

Canadian participation

Canada's participation in international labour affairs dates from 1910, when Mackenzie King attended a labour conference at Lugano, Switzerland. The next year, as Minister of Labour, Mr. King acted on one of the conference recommendations by introducing a bill in the House of Commons to prohibit the use of white phosphorous in making matches. As already mentioned, Canada took an active part in the establishment of the International Labour Organization in 1919, and has supported it fully ever since. Canada has been represented by government, employer and worker delegates at each session of the International Labour Conference and has participated in many other ILO activities.

As early as 1926, Canada ratified four ILO maritime conventions and, by 1979 had ratified a total of 26 conventions dealing with conditions of employment of seafarers and dockers, hours of work and weekly rest in industry, minimum wage-fixing machinery, employment service organization, discrimination, employment policy, freedom of association, equal pay for equal work, and so forth. Canada reports regularly to the ILO on the measures that have been taken to implement these and other conventions. One factor that has contributed to limit the number of ratifications is that the large majority of ILO conventions are in areas that are, in Canada, mainly within provincial legislative

jurisdiction. In recent years, however, there has been increasing co-operation with the provinces on all ILO matters, and procedures have been developed for co-ordinated implementation and ratification of the more important ILO conventions.

In the past ten years, study of the requirements of the ILO conventions and their discussion at federal-provincial meetings has been a stimulus to improvements in labour legislation in various fields.

In the past, Canada obtained helpful advice from the International Labour Office when such matters as conciliation in labour disputes, unemployment insurance, and establishment of employment services were being considered. More recently, Canada has been able to repay this assistance by contributing to the development of the less-industrialized nations. The ILO has used Canadian experts in its technical-assistance program in underdeveloped countries, and has sent trainees from such countries to Canada for study and on-the-job training.

While the Department of External Affairs has the general responsibility for handling Canada's international relations, including its United Nations commitments, the Department of Labour is the official liaison agency between the Canadian government and the ILO. With the expansion in