

SOCIAL PROVISIONS OF THE PEACE SETTLEMENT

It will be readily appreciated that the very aims and purposes of the resolution adopted under this portion of the Agenda warrant its being regarded as one of the more important actions taken by the Conference. Its main purpose, briefly, is to ensure that appropriate social principles and provisions are inserted in each part of the peace settlement—the assumption being that the settlement “will consist of a number of different agreements rather than a single treaty, and that these agreements will be reached at different stages of the period during and after hostilities”(1).

The Committee began by considering the text as drafted by the Office—this text, in the course of the Committee's deliberations, being substantially modified by series of amendments and alternative resolutions on the subject presented by Committee members. At the outset far-reaching amendments were offered by the Australian and United States Government members affecting paragraphs 1 and 2 of the Office text. The latter was submitted in substitution for the Office text, but the proposals made by the Australian Government member, it was subsequently indicated, were not intended to replace the Office resolution, but to constitute an addition to it.

The gist of the Australian proposal was that an international conference should be called to consider “an international agreement on domestic policies of employment and unemployment.” In view of the divergence between the Australian and United States views as expressed in their respective texts, the Committee had at one of its earlier sessions decided to postpone consideration of either amendment in the hope that the representatives of the two Governments concerned might reach agreement on a single draft. It was found, however, after lengthy negotiations that no basis for full agreement existed. The Australian Government indicated that it wished to arrive at a text providing at this time for formal undertakings and international obligations with regard to the maintenance of high levels of employment, in advance of other international agreements in related economic fields. The United States Government, however, was not prepared at this Conference and in advance of other conferences being prepared under other auspices to enter into international undertakings concerning domestic policies of employment. The view was accepted unreservedly by the United States Government representative that nations must acknowledge themselves as willing and as having the duty to maintain high levels of employment by domestic policies in co-ordination with international economic policies. The majority of other Government representatives present, including particularly the British, shared the views of the United States that it was inappropriate “at this moment, at this Conference” to undertake any binding obligations concerning employment policies, on the grounds that other aspects of international collaboration must be settled before countries can undertake a full employment obligation. This point of view was vigorously protested against by the Australian Government member, who indicated that countries as greatly dependent as Australia is on world conditions, must hesitate before entering into discussions on other aspects of international co-operation unless such countries as the United States are willing to undertake the obligations to which Australia attached the greatest importance.

The original text of the Australian amendment provided for consultation between Governments and “with appropriate international authorities”; for Governments to submit statistics “through an appropriate international organization”; for Governments to report for the purpose of “an annual conference” on the state of employment, &c., and for representatives of Governments and international authorities to meet at a special conference called by “the appropriate organization” if a serious decline in employment should develop in any of the signatory countries.

It was subsequently agreed by the Australian Government member to provide that in each case “the appropriate international authority” should be the International Labour Organization. On being put to the vote, the Australian proposal was rejected by 22 to 17. Three Governments, including New Zealand, one employer, and six workers' representatives voted in favour; twelve Government and five employers' representatives voted against it.

Following the vote on the Australian proposal, the amendment submitted by the United States Government member as a substitute for the Office draft concerning social provisions in the peace settlement was adopted by the Committee. The Australian Government member then moved a resolution in the following terms which was accepted without dissent:—

“This Conference recommends to Governments that a conference of representatives of the Governments of the United, associated, and other Nations willing to attend be called at an early date, in association with the Governing Body of International Labour Office, to consider an international agreement on domestic policies of employment and unemployment; and this Conference pledges the full co-operation and the assistance of the I.L.O. in calling such a conference on employment and in helping to carry into effect appropriate decisions it might make.”

This proposal was subsequently incorporated in the resolution relating to social provisions in the peace settlement adopted by the full Conference.

The resolution as submitted by the United States Government representative affirms the Declaration of the Aims and Purposes of the I.L.O. (the Philadelphia Charter), and recognizes that all arrangements by and among the signatory and like-minded Governments for international economic co-operation should be framed and administered to serve the objectives of that Declaration. Major provisions of the resolution include an undertaking on the part of signatory Governments to—

- (1) Develop through appropriate international agencies, standards and statistical measures and to maintain uniform statistics and other information with respect to matters which are specified as of being of international concern.
- (2) Interchange among themselves and to make available to the I.L.O. such information and reports as may be required for the purpose of developing recommendations with respect to the above matters.
- (3) Take appropriate steps to assure close collaboration and full exchange of information between the I.L.O. and any other international bodies which now exist or may be established, for the promotion of economic advancement and social well-being.
- (4) Take appropriate steps to have placed on the Agenda of the International Labour Conference annually the subject of the extent to which the social objectives set forth in the Declaration have been attained and the measures taken during the year towards their attainment.