

At this year's Conference fifty-three of these sixty-two countries were represented. The only States of industrial importance which were not represented were Germany (whose resignation from both the League of Nations and the International Labour Organization took effect in October, 1935) and Italy (which, although still a member of both the League of Nations and the International Labour Organization, was not represented at the Conference).

With regard to the number of representatives, the Treaty of Peace provides that each country shall be presented at these annual conferences by two Government delegates, one employers' delegate, and one workers' delegate, and it permits each of these delegates to be accompanied by two technical advisers for each official item on the Agenda.

This year's Conference had on its Agenda seven such official items, and each State was therefore entitled, had it so wished, to send four delegates, twenty-eight Government advisers, fourteen employers' advisers, and fourteen workers' advisers. As on former occasions, practically all the States which were represented confined their delegations to much smaller limits, and the following table shows the number of delegates and advisers who attended the Conference :—

					Delegates.	Advisers.
Government	..	..	..	..	101	97
Employers	..	..	..	..	38	73
Workers	..	..	..	..	36	85
Total					175	255

The Agenda of the Conference was as follows :—

(A) *Official items*, upon which alone draft Conventions or Recommendations can be adopted—

- (1) Reduction of hours of work in the textile industry.
- (2) Reduction of hours of work in the printing and kindred trades.
- (3) Reduction of hours of work in the chemical industry.
- (4) Safety provisions for workers in building construction, with reference to scaffolding and hoisting-machinery.
- (5) Planning of public works in relation to employment.
- (6) Partial revision of the Minimum Age (Industry) Convention, 1919.
- (7) Partial revision of the Minimum Age (on Industrial Employment) Convention, 1932.

(B) *Other Subjects*—

- (8) Resolutions on various subjects.
- (9) Standing Orders of the Conference.
- (10) Director's annual report.
- (11) Examination of legislation of States which have ratified Conventions.
- (12) Periodical reports on the working of the following Conventions—
 - (a) Workmen's Compensation (Accidents) Convention, 1925.
 - (b) Workmen's Compensation (Occupational Diseases) Convention, 1925.
 - (c) Inspection of Emigrants Convention, 1926.
 - (d) Forced Labour Convention, 1930.
- (13) Election of governing body of International Labour Office for 1937-40.

This year's Conference passed four Conventions: Reduction of Hours of Work in Textiles; Safety in Building; Minimum Age for Industrial Employment; and Minimum Age for Non-Industrial Employment.

Draft Conventions dealing with a reduction of hours of work in (1) the printing and kindred trades, and (2) chemical industry, were not passed.

REDUCTION OF HOURS OF WORK.

I voted against the three Draft Conventions for reduction of hours of work, and recorded my reasons for doing so in the following speech to the Conference when the Textile Trades Hours Convention was being considered :—

"It has been suggested to me on several occasions since I reached Geneva that I should vote for all the forty-hour week Conventions, for the reason that a forty-hour week is in force in New Zealand. I intend to vote against the three Conventions, and take this opportunity of placing on record some of my reasons for so doing. I will be as brief as possible, and to save time will apply my remarks equally to all three Conventions.

"The New Zealand law reducing hours came into force on the 1st September, 1936. The law does not introduce a universal forty-hour week. I believe that the Government was strongly urged by Labour interests to introduce a universal forty-hour week, but did not do so. The law on the point can be summarized as follows :—

"The Court of Arbitration, which consists of a Judge with Supreme Court status, a representative of the employers, and a representative of the workers, shall fix at not more than forty the maximum number of hours (exclusive of overtime) to be worked in any week by any worker, unless in the opinion of the Court, after hearing representatives of the employers and workers concerned, it would be impracticable to carry on efficiently the industry if the hours of work were so limited."

"Under that provision the hours of work in almost all industries in New Zealand have been the subject of investigation by the Arbitration Court. The Court has fixed hours either by special orders or by awards. All of the orders issued have a currency which expires about the beginning of September of this year, while the awards fixing hours have a currency expiring during the six months commencing on the 1st September next.