

RATIFICATION OF DRAFT CONVENTIONS OF WASHINGTON CONFERENCE.

A summary of the action that has been taken in the various countries towards the ratification of the draft conventions of the Washington Conference is contained in Bulletin No. 5, of the International Labor Office at Geneva. It follows:

1. "Countries the Parliaments of which have adopted one or more laws ratifying the Draft Conventions and which have addressed to the Secretary-General of the League of Nations a notification of formal ratification:

Greece. The Greek Parliament has passed six laws ratifying the six Draft Conventions adopted at Washington and in addition a further law giving effect to the recommendation relating to the prohibition of the use of white phosphorus in the manufacture of matches. The Greek Government has telegraphed that it has forwarded formal ratification of all the Draft Conventions to the Secretary-General of the League of Nations.

2. "Countries in which one of the Chambers has adopted one or more bills concerning ratification of the Draft Conventions:

Belgium. The Government intends to proceed as follows: (a) The Draft Conventions have been signed by the King and a bill ratifying them will be introduced during the next session of Parliament which begins in November, 1920.

(b) Later, bills will be presented modifying existing legislation in order to adapt it to the Draft Conventions. A bill (No. 200) was presented to the Chamber of Representatives on the 26th March, 1920 and passed by 142 votes to 12. This bill gives effect to the Washington Draft Conventions relating to hours of work, the minimum age of admission of children to industrial employment and the night work of women and children.

3. "Countries whose Governments have presented bills to their Parliaments:

South Africa. The Government is bringing the Draft Conventions before Parliament with a view to their ratification on 1st Dec.

France. Concurrently with the measures of ratification in France, existing legislation is being modified by laws and decrees. Five bills to ratify five of the Washington Draft Conventions (the exception being that relating to unemployment) were presented to the Chamber of Deputies on the 29th April, 1920.

Great Britain. Bill No. 2 of the 18th August, 1919, relating to hours of employment is at the moment under revision before being introduced into the House of Commons. The object of this revision is to adapt the bill more completely to the dispositions of the Washington Conventions.

A further bill to give effect to the Draft Conventions of Washington relating to the minimum age of industrial undertakings and for the employment of women and children by night, was introduced into the House of Commons by the Home Secretary on the 4th May, 1920. It is probable that the bill will be passed before the end of the autumn session. The Ministry of Health has under consideration the Draft Convention concerning the employment of women before and after childbirth. The Draft Conventions and Recommendations concerning unemployment will probably be considered by the House of Commons in the autumn session. Finally a bill concerning the em-

ployment of women and children in undertakings in which there is a risk of lead poisoning was presented to the House of Commons on the 10th August, 1920.

Italy. A bill consisting of a single article and ratifying the six Washington Draft Conventions was presented to the Chamber of Deputies on the 14th July, 1919 by the Government.

Venezuela. The Draft Conventions and Recommendations have been submitted to the National Congress of the United States of Venezuela. The International Labor Office will be informed of the measures taken.

"Countries actually engaged on the study of the Washington texts:

Germany. The German Government has had in preparation since last year a bill to give effect to the Washington Draft Conventions concerning hours of work. This bill is said to be in harmony with the convention in all essential points. It has, nevertheless, a provision which permits hours of labor in excess of those provided for by the Washington Convention, as the result of agreements between employers and workers' organizations. The German Government does not consider that it can dispense with this provision and it has therefore asked if it would be possible to ratify the Washington Convention on this reservation. (See similar request presented by Poland.)

As far as the other decisions of the Washington Conference are concerned, the German Government does not yet see clearly the legislative measures which it may be necessary to take.

The German Government intends to present the Draft Conventions and Recommendations to the Reichstag very shortly, possibly in the autumn.

Argentina. Bills are in course of preparation by the Director of Labor to give effect to the Washington Conventions.

Labor legislation in the Argentine is already in harmony with the Washington Convention in all important respects. No serious opposition therefore is to be feared. The employers' and workers' delegates at Washington have presented reports in favor of ratification. The bills will be sent to the International Labor Office.

The Draft Convention concerning hours of labor will be embodied in a bill. No difficulty is expected as hours of labor are already regulated in the Argentine.

The Interim President of the Department of Labor informed the office by letter dated 5th April last that the Argentine Parliament would examine the Draft Conventions when it met again in ordinary session in May, 1920.

Once a study of the memorandum recently sent by Austria shows clearly that the application of the Washington Conventions will only be a question of time.

These insignificant modifications to the existing law. The Secretary of State for Social Administration has promised to give priority to the ratification of the Washington Conventions. The Austrian Government has been requested to take steps to ratify the Conventions as soon as possible.

Chile. Three bills, which in their essential details correspond with the Washington Conventions, have been presented to the National Congress. They apply: (a) to hours of labor (this bill shows considerable difference from the Washington Convention); (b) to public health and industrial security; (c) to the employment of women and children. (This bill only prohibits the employment of children before the age of 12 years. The night work of women and young persons under 16 years of age is also prohibited. Young persons between the ages of 14 and 18 years are not to be employed in occupations dangerous to their health and morals.)

India. The Washington texts are at present being examined by the Government of India which is consulting with the provincial Governments and the organizations concerned. No decision has as yet been taken. The Government of India will probably be in a position to make proposals at the beginning of the autumn and any legislation that may be proposed will probably be introduced to the Legislative Council of India during the coming winter.

Luxembourg. The texts of the Washington Conventions have been transmitted to the Department of Commerce, Industry and Labor.

Except in so far as questions relating to insurance against unemployment, employment of women before and after child-birth, prevention of anthrax and the protection of women and children against lead poisoning are concerned, the existing legislation in Luxembourg is in more or less complete agreement with the Washington Conventions.

The Grand-Ducal Government is in favor of ratifying the Draft Conventions. The only difficulties which have arisen are in connection with the question of insurance against unemployment owing to the small number of workers in Luxembourg and the small extent of its territory.

Nicaragua. Those provisions of the Draft Conventions which interest particularly the Ministry of Public Works have been submitted to it for examination.

Norway. Two committees, which have been appointed by the Government are at present engaged in examining the Draft Conventions and Recommendations. They will report to the

Ministry of Social Affairs which after having studied the reports will transmit them to the Government. The latter will then decide what action is to be taken. If it is necessary to modify any of the existing laws, modifications will be presented to the Storting in the form of a bill prepared by the Government.

Poland. The Washington texts have been submitted to the examination of the Secretary for Development and Public Works.

The Ministry of Labor and Social Assistance is engaged in studying the Draft Conventions and Recommendations. They have asked if the Polish Government may be authorized to ratify the Draft Conventions with certain reservations. These reservations concern: (a) employment of women before and after child-birth; (b) employment of women by night; (c) unemployment.

The International Labor Office has replied to this question in the negative.

Spain. The Draft Conventions have been sent to the Institute of Social Reform which is engaged in preparing the necessary legislation. Parliament has just been dissolved but as soon as the new Parliament meets bills ratifying the Washington Draft Conventions will be brought before it.

Sweden. The act of 19th October, 1919, concerning the limitation of hours of employment is in general agreement with the Draft Convention of Washington, except in a few respects. This law, however, has only a provisional character. It will only continue in operation until 1923 and the Swedish Government declares that it will be difficult to modify it before that date.

There will be no difficulty as far as the Conventions relating to the age of admission of children to industrial employment, to the employment of children by night, to the employment of women by night and to unemployment are concerned. Further, the adoption of the Recommendations concerning unemployment

and the reciprocity of treatment of foreign workers will appear to encounter very little opposition. It was further decided during the Session of 1919 that Sweden should adhere to the Bernese Convention concerning the prohibition of the use of white phosphorus.

On the other hand, it is doubtful whether the provisions of the Draft Convention concerning the employment of women before and after child-birth will be accepted in Sweden.

The Draft Conventions and Recommendations will be examined by Parliament during next Session, which begins in January 1921.

Switzerland. The Swiss Department of Public Economy is examining the procedure to be followed with regard to ratification. A thorough study of the Draft Convention concerning hours of work has been made by

Switzerland. A conference of representatives of employers' and workers' organizations met in Zurich on the 13th and 14th September last under the Presidency of Mr. Schulthess, Federal Councillor, in order to examine the measures to be taken with regard to the Draft Conventions and Recommendations adopted at Washington. All the decisions of the Washington Conference were discussed, with the exception of the Draft Convention concerning hours of labor which was put back for discussion at a special conference.

The Congress approved the Draft Conventions concerning the minimum age of admission of children to industrial employment and concerning the employment of women and children by night. On the other hand, the employers' representatives formulated certain objections against the Draft concerning unemployment.

Further, the Draft Convention concerning the employment of women before and after child-birth received a very favorable reception. It appears that the application of this Draft Convention will meet with difficulties, particularly of a financial character. Finally the Congress accepted the

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