

Department of Labour and Employment,

Wellington, 12th January, 1948.

SIR,—

The Preparatory Asian Regional Conference of the International Labour Organization was held in New Delhi, India, from 27th October, 1947, to 8th November, 1947, both dates inclusive.

The New Zealand Government delegates have the honour to present this, their report on the proceedings of the Conference.

We have the honour to be, Sir,

Your obedient servants,

E. B. TAYLOR,

L. S. DIXON,

Delegates.

The Hon. the Minister of Labour.

REPORT

1. INTRODUCTION

THE Government delegates to the International Labour Organization Preparatory Asian Regional Conference in New Delhi have returned greatly impressed by the proceedings of the Conference and its potentialities. New Zealand, in spite of its position almost on the 180th meridian, has cultural, economic, and social ties with Europe so urgent and intimate that New Zealanders think almost entirely in Western terms, with the result that the ancient Eastern civilizations are virtually unknown.

It is not generally recognized that the Asian nations cover one-third of the surface of the earth and comprise about a thousand million people, or *more than half of the human race*. Nor, perhaps, is full importance attached to the social and political changes which are going on in Asia, changes aptly described by the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Jef Rens, in these words: "At present a strong wind of liberation is blowing through the whole of this vast and ancient continent." India, Pakistan, and Burma are Sovereign nations, and Ceylon will shortly follow them into independence.

Side by side with and forming part of the continent-wide upsurge of progressive thought is a vigorous movement towards social freedom and security—a stirring from a centuries-old subjection to disease, ignorance, squalor, idleness, and want. These "five giants on the road" (as they were named by Sir William Beveridge) are being recognized as no longer inevitable, no longer insuperable.

This recognition was illustrated by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Prime Minister of India, when he said at the Conference that his Government was faced with many grave problems, of which the most important was the "problem of poverty, of unemployment, of semi-starvation for large numbers of people, of low standards of living of vast numbers."

Similarly, Mr. Pao Hua-Kuo, the Government delegate of China, said that the standard of living in Asia was pitifully low, and expressed the intention of his Government of securing higher living standards as a first step towards the creation of social order in Asia and as a prelude to world peace.