

The tripartite structure of the ILO is unique among the Specialized Agencies of the United Nations. Representatives of governments, employers and workers from the 80 member states participate freely in determining ILO activities and policies.* One important method of achieving its objectives is by the adoption of conventions and recommendations at the regular sessions of the International Labour Conference. Ratification of these conventions by member states is a voluntary matter, but when countries do ratify an ILO convention they are obliged to bring their labour standards into agreement with the provisions of the convention and to report annually on its implementation. Recommendations are not subject to ratification but set forth general principles to guide governments and agencies in drafting regulations in various industrial fields.

In its forty years of existence, the International Labour Organization has adopted 111 conventions and 111 recommendations, forming a broadly systematic labour code covering freedom of association, industrial relations, equal pay for equal work, employment and unemployment, discrimination, forced labour, protection of women and young persons, working conditions, hours of work, weekly rest, industrial safety and health, social security, vocational training and rehabilitation, special problems in various industries and occupations, and many other related subjects.

Canada has ratified a total of 18 conventions dealing with labour statistics, hours of work and weekly rest in industry, conditions of employment of seafarers and dock workers, minimum wage-fixing machinery, and the employment service. As Canada is a federal state, in which most labour matters lie wholly or partly within the jurisdiction of the provinces constitutional considerations impede the ratification by Canada of most ILO conventions.

Two sessions of the International Labour Conference were held in Geneva during 1958. The 41st (Maritime) session met from April 29 to May 14, and was attended by 370 delegates, advisers and observers from 46 member states interested in maritime matters. The Conference revised the 1949 convention concerning wages, hours of work on board ship and manning, and adopted also a supplementary recommendation. The revised convention treats each of its subjects individually (wages, hours of work and manning) and provides that each part can be ratified separately. It sets a minimum monthly wage of £ 16 (British) or \$64 (U.S.) or equivalent, and provides for a maximum 48-hour week on deep sea ships and a maximum 56-hour week on coastal ships. The section on manning includes provisions designed to prevent excessive strain and overtime work for crews. The convention will come into force six months after ratification by nine out of 27 maritimes countries representing a major share of the world's shipping tonnage.

In addition, the 41st (Maritime) Conference adopted a convention on seafarers' identity documents and recommendations on the social conditions and safety of seafarers, on medical care of seamen, on ships' medical chests, and on the engagement of seafarers for vessels registered in a foreign country. A number of resolutions were adopted including resolutions on refugee seafarers, welfare in port, crew accommodation, atomic power and shipping, and fishermen's questions.

The 42nd session of the International Labour Conference met in Geneva from June 4 to 26, 1958, and was attended by nearly 900 delegates, advisers and observers from 73 member nations. The Honourable Michael

*See *Canada and the United Nations 1957* pp. 54-55, for details on the constitution of ILO.