

The following is a summary of the speech delivered by the Hon. H. T. Armstrong (Principal Government delegate, New Zealand) when, as Chairman of the Committee on the Textile Industry, he replied to the debate in the whole Conference on the committee's report :—

The Chairman said that he was sorry that the whole of the committee had not worked all the time because the employers' representatives, with the exception of those from France and United States of America, went on strike and decided that they would take no part whatever in the proceedings, refusing to serve on the Drafting Committee or on the Co-ordinating Committee. Although the Textile Committee were entitled to the assistance of the employer members just as they were entitled to the assistance of the Government and workers' representatives, that assistance was not received. He considered the attitude taken up by the employers to be a dangerous one, because, if one of the other groups took up the same attitude, the business of the Conference would become impossible of transaction. In addition, confidence in the Organization would be lost altogether, which would be a very bad thing indeed for the world. Referring to a statement which had been made by the New Zealand employees' representative that the Court of Arbitration was the deciding factor in the application of the forty-hour week, the Chairman pointed out that this was strictly in line with the law of New Zealand. The law gave a direction to the Court that the forty-hour week was to be applied unless the employers could show to the satisfaction of the Court that it would be impracticable in any particular industry. He gave figures concerning the percentage of industrial workers to whom the forty-hour week applied in New Zealand. The New Zealand employers' representative had omitted to mention that the Court had conceded the forty-hour week in the textile industry. The Chairman went on to say, however, that the Textile Committee was not asking the Organization to go as far as they had gone in New Zealand, in France, and the United States of America, or in some other countries. In an attempt to meet the recommendation made by the employers and the Governments of some of the more backward countries that the Convention be as elastic as possible, its provisions were in a much more modified form compared with those operating in the countries to which he referred.

He refuted the contention of the British Government representative that a reduction in hours of work must necessarily carry with it a reduction in the rates of wages. In New Zealand the reduction to forty hours per week had been accompanied by an increase of about 20 per cent. in the weekly remuneration. The result was that the demand for goods had increased enormously, and New Zealand was benefiting from the increased spending-power of the community.

Regarding employers' pleas concerning backward countries, he considered that the best way that such countries could be assisted was by setting an example, as had been done in New Zealand.

Referring to a plea by the Government and the employers' representatives of India that if hours of work were reduced in the textile industry of that country manufacturers would be prevented from selling cheap goods to the mass of the people, he expressed the view that the Conference had not been hearing the voice of India at all, but the voice of vested interests. He inquired how many of the 300,000,000 people to whom the representatives in question had referred had been consulted. In his view, India was crying out to the rest of the civilized world for assistance to lift its workers from the squalor and misery in which they were compelled to work and live. It was for such countries principally that the Organization existed, and if it did not assist in raising their standard of living, then the standard of the more advanced countries would be lowered to theirs.

The Draft of the Convention had been well reasoned out by the committee. It had been the subject of a special Conference at Washington. It had been discussed in Geneva in previous Conferences, and every time it had been discussed it had been modified to such an extent that now he was almost ashamed to be Chairman of the Committee which put it forward at all. He sincerely hoped that the Conference would give a lead to the world, and not delay the application of the forty-hour week until the time when the rest of the civilized world had reduced its hours of work below forty hours.

The Draft Convention was adopted by the Conference, with 88 votes to 41, securing more than the necessary two-thirds majority.

PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE.

Composition of Committee.

Chairman.—Mr. Renggli.

Vice-Chairmen.—Mr. Vanek, Mr. J. Tallon.

Reporter.—Mr. Mallery.

Representative of the Secretary-General.—Mr. Waelbroeck.

Expert.—Mr. Tait.

Secretaries.—Mr. Rabinovitch, Mr. Rao.

Government Members.—United States of America, Mr. Mallery (substitute, Mr. Kreps); Australia, Mr. Schofield; Austria, Mr. Wleek; Canada, Mr. Dickson; Chile, Mr. Garcia Oldini; China, Mr. Young; Dominican Republic, Mr. Ackermann; Egypt, Mr. El-Baba; Ecuador, Mr. Gastelu; Estonia, Mr. Sonin; Finland, Mr. Mannio (substitute, Mr. Hjelt); France, Mr. Tessier; Greece, Mr. Phocas (substitute, Mr. Pavlakis); Hungary, Mr. Kádar (substitute, Mr. Blatniczky); India, Mr. Morley (substitute, Mr. Zaman); Iraq, Mr. Khalidy; Iran, Mr. Entezam; Irish Free State, Mr. MacLaughlin; Japan, Mr. Kitaoka (substitute, Mr. Ohashi); Lithuania, Mr. Barkauskas (substitute, Mr. Staneika); Norway, Mr. Colbjørnsen; New Zealand, Hon. H. T. Armstrong (substitute, Mr. Shanly); Poland, Mr. Biesiekierski (substitute, Mr. Wscieklica); Sweden, Mr. Molin (substitute, Miss Hesselgren);