

The

International

Labour

Organisation

What it is

How it works

What it does

A brief introduction to a democratic international institution which has been working for 25 years for better conditions for working men, women and children.



What the I.L.O. is

The International Labour Organisation is an official (international) association of States, financed by Governments but democratically controlled by representatives of employers' and workers' organisations as well as of Governments.

Its Purpose

Its purpose is to promote social justice in all the countries of the world and thereby to help to secure permanent peace and well-being.

How the I.L.O. Began

After the First World War, organised workers demanded that they, who had suffered so much from the war, should gain something of permanent value to them out of the Peace Conference. The I.L.O. was therefore set up as an organisation which would concern itself specially with conditions of employment and standards of living of working men, women and children throughout the world.

How the I.L.O. Works

The machinery of the Organisation consists of: *The International Labour Office; The Governing Body of the Office; The International Labour Conference.*

The Office

The International Labour Office acts as the secretariat of the whole Organisation, a world centre for information, research and advice, and a publishing house. The Government, and the employers' and workers' organisations in any country seeking a solution for a social problem can find out from the Office what other countries have done to deal with the same problem and can make use of comparative analyses by experts of the results of various methods adopted in different countries. Governments can even obtain the technical assistance of experts in drafting or amending their legislation and setting up or remodelling their labour and social administration. This service is open to all countries and has been used by countries as

diverse as China, Egypt, the United Kingdom, Canada and Venezuela (to name only a few).

The staff of the Office come from some forty countries and they act as international servants, independent of the Government of the country to which they belong and impartially at the service of all countries.

The Office publishes a monthly *International Labour Review*, a *Legislative Series* giving texts and translations of important labour and social legislation in all countries, a *Year Book of Labour Statistics*, and many periodicals and special studies dealing with particular subjects. Nearly all of these are published in two languages and some of them in three (English, French and Spanish).

The Governing Body

The Governing Body exercises general supervision over the work of the Office and frames its budget, appoints the Director of the Office, and fixes the agenda of the Conference (so far as it is not fixed by the Conference itself). It is composed of 16 Government representatives and 16 representatives of employers' and workers' organisations (divided equally between workers and employers), and includes members drawn from every continent.

The International Labour Conference

The Conference is a world parliament for the consideration of labour and social questions. Each national delegation to the annual meetings comprises four delegates, two representing the Government, one representing organised employers, and one representing organised workers; each of these three sections speaks and votes independently of the others, so that all points of view find free expression.

Besides providing a meeting place and platform for the exchange of views and information between delegates having a responsible concern for labour and social questions, the Conference acts as a kind of advisory parliament, which formulates international minimum standards to which national legislation and administration should conform. These are drawn up after thorough fact-finding and enquiry by the Office and discussion in the Conference, and as a two-thirds majority of the Conference is required for their adoption they embody the general agreement of informed world opinion on the subjects they deal with. The

decisions of the Conference are formulated in a special kind of international treaty called a *Convention* or in a *Recommendation* (which is somewhat less formal than a Convention).

These Conventions and Recommendations do not automatically become binding when they have been adopted by the Conference; the I.L.O. does not dictate to any Government or people. But Governments are obliged to submit them to their national legislatures. If a country decides to accept a Convention, it is bound to apply it and its Government must submit every year a report showing exactly what measures it has taken to give effect to the Convention.

International Labour Conventions and Recommendations

In the twenty years 1919-1939 the Conference held twenty-five sessions and adopted 67 Conventions and 66 Recommendations. The Conventions have secured nearly nine hundred formal ratifications by Governments. The subjects dealt with covered a very wide range and included:

- Hours of Work
- Holidays with Pay
- Regulation of Conditions of Work of Women
- Protection of Child Workers
- Prevention and Compensation of Industrial Accidents
- Insurance against Unemployment, Sickness, Old Age and Death
- Apprenticeship and Training for Employment
- Colonial Labour Problems
- Living and Working Conditions of Seamen at Sea and Ashore

The I.L.O. and the War

The outbreak of the war dealt a severe blow to the I.L.O., but could not kill it. Because the problems with which the I.L.O. deals are even more acute in wartime than in peacetime, because the I.L.O. had by general consent proved really useful, and because it was broad-based on the organisations of those who carry on the work of the world, everybody was determined that the I.L.O. must continue not only in being but actively at work. So the essential staff was held together and is now being expanded again, the

collection and publication of information and the giving of assistance to Governments have been continued, and new fields of work have been opened up. The regular annual sessions of the Conference had at first to be suspended, but a special Conference, at which 34 countries were represented, was held in New York in October 1941, and the regular series of Conferences has now been resumed.

The I.L.O. and the Peace

The New York Conference declared unanimously that the I.L.O. should be called upon to play an effective part in the reconstruction of the world after the war and for that purpose should be represented at the Peace Conference and be associated with the planning and carrying out of measures of reconstruction both nationally and internationally. President Roosevelt, for the United States, Mr. Eden and Mr. Bevin for the United Kingdom, and leading statesmen of many other Governments have all paid tribute to the value of the work already done by the I.L.O., to the merits of its special system of associating workers and employers with Governments in the settlement of social problems, and to the unique contribution it can make towards building a new and better world in the "Century of the Common Man".

So, in 1944, the I.L.O. celebrated its twenty-fifth year of useful work by resuming the regular annual sessions of its Conference. The 26th Session of the Conference met at Philadelphia in April and May 1944, and was attended by 132 delegates, with 228 advisers, from 41 countries, under the chairmanship of Walter Nash, Deputy Prime Minister of New Zealand. It devoted itself to the problems of the peace settlement, the transition from war to peace, and the laying of the foundations of a world order of full employment and prosperity after the war. The Conference began by adopting a restatement of the aims and purposes of the I.L.O. itself, in the form of a "Declaration of Philadelphia", which President Roosevelt described as "a landmark in world thinking". The Declaration reasserts certain fundamental principles. One is that "Poverty anywhere constitutes a danger to prosperity everywhere". Another is that "All human beings, irrespective of race, creed or sex, have the right to pursue both their material well-being and their spiritual development in conditions of freedom and dignity, of economic security and equal

opportunity". It then goes on to outline a ten-point programme of action to give effect to these principles, beginning with full employment and the raising of standards of living. The Conference also adopted resolutions concerning social provisions in the peace settlement and on economic policies for the attainment of social objectives. It set out in three Recommendations proposals for dealing with the problems of orderly and speedy transfer of workers from the armed forces and war work to productive employment for the purposes of peace. In three other Recommendations are set out guiding principles for social security and medical care and suggested methods of giving effect to them. In a seventh Recommendation it made a substantial beginning with the framing of a policy to ensure that the millions of inhabitants of colonies and other dependent territories shall enjoy their rightful share of the benefits of world social and economic progress.

The 27th Session of the Conference will be held in Paris in October 1945. Its agenda will include "the maintenance of high levels of employment during the period of industrial rehabilitation and reconversion"; "welfare of children and young workers"; and "minimum standards of social policy in dependent territories (supplementary provisions)".

The I.L.O. and the People

This is in brief what the I.L.O. has done and is doing. But the I.L.O. is a democratic institution, and democratic institutions work properly only if they are watched, supported, encouraged and stimulated by the people. Every member of a trade union, an employers' association, a farmers' union, a co-operative society, a political party—every conscientious citizen should know what the I.L.O. is doing. He and she can do so by reading I.L.O. publications. A list of some of the more popular of these, and of the addresses from which they can be obtained, is given below.

SOME I.L.O. PUBLICATIONS

PERIODICALS

International Labour Review (*monthly*)

Price per number: 50 cents; 2s.

Annual subscription: \$5; 21s.

Legislative Series (*quarterly*)

Any text can be purchased separately, at prices ranging upwards from 2 cents or 1d.

Annual subscription: \$5; 20s.

Industrial Safety Survey (*quarterly*)

Illustrated. Price per number: 50 cents; 2s.

Annual subscription: \$1.50; 7s. 6d.

Year Book of Labour Statistics

Price: *paper*, \$2; 8s.; *cloth*, \$3; 10s. 6d.

SOME OTHER PUBLICATIONS

Social Policy in Dependent Territories

September 1944. vi + 185 pp. Price: *paper*, \$1; 4s.
boards, \$1.50; 6s.

The Common Interest in International Economic Organisation

by J. B. CONDLIFFE and A. STEVENSON

October 1944. vi + 135 pp. Price: *paper*, \$1; 4s.
boards, \$1.50; 6s.

The Exploitation of Foreign Labour by Germany

July 1945. v + 286 pp. Price: *paper*, \$1.50; 6s.
boards, \$2; 7s. 6d.

The I.L.O. at Work

An illustrated bulletin issued at irregular intervals to keep the public informed of the I.L.O.'s activities.

Free of charge.

The Declaration of Philadelphia

In pocket folder form or small poster size.

Free of charge.

All I.L.O. publications, free literature, specimen copies of periodicals, and a catalogue of recent publications, giving details of prices and subscriptions, may be obtained from the following addresses:

THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR OFFICE
3480 University Street, Montreal, 2, Canada;

THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR OFFICE
Geneva, Switzerland;

from the following Branch Offices:

China: Mr. Hai-fong CHENG, P.O. Box 264, East Szechuan Post Office, Chungking.

France: Mrs. A. MOREL, 205 Boulevard St. Germain, Paris, VII^e.

Great Britain: Mr. Clifton ROBBINS, 38 Parliament Street, London, S.W. 1.

India: Mr. P. P. PILLAI, International Labour Office (Indian Branch), New Delhi.

United States: Mrs. Elizabeth ROWE, 734 Jackson Place, Washington, 6, D.C.

or from Correspondents in Brazil, Greece, Iraq and Sweden, and Agents in Australia, Brazil, Canada, Egypt, Great Britain, Ireland, Palestine, and Union of South Africa, as well as other countries.