



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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An address by the Minister of Labour, Mr. Milton F. Gregg, delivered at a Plenary Meeting of the 36th Session of the International Labour Conference, at Geneva, June 8, 1953.

....I do not want to make a speech in the formal sense. Instead, I should like to talk to you from a Canadian point of view about some of the things in which we have a common interest. One of the purposes for which the ILO was formed - now over a generation ago - was to have a forum for discussion of mutual problems in the labour field. I do not wish to undervalue the legislative and operational tasks the ILO has done so very well over the years, but this opportunity for discussion, I feel, remains one of its most important functions.

The formal documents adopted here - the conventions, the recommendations and the declarations - are the visible symbols of the urge to push on in the only kind of war we all like to fight: the war against poverty and social injustice. But of even greater importance than the documents is the spirit in which we meet here, the progress we make in understanding one another, in our hearts as well as in our minds, so that we may share ideas that will help us in this common effort that transcends all barriers of language, training and custom.

I know the ILO is experienced in methods to promote this common effort. Its reports and studies help each of us to appreciate the needs and aspirations of other member countries. Each year the Director-General gives us a review of the over-all world labour picture to keep us aware of how much needs to be done and also each year to focus our thoughts upon a specific task.

This year his special theme is productivity. Useful work was done on the question of productivity by a Committee of Experts last December. I share the Director-General's satisfaction at the success of that Committee in reaching agreement on important matters of substance. It is to be hoped that the Report will do much to dispel the uncertainties that often surround the subject - uncertainties on the part of labour or management that may cause either to be averse to useful changes; uncertainties on the part of governments that may cause them to sponsor policies that thwart rather than encourage increases in productivity.

As the Director-General points out, the question of productivity has different aspects in different countries, depending on such matters as the degree of industrialisation. In Canada our perspective is that of a country in the midst of rapid industrial expansion.