

29. TRADE UNION RIGHTS (FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION)

The question of trade union rights had been placed on the agenda of the fourth session of the Economic and Social Council in February, 1947, by the World Federation of Trade Unions. This matter was referred by the Economic and Social Council to the International Labour Organization for study. The Economic and Social Council, at its fifth session, received the report of the I.L.O. and endorsed the findings of the organization with respect to trade union rights. In the Third Committee at the Second Session of the General Assembly, this section of the Council's report gave rise to a lengthy and at times acrimonious debate. The Soviet representative and the representative of the Slav States were opposed to endorsing the work done in the field of trade union rights in the Economic and Social Council and by the International Labour Organization. The Soviet representative criticized the action of the Economic and Social Council in referring memoranda of the World Federation of Trade Unions to the I.L.O. In addition, he stated that the I.L.O. report dealt with the right of association in general and not specifically with trade union rights.

During the debate, the Argentine representative sought to have included in the resolution on this subject a declaration on the rights of workers. This was opposed by the majority of the members of the Committee. Finally, a French resolution which endorsed the work of the I.L.O. and of the Economic and Social Council was approved by a vote of 31 in favour, 5 against, and 6 abstentions. Canada voted for this proposal. The resolution as adopted by the General Assembly, in addition to approving the Council's decisions on trade union rights stated that "the inalienable right of trade union freedom of association is, as well as other social safeguards, essential to the improvement of the standard of living of workers