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Work of the International Labour Organisation in relation to Europe

Report

1.

In February, 1951 the I. L. 0. communicated to the Council of Europe a memorandum entitled " Activities of the International Labour Organisation in relation to Europe ", for the information of the Sub-Committee of the Committee on Social Questions of the Consultative Assembly set up to study the possibilities of defining a common European policy in the social field. This memorandum was reproduced in extenso by the Council of Europe on 30th August, 1951. In response to a subsequent request from the Secretary-General of the Council of Europe the International Labour Office has prepared the present memorandum giving additional information concerning I. L. 0. activities of interest to Europe, and thus bringing up to date the account of activities included in the first memorandum.

2. Introduction

I. L. 0. activities of interest to Europe arc broadly of two kinds. In the first place, European countries have a direct concern with the influence that international labour standards evolved by the I. L. 0. have, or may have, upon the development of their national social policy; secondly, as members of the world community, these countries also have an interest, in order to maintain their own relatively higher living standards, in promoting the observance of agreed international norms of social policy calculated to improve conditions of the workers throughout the world.

As an indication of the importance attached to these international standards by European countries, it was pointed out in the memorandum presented to the Council of Europe last year that, of a total of 1,190 ratifications to international labour Conventions received by the I. L. 0., by February, 1951, no less than 368 ratifications were by 13 members of the Council of Europe. Since that time 121 new ratifications have been received of which 44 were by members of the Council of Europe. In terms of particular Conventions, it might be pointed out that, in the case of those most recently adopted by the Conference, eight of the i4 ratifications so far received to the Freedom of Association Convention, 1948, are from States Members of the Council of Europe, and five of the ten ratifications to the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949, are also from these States; members of the Council of Europe have also registered seven of the 15 ratifications to the Labour Inspection Convention, 1947, five of the 14 ratifications to the Employment Service Convention, 1948, three of the seven ratifications to the Labour Clauses in Public Contracts Convention, 1949, and three of the six ratifications to the Protection of Wages Convention, 1949. This shows" that approximately half the ratifications to these important Conventions, recently adopted, are by members of the Council of Europe.

The existing body of international labour conventions and recommendations now represents a comprehensive system of legislative standards which is of particular significance to the social programme of the Council of Europe, in view of the Council's recognition of " the value of harmonising national activities in the social field "[1].It may be noted in this connection that, if necessary, measures may be promoted for adapting the principles laid down in conventions and recommendations to meet the special circumstances of different regions, or for reinforcing these standards in their practical application.

The I. L. 0. has also undertaken certain activities which relate to specific European problems. The action taken in regard to conditions of work and social security of Rhine boatmen was mentioned in the memorandum put before the Council of Europe last year[2]. More recently the I. L. 0. has been concerned with other labour problems of European transport. The I. L. 0. has proposed specific measures in regard to labour problems arising from the coordination of European transport and has drawn up clauses concerning conditions of employment to be included in the Standard Set of Rules for the commercial transport of passengers and goods by road in international traffic in Europe. More details regarding these questions will be found below. Preliminary consideration has been given to questions regarding conditions of employment on board vessels engaged in the short-sea trades of West and North West Europe and in North Sea and Channel ports. The I. L. 0. manpower programme has been concerned with the problem of European migration, and technical assistance is being given to Greece, Italy and Yugoslavia on manpower questions.

Finally, it should be pointed out that certain I. L. 0. activities, particularly in the technical assistance field in non-European countries and territories, have .important repercussions on European problems. For example, I. L. 0. assistance to Latin-American countries for their economic development in general may have a major bearing upon the prospects of migration from Europe to those countries. The I. L. O.'s work in Africa is also of interest to Europe as a whole, in view of its importance both for improvement of conditions in African territories and because of the relationship of African development to the prospects of the European economy.

Problems of the organisation and working of national labour departments are to be considered as an item on the agenda of the 1953 session of the International Labour Conference. The Conference will examine such questions as the functions and responsibilities of national labour departments, their internal structure and working, their personnel and staffing problems, co-ordination of their activities with other departments and agencies, and collaboration with employers and workers. This discussion takes on a special interest for European countries because of the degree of co-operation achieved between labour departments of the Brussels Treaty powers and the Scandinavian countries, and because of the proposals for closer co-operation between labour departments of Council of Europe countries.

The purpose of the present memorandum is to give a brief outline of those I. L. 0. activities which are of greatest interest to European countries. These include activities in the fields of social security, social problems in raising labour productivity, industrial relations, manpower, wages policy, labour problems in European transport, conditions of work in general and in particular occupations, as well as in other fields.

3. Social Security

At its 1952 session the International Labour Conference adopted a Convention concerning minimum standards of social security. This is the first comprehensive international Convention on the subject and is of particular interest to the Council of Europe in view of the proposal, pending before it, for a European code of social security. This result could be achieved by the adoption by the Council of Europe of a Recommendation to that effect.

Earlier Conventions dealt with particular branches of social insurance; most of them prescribed minimum conditions of entitlement to, and duration of, benefit, but they did not fix any rate of benefit and their essential function was to provide the general legal framework for a social insurance system. The new Convention provides for a comprehensive form of social security. It covers nine different branches of social security : medical care, sickness, unemployment, old age, employment, injury, family, maternity, invalidity and survivors' benefits. Minimum standards for each of these branches deal 'with the range of persons protected, the right to benefits and also with the nature, rate and duration of benefit. Common standards for all branches are specified as regards periodical payments, equality of treatment of non-national residents, suspension of benefits, the right of appeal, financial resources and administration. To ratify the Convention a country is required to comply with the standards set by the Convention for at least three of the above-mentioned branches of social security, including at least one of the following : unemployment, old age, employment injury, invalidity and survivors' benefits. In respect of certain specified provisions, temporary derogations are permitted, under the Convention, to under-developed countries.

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1. See Report of the Committee of Ministers (4th ordinary session, 1952 : Doc. 2, § 60).
2. Ratifications to tho agreement on social security of Rhine boatmen have been deposited by France, the Federal Republic of Germany and Switzerland; ratification by tho Netherlands has been authorised by the competent authority and, it is expected, will be formally deposited shortly; the agreement has yet to be submitted to the belgian parliament. One ratification to the conditions of employment agreement has been deposited b y the Federal Republic of Germany and it is expected that further ratifications will be forthcoming.

The I. L. 0. has also made studies of a variety of social security questions including the financial and actuarial implications of the new international standards, the relation of the standards to provisions of existing social security laws, income and outgo under present social security provisions and their relation to national income, and methods of adapting the standards to divergent social security approaches, as well as to economic differences between countries.

The work of the International Social Security Association (I. S. S. A.) has been of great value to the I. L. 0. in enabling it to keep in direct touch with social security administrations in the different countries. The I. S. S. A. is a private international association of social security institutions for which the I. L. 0. supplies the secretariat. It is particularly well representative of European institutions. Recently the I. S. S. A. has examined such questions as the social security of independent workers, technical problems involved in the administration of social security laws, and rehabilitation and assessment of social security benefits.

The I. L. 0. has co-operated with the Council of Europe in drawing up two interim agreements on equality of treatment in social security.

4. Social Problems in relation to the raising of Labour Productivity

Increasing labour productivity is a matter of major concern to the Council of Europe, especially in the light of the 0. E. E. C. programme designed to. raise production in its member countries by 25 per cent, over a fiveyear period (1951-1956). The 0. E. E. C. has undertaken a number of activities in this field, particularly with regard to the technical problems and the need to spread knowledge of the best technical processes throughout European industry. The I. L. 0. on the other hand has, in recent years, emphasised the social problems involved in the drive for increased production. If the full co-operation of workers and employers, essential to raising productivity, is to be secured, it can only be through policies which, on the one hand, will ensure to the workers an equitable share in increases in production resulting from increased efficiency and, on the other hand, will reconcile the claims of workers to general security of employment and income with a drive for higher productivity. This means policies which will maintain a high general level of employment and income, assist the re-employment of workers displaced from their jobs, and maintain incomes of temporarily unemployed workers. It also means developing a common interest among management and workers in such questions as, for instance, improved selection, training and placement techniques and the handling of personnel matters; the joint study of problems of safety and welfare ; and attention to matters affecting the morale of the production team as a whole.

The I. L. 0. has approached the problem of productivity in this light, emphasising the " human " problems. Activities in the fields of manpower, industrial relations and industrial health and safety all hinge upon this question. These are dealt with below. In addition the I. L. 0. has attacked the problem of productivity as a whole, both generally, and with respect to certain industries. Special examinations have been made of productivity in the coal mining industry and in the metal trades. Wage incentives have been studied by a meeting of experts on payment by results. A meeting of experts on labour productivity in manufacturing industries has been convened to meet in December, 1952, and its conclusions might subsequently be considered for application to specific industries or regions.

5. Industrial Relations

Since 1948 the International Labour Conference has worked on a programme to draw up international standards in the field of industrial relations. The Freedom of Association Convention, 1948, and the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949, were described in the memorandum presented to the Council of Europe last year. In 1951, two Recommendations were adopted by the Conference,- one concerning collective agreements and the other concerning voluntary conciliation and arbitration, and in 1952 a further Recommendation was adopted concerning consultation and co-operation between employers and workers, at the level of the undertaking concerned, on matters of mutual concern not within the scope of collective bargaining machinery. This completes, for the present, consideration by the Conference of industrial relations questions.

The I. L. 0. has also set up machinery both on its own behalf and on behalf of the United Nations for the examination of complaints of violation of trade union rights and for this purpose the Fact-Finding and Conciliation Commission on Freedom of Association was established by the Governing Body in 1950. No complaint may be referred to the Fact - Finding and Conciliation Commission unless the Government concerned has given its consent to such reference. In the first place, however, before the question of reference to the Commission arises, all complaints are subject to a procedure of preliminary examination. To carry out this preliminary examination, the Governing Body has established a Committee on Freedom of

Association consisting of Government, employers' and workers' representatives. The responsibilities of this Committee are (1) to consider for recommendation to the Governing Body whether cases are worthy of examination by the Governing Body, and (2) where so determined affirmatively by the Governing Body, to attempt to secure the consent of the Governments concerned to the reference of such cases to the Fact-Finding and Conciliation Commission. Up to the present 42 complaints have come before the Committee; on 30 of these the Governing Body has reached final conclusions and a further 12 cases are in varying stages of consideration. No cases have as yet been referred to the Fact-Finding Commission and no complaint concerning a State Member of the Council of Europe has been retained for further examination.

6. Manpower

The I. L. O.'s concern for European migration was pointed out in a memorandum presented to the Council of Europe last year. Reference was made to the work carried out with the Special Migration Fund placed at the disposal of the I. L. 0. by member countries of 0. E. E. C. Migration field missions were set up in Italy, Germany and Austria to provide direct practical assistance to the Governments of these countries in connection with emigration and related questions, including employment service organisation and vocational training. The missions attempted to help develop a sound basis for orderly emigration, both from Europe overseas and from one European country to another. With the ending of work which was made possible by this Special Migration Fund, it has been necessary to close the field missions in Germany and Austria. The I. L. 0. continues its general interest in migration information services. Within the framework of this service, the I. L. 0. is publishing a special two-monthly bulletin entitled " Migration ", arid is compiling a series of monographs on the immigration policies and legislation of the main migrant-receiving countries in Europe and overseas. In its migration work the I. L. 0. is acting in close co-operation with the Provisional Intergovernmental Committee for the Movement of Migrants from Europe. In its approach to European manpower problems, the I. L. 0. has also continued to emphasise supervisory training.

The I. L. 0. has worked out an occupational classification for migration and placement purposes; I. L. 0. technicians have worked closely with a number of European countries in this task, including Austria, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom, in order to develop a comparability between national systems and the I. L. 0. international system. The I. L. O.'s work in the whole field of training, labour mobility and inter-European migration bears directly upon the manpower aspects of raising productivity.

The I. L. 0. continues to give technical assistance on manpower questions to European countries. There are two I. L. 0. technical assistance projects in Italy, one for training within industry and the other for creation of two centres for the training of instructors for vocational training of adult workers. An extensive training project is being developed in Yugoslavia; foreign foremen and technicians are being sent to give supplementary training to qualified workers and foremen, while Yugoslav technicians, skilled workers and foremen are being sent to several European countries for supplementary training. Training experts and an apprenticeship expert are at work in Greece, and a new project for a centre for the training of instructors in Greece is being worked upon. Discussions are proceeding with the Government of Austria with a view to the I. L. 0. assisting in the creation of one or more centres for the training of adult workers, some of whom would, in turn, be helped to find fruitful employment in countries of emigration.

7. Wages

The I. L. 0. has been concerned both with long-term objectives of wages policy and with certain problems which are of special interest in view of present conditions. As regards long-term objectives of policy, the memorandum presented to the Council of Europe last year referred to the international standards approved by the Conference on protection of wages and fair wage clauses in public contracts. In 1951, a Convention and a Recommendation were adopted establishing the principle of equal remuneration for men and women workers for work of equal value. The I. L. 0. has continued to study problems in the application of this principle. A Convention and a Recommendation on minimum wage-fixing machinery in agriculture were also adopted in 1951.

Among problems of particular temporary interest, the I. L. 0. has been devoting attention to wages policy in conditions of full employment and particularly in relation to inflationary pressures. Another matter of interest, as a means of increasing productivity and real wages, is that of systems of payment by results. A meeting of experts on payment by results met in April, 1951. The studies prepared for the meeting of experts on systems of payment by results modified in accordance with suggestions made at the meeting, together with the

conclusions of the experts, have been published by the International Labour Office[3]. The experts stressed the primary importance of good labour-management relations as a condition for the successful introduction and operation of wage incentive schemes.

The I. L. 0. is also continuing to study the guaranteed wage, both as regards general problems and with reference to specific industries (i. e. stabilisation of dockworkers' earnings and application of the guaranteed wage to the construction industry).

8. Labour Problems in European Transport

During the past year the I. L. 0. dealt with three questions of special concern in European transport. The Inland Transport Committee (December, 1951) of the I. L. 0. had before it the question of labour problems in the co-ordination of transport. The I. L. O.'s consideration of this question is connected with the study, by the Economic Commission for Europe, of problems of co-ordination of transport. The I. L. 0. has proposed specific measures to ensure the observance of fair labour standards in the operation of transport undertakings in each country and to cover cases in which co-ordination of transport is liable to affect the workers concerned adversely. The Inland Transport Committee also drew up clauses concerning conditions of employment to be included in the Standard Set of Rules for the commercial transport of passengers and goods by road in international traffic in Europe, which is being prepared by the Economic Commission for Europe. A series of detailed clauses was drawn up by the Inland Transport Committee covering drivers' qualifications, hours of work and rest periods, wages, safety, social security and miscellaneous provisions.

The I. L. 0. though its Joint Maritime Commission, on which shipowners and seafarers are represented, has given preliminary consideration to the effect of competition in the short-sea trades of West and North West Europe upon the wages and other conditions of employment of seafarers engaged in these trades. The Congress of the International Transport Workers Federation has proposed that the I. L. 0. convene a regional maritime conference on this question.

The Inland Transport Committee has proposed that the I. L. 0. study the effect of prevailing competition on wages and conditions of employment of workers in North Sea and Channel ports.

9. Occupational Health and Safety

The International Labour Conference has before it the question of protection of the health of workers in places of employment. This covers notification of occupational diseases, technical measures for the control of health hazards, and medical examinations. Problems of dust suppression and prevention are being given special attention by the I. L. 0. ; a meeting of experts on dust prevention and suppression in mining, tunnelling and quarrying is to be held shortly, and the I. L. 0. is studying dust suppression in coal mines, hazards of sand blasting in the metal trades and dust suppression in the unloading of cereal cargoes. Other studies carried out by the I. L. 0. relate to accident prevention policies in agriculture, safety in coal mines and the textile industries, classification and labelling of dangerous substances and transport of dangerous goods, safety and health in the chemical industries, the possibility of taking international action in Europe to reduce the frequency and severity of accidents in railway coupling operations, the health of workers in shops and offices, the standardisation of push-button controls for machines and other installations, and limitation of loads.

10. Conditions of Work applicable to varions occupations

The question of employment of young persons underground in coal mines is before the International Labour Conference, with a view to the adoption of a Recommendation at the 1953 session. Hours of work in coal mines are to be considered by a future session of the Conference. A Convention and a Recommendation concerning holidays with pay in agriculture were adopted by the Conference at the 1952 session. The I. L. 0. has co-operated with the F. A. 0. in the preparation of a report for the Economic Commission for Europe; on the status of tenant farmers and sharecroppers in Europe. This study gives a summary and analysis of the principal legal aspects of tenancy and sharecropping in European countries, and deals with the lease contract, the length of the lease and its renewal, access to ownership, the responsibility of the two parties in the management of the farm, rent, compensation and arbitration. The Office has published a report on conditions of work in the fishing industry and is awaiting the views of Governments before taking further action. The question of seafarers' welfare in ports is under study. The I. L. 0. has been associated with the International

3. See publications of the I. L. 0 . , Payment by Results, Geneva, 1951.

Union for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works (Berne Union) in the drafting of a Convention regarding the rights of performers, manufacturers of phonographic records and similar instruments and broadcasting organisations. Problems of domestic workers in were considered by a special meeting of experts 1951. The experts proposed a discussion of international standards applicable to such workers. A Convention on maternity protection, which revises an earlier Convention of 1919, was adopted by the 1952 session of the Conference. Special problems of women workers were discussed at a meeting of experts held in december 1951.