

who has taken an active and loyal part in the work of the Organisation from its inception.

A brief account of the discussions is given below, question by question.

In opening the Session, the retiring Chairman, Mr. Bramsnaes (Denmark), referred to the fact that since the last Session in June two new Members had joined the International Labour Organisation: the United States and the Soviet Union.\* He warmly welcomed the new Members and expressed his opinion that their collaboration would help in the development of social progress throughout the world, the chief aim of the Organisation. He then welcomed the new members—Government, employers' and workers' representatives—of the Governing Body.

The representatives of the Argentine Republic, Mexico, and China thanked the Chairman in the name of their respective countries.

#### Election of Officers

Just before the annual election of the officers was to take place, Mr. Picquenard for the Government group, Mr. Olivetti for the employers' group, Mr. Mertens for the workers' group, and Mr. Harold Butler for the International Labour Office expressed their appreciation of the way in which Mr. Bramsnaes had filled his office during the past year. Mr. Bramsnaes thanked his colleagues for their tributes, which he deeply appreciated.

Mr. de Michelis, Italian Government representative, was then appointed Chairman of the Governing Body for the year 1934-1935.

In taking the chair, Mr. de Michelis expressed his gratitude to his colleagues and praised the work of all his predecessors from the late Arthur Fontaine to Mr. Bramsnaes, who although he ceased to be Chairman would continue to work with the Governing Body, since Denmark had named him as Deputy Member for Spain.

The Chairman then emphasised the importance of the increased membership of the Governing Body and of the entry of the United States and the Soviet Union into the International Labour Organisation. This new situation, he said, raised new problems, which the Governing Body would attempt to solve in a spirit of understanding and justice. The strengthened authority which resulted for the International Labour Organisation ought also to lead to greater activity and output.

The following were then elected:—

Government Vice-President: Mr. Riddell (Canada).

Employers' Vice-President: Mr. Oersted (Denmark).

Workers' Vice-President: Mr. Mertens (Belgium).

#### Revision of the Convention limiting Hours of Work in Coal Mines

The Governing Body considered the record of the proceedings of the tripartite meeting which it had convened in order to facilitate the simultaneous ratification in the near future of the 1931 Convention on hours of work in coal mines.

\* At that date the Assembly of the League of Nations had not yet approved the admission of Afghanistan, and Ecuador had not yet notified the Council of the League of its accession.

It will be remembered that this meeting was held at Geneva on 26 and 27 June, and that representatives of Belgium, Czechoslovakia, France, Great Britain, the Netherlands, and Poland took part. Certain Governments having explained that they would meet with difficulties in the application of some of the provisions of the Convention, the question arose of considering the partial revision of the Convention on certain specific points in order to allow of simultaneous ratification by the chief coal-producing countries of Europe, which were enumerated in the Article of the Convention dealing with its coming into operation. The Governing Body had to decide what action should be taken.

During the discussion of the question several speakers from all three groups expressed their sympathy for the victims of the recent mining disaster in North Wales.

As regards the subject under discussion, the workers' representatives opposed the revision of the 1931 Convention, since they held that the difficulties referred to could be solved within the present framework of the Convention. They added that if nevertheless the procedure for revision were to be opened, they would demand that the revision should deal not only with the points raised by various Governments as causing difficulties in regard to practical application, but also with the number of hours of work fixed by the 1931 Convention in order to reduce still further the hours worked in coal mines.

The employers' group opposed the opening of the procedure of revision, just as it had been opposed to the holding of the tripartite meeting, which it felt served no useful purpose. At this meeting Germany, one of the seven coal-producing countries specifically named in the Convention, was absent, and the six others held to their decision not to ratify unless all seven ratified simultaneously inside the framework of the Organisation. Moreover, even if the seven European countries ratified, there still remained the danger that coal-producing countries outside Europe would not feel bound by any obligation to ratify, and the resulting competition would certainly be a serious matter for the whole community, for workers as much as for employers. Besides, revision would not remove the danger of the competition of cheaper sources of power, in particular water-power and oil. These economic reasons, which prevented the employers' group from supporting the Draft Convention in 1931, still existed to-day in their entirety, and the proposed revision, which would deal with technical points only, did not dissipate them.

After prolonged discussion the Governing Body decided by 21 votes (12 Government and 8 workers' representatives) to 8 (employers' representatives) to open the procedure for revision of the 1931 Convention on hours of work in coal mines.

A proposal by Mr. Forbes Watson (employer, Great Britain) to send to the Governments a record of the tripartite meeting and ask for their observations on all the Articles of the 1931 Convention was rejected by 20 votes to 7.

By 19 votes, without opposition, the Governing Body decided to communicate to the Governments the five points noted by the tripartite meeting as raising difficulties in connection with practical application.

Finally, by 17 votes to 6, on a proposal by the workers' group, the Governing Body agreed also to communicate to the Governments a sixth point, raising the question of limiting hours of work in coal mines to a smaller number than that laid down in the 1931 Convention.

#### The Director's Visit to the United States and Mexico

In connection with the discussion on the Director's Report on the activity of the Organisation, Mr. Harold Butler notified the Governing Body of his intended visit to the United States immediately after the Session then in progress. The Director has thus acted on the invitation to attend the annual Convention of the American Federation of Labour which was extended to him by Mr. John Lewis at the last Session of the International Labour Conference and was subsequently confirmed by Mr. Green, President of the Federation.

The representative of the Mexican Government, Mr. P. de Alba, expressed the satisfaction of his Government that Mr. Butler also proposed to visit Mexico during his trip to America. He assured the Governing Body that the Government and the employers' and workers' organisations of Mexico would be glad to profit from the Director's visit to consult him on various technical problems, and he felt sure that Mr. Butler would be interested to see on the spot the results of the application of Mexican social legislation.

#### Mr. Maurette's Mission to Japan

The Governing Body then considered the report submitted by Mr. Fernand Maurette, one of the Assistant-Directors of the Office, on his mission to Japan last April.

Mr. Oersted (employer, Denmark) congratulated Mr. Maurette on his excellent report, and hoped that it would be published by the International Labour Office.

Mr. Yoshisaka (Japanese Government representative) praised the value and objectivity of the report and endorsed the wish for its publication. He said that the report would help to spread a better knowledge of Japanese labour conditions. These had improved during the last few years and the Japanese Government took the greatest interest in the welfare of the working classes. In regard to the charge of "social dumping," Mr. Maurette's report showed clearly that such dumping did not exist in Japan. Mr. Yoshisaka then made a few observations on certain points in the report referring to small undertakings and the "family system." In conclusion, he expressed the wish that the International Labour Office should institute similar enquiries in all the countries belonging to the Organisation, taking into account, as for Japan, their economic, geographical, ethnological, and other special conditions.

Mr. Kupers (worker, Netherlands) also spoke of the interest of Mr. Maurette's report and noted among other things the statement that, from the point of view of equipment and organisation, Japanese industry is at present as efficient as industry in Europe and America. This showed that Japan had no further right to exceptions such as were allowed for in the International Labour Conventions. When the Conference draws up future Conventions on international working conditions, Japan should be placed on the same footing as the countries of Europe and America.

Mr. Picquenard (Government, France) added his congratulations on the report and urged its publication.

Mr. Jouhaux (worker, France) also praised the report and emphasised the seriousness of Japanese competition, which threatened industrial activity and the conditions of the workers in many countries. It was possible that there had not been systematic efforts in Japan to effect "social dumping" in order to reduce costs by lowering the conditions of labour, but it was none the less true that actual conditions in Japanese industry amounted to dumping. Such being the case, workers in other countries could not accept the situation from a purely objective standpoint. They reminded the Japanese Government that it was not enough merely not to diminish the Japanese workers' standard of living; it should be raised. The workers who had achieved higher standards should not be forced to give them up, but those on a lower standard should advance, for without that civilisation would be an empty word.

Mr. Joshi (worker, India) saw in the report an important step towards strengthening the relations between the International Labour Organisation and Far-Eastern countries. It was very important that the Organisation should clearly understand working conditions in Asia. He added that Asiatic workers did not want their conditions of life to be a danger to the workers of other countries. They wished to obtain conditions at least equal to those existing in the most advanced countries. The amelioration of working conditions in the East should be one of the main objects of the International Labour Organisation.

Mr. Schürch (worker, Switzerland) agreed with the observations made by Mr. Kupers and Mr. Jouhaux.

Mr. Yoshisaka (Japanese Government representative) replied to the arguments made by the workers' group. He stated that he also felt that the situation of Japanese workers should continue to be improved, but this could be done only if the situation of the other classes of the population improved at the same time, since social progress depended on economic progress. He pointed out that only some of the Conventions adopted at the 1919 Conference at Washington contained special clauses for Japan, and that these were not to be found in the Conventions adopted since.

Mr. Leggett (Government, Great Britain) expressed the opinion that Mr. Maurette's report should be published under the author's name.

This was agreed to.

#### The Forty-Hour Week

The Governing Body then considered the question of the forty-hour week. It had to decide what steps to take in pursuance of the resolution adopted on the question by the International Labour Conference in June last.

It will be remembered that this resolution affirmed that the reduction of hours of work, considered either as a palliative of unemployment or as a method of enabling the workers to share in the benefits of technical progress, remained one of the principal tasks of the International Labour Organisation. It noted that the Conference had approved the principle of the forty-hour week, but that it was not possible during this year's Session to reach the necessary quorum on the drafts under consideration, and it requested the International