

legislation was something more than a utopian concept in the minds of a few labour leaders. Governments were often slow to proceed with measures to implement legislation which would give effect to the conventions. Public opinion was hard to mobilize and without it there was little pressure on governments to proceed with the process of ratification. When the Association met at Lucerne two years later, many of the principal industrial states had made no progress toward implementing the Berne conventions.⁶ Despite these delays, the I.A.L.L. continued to grow in importance, to hold more regular meetings and to deal with more specific problems. By the Zurich assembly of 1912, twenty-four national sections and twenty-two governments had appointed delegates who produced a most ambitious program for labour legislation, of which the Berne Conventions of 1913 were the result.⁷ In a little more than a decade, the I.A.L.L. had emerged as a viable international association.

The events of August, 1914, however, curtailed drastically the Association's development. With the withdrawal of governments from active participation, the I.A.L.L. reverted to its former role as a forum for discussion among labour leaders. The year 1914 also marked the introduction of a new element in the discussion of international labour problems and a turning-point in the road which ultimately led to the creation of the International Labour Organization. The new initiative came not from Europe but from the United States. At its Philadelphia Convention in November, barely four months after the outbreak of war, the American Federation of Labour (A.F.L.) had unanimously adopted a resolution that "a Labour Conference should be held at the same time in the same place as the Peace Congress"⁸ that would formulate the peace treaty closing the war. Conferences of both Allied labour groups in Leeds in 1916 and neutral and "Central Power" labour leaders at Stockholm in 1917 discussed the American proposal, and endorsed resolutions calling for "an international conference before the beginning of the peace negotiations".⁹ The entry of the United States into the war and Woodrow Wilson's appeal for the creation of a post-war League of Nations further buoyed the spirits of those promoting the concept of a permanent international organization for labour. An *entente* between two such bodies would give the labour association a permanence and authority which the I.A.L.L. had never been able to achieve. By 1918, organized labour was anxiously awaiting the termination of hostilities, hopeful that the post-war atmosphere would be more conducive to its ideas and more responsive to its demands.

The Beginnings of Canadian Participation

As the oldest, the largest and most highly industrialized of the British Dominions, Canada was in the forefront of Dominion participation in international labour diplomacy. Formally, Canada became involved with her acceptance of the Berne White Phosphorus Convention of 1906. The decision, however, came neither easily nor rapidly. Great Britain had ratified the Convention in 1908, and it was partially as a result of her influence that Labour Minister Mackenzie King decided in 1910 that it was "desirable that Canada should follow the example of the Mother Country and other European Nations"¹⁰ in proceeding with ratification. Numerous consultations were held by federal officials with the provincial governments to obtain their agreement, while efforts were made to calm the anxieties of Canadian manufacturers who feared increased competition in their home markets should the convention be adopted.