

In New Zealand, for more than fifty years, our legislative record in the domain of industrial and social life has been such as to have attached us in a sympathetic relationship from the very beginning with the International Labour Organization. We have always looked on this Organization with confidence, and one of our reasons for doing so has been the competence and humanity with which its successive Directors-General have carried their responsibilities and given leadership to the world.

Mr. Phelan followed Mr. Butler and the late John Winant, two devoted servants of the human race. And now that he is leaving us, we wish to express to him our sincerest thanks for the manifold services he has rendered to this Organization and the noble purposes for which it was established.

Many years ago, New Zealand won for itself a world-wide reputation for economic and social experiment, and since the early 1890's the aim of several Governments has been to encourage the formation of trade-unions, to establish minimum conditions in industry below which no worker could fall, to safeguard against poverty all citizens who suffer hazards of life such as old age, chronic invalidity, maternity, widowhood, orphanhood, sickness, and unemployment, and to provide the best medical and hospital treatment for all who require it.

These ends have been served by legal process. The first two have been met by our Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act and our minimum-wage law, and the last two by our Social Security Act. Our Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act was passed in 1893. It is still on our statute-books, and all but three of our trade-unions are registered under it. The Act provides conciliation procedures, and arbitration by a Court if these fail. After hearing evidence from the parties to the dispute, the Court makes awards fixing wages and conditions, and its awards are the law of the land. In the original Act, a Preamble stated that one of its purposes was to "foster and encourage the formation of trade-unions," and in 1936 it was amended to make trade-union membership compulsory in all industries covered by Arbitration Court awards. The Act has not had a perfect result, but it is nevertheless true to-day that the overwhelming majority of trade-unions and their members were never more convinced that it supplies a civilized means of settling industrial disputes. Indeed, its aim is that of law and order in the industrial and commercial life of New Zealand.

With such a legislative achievement, it does appear to the Government I represent that there is a certain appropriateness in the Agenda for this Conference, covering as it does such subjects as wages, the conditions of night work for women, and young persons vocational guidance, and, in particular, freedom of association, the workers' right to organize, and industrial relations—to all of which very considerable enlightened attention has been paid by the people of my country. We are gratified, too, to observe in the replies of Governments to the questionnaires on freedom of association and industrial relations that there is so wide a consensus of agreement as to encourage the hope that the preparation of Conventions will be accomplished with little difficulty.

As to freedom of association and industrial relations, the New Zealand Government is strongly of the opinion that the decision of the Economic and Social Council and of the General Assembly of the United Nations to avail themselves of the experience of the International Labour Organization was right and proper. When the question was raised at the Economic and Social Council by memoranda from the World Federation of Trade Unions and the American Federation of Labour, the attitude of the New Zealand delegation was that it would be meaningless to refrain from utilizing the services of an agency which had specialized on these very questions and whose work had always been of the most competent character. The course taken was a commendable example of co-operative effort within the United Nations. Two non-governmental organizations made proposals to the Economic and Social Council. The Council decided to make use of the appropriate specialized agency. This agency, at its annual Conference, reached