislation affecting emigration,
- (2) Statistics of emigrants from the country,
- (3) Statistics of immigrants to the country, with particulars of age, sex, and occupation.

### FIFTH SESSION, GENEVA, 1923

This was concerned entirely with factory inspection. A Recommendation unanimously passed lays down certain principles regarding the rights, duties and powers of factory inspectors in all countries, especially in connection with the prevention of accidents. All these principles go no farther than what is already done in Great Britain and the more advanced industrial countries ; but the backward nations are urged to set up a really efficient system of factory inspection on the sound, common-sense lines laid down in this report.

But the influence of the I.L.O. is widespread, and cannot be estimated in terms of the actual number of ratifications of its resolutions, obtained from the member states. Much of its labour is spade-work ; it consists in laying the foundations of international

industrial knowledge, without which a firm and lasting social structure is impossible. Ten years hence the nation may have learned—thanks to the research carried on by the I.L.O.—how to deal, in a sensible, co-operative way, with problems of unemployment, emigration, social insurance, the elimination of dangerous industrial processes, the safeguarding of child-life, and so forth.

“Of what use is that to us now?” demands the impatient citizen. “How can we endure the present chaos for even another year? How can we even exist much longer under the insupportable burden of taxation, without some immediate relief?”

It seems, indeed, cold comfort to many to answer that the I.L.O. has appointed permanent committees to investigate some of these subjects, and that those committees are laboriously collecting the information that *should* have been ready to hand almost at the beginning of the present crisis! Well, let us take the punishment of our own and our forefathers' folly as stiffly as we can, grimly resolving that henceforth it shall not be *our* fault if our children grow up to find a world in which international co-operation against common evils is still in its infancy! Each nation is bound, of course, to take such immediate urgency measures for the relief of unemployment, as it sees fit; but the measures of joint control over the necessities of life, taken by the Allies in the Great War, point to the possibility of enormous economies in the saving of unemployment and wasted labour in the future when even some partial measure of international agreement on the spheres of production can be reached.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE ENEMIES OF THE PARLIAMENT

THE great work of the I.L.O. suffers from two enemies : indifference, and open hostility.

It was actually possible for Sir Frederick Treves in 1923 to write a most interesting and fascinating book on *The Lake of Geneva*, including three chapters on the city of Geneva itself, with a description of its political importance and its historic buildings, without mentioning the very names of the International Labour Office or the League of Nations, both of which have their homes here. The average Englishman does not know that the I.L.O. exists. Again, Mr. G. N. Barnes, addressing the Manchester Engineering Council in November 1923, says he looked in vain for any mention of this work (of such supreme importance to all the world and to every individual workman) in the election addresses and speeches which were inundating this country during that month. The only exception was "a somewhat anæmic reference" by Mr. Baldwin, who gave it a vague and qualified blessing !

On the other hand, it has had fierce opposition to meet from some quarters. The following is a good specimen :

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... "this extraordinary body (the I.L.O.) which covered itself with ridicule in 1921 by trying to impose vexatious and impracticable regulations upon agriculture and other industries, has now placed upon its agenda for the next Labour Conference in Geneva the consideration of means for utilizing the leisure hours 'which the workers have gained by the adoption of the 8-hour day! . . . these modern wise men of Gotham . . .'" etc. (Letter from Mr. Noel Inchcape to the *Daily Gazette* of Exeter, April 2, 1923.)

This letter is quoted by Mr. Haynes in his book *The Enemies of Liberty* (London, 1923). He adduces it as sufficient evidence that the I.L.O. is nothing but a society of cranks and meddling busybodies. He draws a terrifying picture of the British workman being compelled to allot his leisure hours at the dictation of the I.L.O.: say, half an hour to Swedish drill, an hour's digging in the garden, attendance at a temperance meeting, half an hour's walk with the wife and kiddies, etc. . . . ! !

The very absurdity of the picture supplies the answer to this criticism. Would the British working man ever submit to such regimentation? Would the British Government ever dare to lay such a bill before the House of Commons? It would be laughed out before it was voted out. Herein lies the safeguard against all vexatiously interfering legislation. It must never be forgotten that the I.L.O. at Geneva CANNOT PASS A SINGLE LAW BINDING ON BRITISH SUBJECTS: nor on those of any other nation. The resolutions which it passes by a majority of delegates (representing, be it remembered, the Governments, employers and employed of all nations) *must* be laid before the Parliament of each nation. That is all

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that we and the other member states have promised. If the House of Commons ratified such a proposal, then it would become law. But if super-cranky legislation is passed at Westminster, it is the British electorate who are to blame, not the experts in conference at Geneva.<sup>1</sup>

A second criticism really raises the same objection in a different way. There is a strong and very natural feeling of resentment against any attempt to infringe our national sovereignty. This feeling, we may be sure, is shared by the other nations. But just as every contract between individuals is so far a voluntary curtailment of their respective liberty, so is every treaty between nations who agree to co-operate either for good purposes or for evil. *The work of the League of Nations and the International Labour Office represents the greatest co-operation for good ever attempted by the nations of the world.* But here there can be no question of infringement of liberty, as we have already shown. For at every step each national Parliament is able to say, "We do not agree: we withdraw from this proposition, and cannot enforce it in our country." They are expected to give good reasons for their withdrawal; that is all. In actual fact, they have time and again refused to ratify some particular measure which seemed to take too little account of the peculiar climatic or industrial circumstances of their own country. There is no fear whatever of the I.L.O. proceeding too quickly!

A third objection is the cost. The British tax-

<sup>1</sup> The most satisfactory answer to these puerile objections will be found in the Appendix (Recommendations passed June 1924).



payer, groaning under the burden of the heaviest tax-bill in Europe, naturally resents any addition which he may think is not strictly necessary. But let the facts speak for themselves :

Out of every £100 paid by the British taxpayer, 2½d. is paid as Great Britain's share of the League of Nations expenses. This INCLUDES the cost of upkeep of the I.L.O., which is paid by the Secretary-General out of the League of Nations funds. The only exceptions are the travelling and maintenance expenses of the four British delegates (and their technical advisers) who attend the annual Conference at Geneva, for three or four weeks once a year. This item must be almost infinitesimal in the Budget of a country which now reckons in hundred of millions of pounds sterling !<sup>1</sup>

Remember, too, what it is we are paying this fraction of a farthing for. For the support of the most successful effort yet made to better labour conditions and to secure industrial peace throughout the world ; for the protection of our workmen against the competition of sweated labour and consequent unemployment. How many million pounds do we spend or lose every year in England on unemployment "doles" or disastrous strikes resulting from discontent among the workers ?

Surely, an industrial round table is worth paying for !

<sup>1</sup> The "nominal" cost of the I.L.O. to Great Britain is now much less than ½d. per head of the population. The cost per head of defence expenditure is £2 14s. 8d. [See Hansard (Commons), vol. 175, No. 96, column 958, of June 30, 1924.]

## CHAPTER IX

### THE HOPE OF THE FUTURE

IT is comparatively easy for the historian, glancing back over past centuries, to trace the main streams of thought and action in each epoch ; to follow tendencies from their source to their emergence in the ocean of the present. What will future historians think of our era ? We are in a state of unparalleled confusion in economic and political life ; we are very conscious of change, and of many new forces at work, but we cannot visualize our goal. We feel that we are struggling in a twilight dimness, but what kind of new day the coming dawn will herald, we can hardly prophesy. Or rather, perhaps, we are suffering from too many prophets, and a multitude of counsellors !

But I believe that the historians of a hundred years hence will find that the most important events of our age were taking place AT GENEVA. They will distinguish, among the confused gropings and re-shufflings of political combinations in this and other countries, only two essential parties. On the one hand, those who could not out-live nor forget the past, who looked back to the old ways and the old diplomacy, and "sharpened their swords for the glittering prizes of war" ; on the other hand, those

who could see more clearly into the future, and who *saw* that man's only chance of survival now lay in international co-operation against the one common enemy under his various aspects as industrial oppression, social injustice, ignorance, dirt, drink, vice, famine, disease and death. More and more, the men and women in every country who had pledged themselves to *this* warfare drew together ; and they formed everywhere the party which gave genuine support to the League of Nations. And why? Because they realized that they had no *time* to fight their fellow-men ; because, like the "idealists" who founded the International Labour Office, they knew that the social war was so great and terrible that it left no room for any other. Therefore they knew that the framers of the Versailles Treaty spoke truth when they said that "universal peace can be established only if it is based everywhere on social justice."

The voices of the new era, though weak in numbers, are strong in proportion to the truth of their beliefs. They are heard from many lands. From the West comes the voice of the late President Wilson :<sup>1</sup>

The peoples of the world are awake, and the peoples of the world are in the saddle. Private counsels of statesmen cannot now and cannot hereafter determine the destinies of nations. If we are not the servants of the opinion of mankind, we are of all men the littlest, the most contemptible, the least gifted with vision. If we do not know our age, we cannot accomplish our purpose, and this age is an age which looks forward, not backward ; which rejects the standards of national selfishness that once governed the counsels of nations and demands that they shall give way

<sup>1</sup> Speech delivered over the American dead in the cemetery of Suresnes, May 30, 1919.

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to a new order of things in which the only questions shall be: "Is it right?" "Is it just?" "Is it in the interests of mankind?" This is a challenge that no previous generation ever dared to give ear to.

From the East, hear the Indian poet-philosopher, Rabindarath Tagore :

There is only one history—the history of Man. All national histories are merely chapters in the larger one. . . . The most important fact of the present age is that all the different races of men have come together. . . . Those who are gifted with the moral power of love and vision of spiritual unity, who have the least feeling of enmity against aliens, and the sympathetic insight to place themselves in the position of others, will be the fittest to take their permanent place in the age that is lying before us : and those who are constantly developing their instinct of fight and intolerance of aliens will be eliminated.

## APPENDIX

### SUMMARY OF RESULTS OF THE SIXTH ANNUAL SESSION OF THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION, GENEVA, JUNE-JULY 1924

#### TWO-READING PROCEDURE.

After a Draft Convention or Recommendation has received a two-thirds majority, the Conference shall decide whether a final vote on it shall be taken at once, or deferred till the next annual Session. In the latter case, the Governments are at once to be informed of the decisions, so that they may have the chance of *suggesting amendments* to the next Conference.

(This procedure is provisional, till 1925.)

#### RECOMMENDATION FINALLY ADOPTED.

*Utilisation of Worker's Spare Time.*—Far from the tyrannical interference with individual liberty predicted by some critics, this Recommendation merely *asks* the Governments to *encourage* the provision of such things as public baths, allotments, parks and open spaces for games and sports, the extension of all kinds of education for young people and adults. They are also to try and see that the workers are not forced by economic pressure to work so much overtime as to nullify the legal limitations of hours in the interests of their own health. It is suggested that the hours of spare time might be made as continuous as possible; and that a considerable reduction in the time now wasted in travelling

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to and from work might be effected. All this to be brought about by consultation and agreement between the parties concerned. *A special clause deprecates any encroachment on individual liberty by schemes for the wise use of spare time.*

### DRAFT CONVENTION AND RECOMMENDATION APPROVED, BUT DEFERRED TILL 1925.

*Alien Workers and Accident Compensation.*—This simply lays down the principle that aliens should be entitled to the same benefits as nationals in case of accident; and asks the Governments to make the necessary arrangements for carrying this into effect.

### DRAFT CONVENTION APPROVED, BUT DEFERRED TILL 1925.

*Weekly Cessation of Work in Glass Works Employing Tank Furnaces.*—A weekly cessation of twenty-four hours is provided for, if possible on Sunday or other customary holiday. A list of the *necessary* exceptions in each country is to be drawn up by the Government, after consultation with organizations of employers and employed.

### DRAFT CONVENTION APPROVED, BUT DEFERRED TILL 1925.

*Night Work in Bakeries* is prohibited between 11 p.m. and 5 a.m. (or between 10 p.m. and 4 a.m.). Permanent necessary exceptions are allowed, but not for young persons under eighteen.

### RESOLUTION ADOPTED BY THE CONFERENCE.

*On World Unemployment.*—On this difficult and highly technical subject, the Conference warmly commended the work already done by the I.L. Office, and asked them to continue their investigations. An International Conference of Labour statisticians is to be arranged in the near future, to consult on the best measures for bringing about a steady, coincident increase in production and consumption throughout the world, so as to reduce unemployment, stabilize prices, and restore international credit. To help this forward, each

Government is asked to prepare a careful report on unemployment in its own country, its volume, its nature, remedies tried and suggested.

RESOLUTION ADOPTED BY THE CONFERENCE.

*On the Prevention of Anthrax.*—To inscribe on the agenda of a future Conference a Draft Convention for the compulsory disinfection of horsehair, etc., prior to manipulation.



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