

REFERENCE PAPERS

WARTIME

WARTIME INFORMATION BOARD, OTTAWA
BOARD

LIBRARY

No. 21.

April 18, 1944.

THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION

Delegates to the 1944 conference of the International Labour Organization in Philadelphia on April 20 face a broad range of problems embracing the future policy and program of the ILO.

Recommendations for post-war policy to be made to the United Nations, organization of employment in the transition period between war and post-war, social security and minimum standards of social policy in dependent territories, and the relationship of the ILO to other international agencies are receiving considerable attention.

Organized in 1919 for the purpose of raising living standards throughout the world through common action, the ILO has operated on the premise that "poverty anywhere constitutes a danger to prosperity everywhere, and that accordingly the war against want, while it requires to be carried on with unrelenting vigor within each nation, equally requires continuous and concerted international effort in which representatives of workers and employers, enjoying equal status with those of governments, join with them in free discussion and democratic decision with a view to the promotion of the common welfare."

Originally, to be a member of the ILO, a state had to be a member of the League of Nations. Later, however, some nations, notably Brazil and Japan, withdrew from the League while still remaining in the ILO, while others, such as the United States, joined the ILO without joining the League.

The autonomy which the ILO enjoys has set it apart from the difficulties which beset the League of Nations. This has permitted the ILO to enjoy a far greater measure of confidence than other international organizations and has contributed greatly to its success.

The organization receives financial support from the League of Nations and from all the member states according to size, population, natural resources and stage of economic development of each.

The governing body is made up of four delegates from each of the eight states of chief industrial importance. Two of these delegates are representatives of the government, and one each of labour and management. The governing body normally meets four times a year to outline the program for the yearly conferences, to work out the budget and to appoint a new director when necessary.

Canada and Belgium had seats on the governing body from 1919 to 1935. In 1935 the United States and Russia, which exceeded them in industrial importance, joined the ILO. Canada was then given a seat for a deputy-delegate, and Dr. W. A. Riddell, the League representative at Geneva, filled that position. In October of 1935 Germany withdrew from the ILO, and Canada's seat on the governing body was restored.

The permanent staff of the International Labour Office is the secretariat. Normally it is a body of some 400 experts in many fields who conduct extensive research on social conditions throughout the world, and on such specific measures as are to be considered by the organization. Unlike the secretariat of the League of Nations, which merely conducted the business and research decided on by the League, the ILO secretariat takes the initiative and makes recommendations to the organization. In the summer of 1940 the secretariat, somewhat reduced in numbers, moved from Geneva to Montreal, where it is now established on the campus of McGill University.