



LEAGUE OF NATIONS

International Labour Conference

Proposed action by the British Government regarding
Recommendation adopted by the Conference
at its Sixth Session, 16th June to
5th July, 1924.

*Presented to Parliament by
Command of His Majesty.*

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LEAGUE OF NATIONS

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR CONFERENCE

There were presented to Parliament in Command 2292 (1924) the French and English texts of the recommendation adopted by the International Labour Conference at its sixth session (June-July, 1924) "concerning the development of facilities for the utilisation of workers' spare time."

At the expiration of a period of twenty-one days from the date on which the present paper is laid on the table of both Houses of Parliament, His Majesty's Government propose, in accordance with the provisions of Article 405 of the Treaty of Versailles, to forward to the Secretary-General of the League of Nations the following communication showing the action taken in respect of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in the case of this recommendation.

PROPOSED COMMUNICATION TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS.

RECOMMENDATION REGARDING THE DEVELOPMENT OF FACILITIES FOR THE UTILISATION OF WORKERS' SPARE TIME ADOPTED BY THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR CONFERENCE AT ITS SIXTH SESSION, JUNE-JULY, 1924.

Note of Action by British Government.

The Recommendation regarding the development of facilities for the utilisation of workers' spare time adopted by the sixth session of the International Labour Conference (June-July, 1924), together with the present communication has been presented to both Houses of Parliament and considered by His Majesty's Government.

As one of the British Government delegates indicated in the course of the debate at the Conference itself, H.M. Government did not disagree generally with the principles set out in the text which the Conference was asked to adopt. They could not help feeling, however, that it was too much to hope that the long recommendation adopted, which was necessarily of so vague and general a character, could be of much practical utility.

Since that time H.M. Government have given further consideration to the terms of the recommendation but have found no reason to modify their view.

For many years successive British Governments have shown great interest in every question affecting the well-being of the workers and have expressed this interest in a concrete form as opportunity offered by a steady development of legislative and

administrative action regarding the various subjects with which the recommendation deals. At the same time many of these questions necessarily have to be considered not merely from the standpoint of the utilisation of workers' leisure, but from the wider standpoint of the public health and general welfare and needs of the community. A certain amount of information as to the progress made by Great Britain in this connexion has already been supplied to the International Labour Office. H.M. Government will at all times be glad to supply further information regarding the undoubtedly advanced British legislation and practice in matters concerning the utilisation of the workers' spare time. They feel, however, that the terms of the recommendation adopted have justified the anticipation of the British Government delegates that the necessarily brief consideration given by the Conference to the many important questions involved could not be sufficiently thorough to affect the conclusions arrived at by H.M. Government after many years' study of those questions. In general they do not find in the recommendation any new suggestions as to either policy or administrative procedure which they consider it desirable to adopt.

There is one part of the recommendation to which H.M. Government think it desirable to refer specifically. In Part I, sub-paragraph (a) it is recommended "that each Member, whilst having due regard to the requirements of different industries, local customs and the varying capacities and habits of the different kinds of workers, should consider the means of so arranging the working day as to make the periods of spare time as continuous as possible."

If it is to be understood that the object of this recommendation is to promote arrangements for a working day unbroken by any substantial interval for dinner, H.M. Government are advised that such an arrangement would not, generally speaking, be conducive to the health and welfare of the workers and ought not to be encouraged; in any case they are of opinion that (subject to the observance of any conditions imposed by the Factories Acts for the protection of the health of women and young persons) the adjustment of the hours of the working day is a matter which should be left to the employers and workers in the different industries and localities to settle for themselves and that any Government intervention would be undesirable.

June, 1925.