

The Director's report indicates the tremendous progress throughout the world in social improvements, and inspires the hope that, notwithstanding war clouds that drift across the horizon, the heart of the peoples is sound. There is ample evidence to show that nations are making stern endeavours to provide happier and healthier conditions and to lessen the sum of human misery. It is the function of this assembly to carry the efforts of individual countries forward by means of international regulations and agreements. In this way the International Labour Organization can achieve something that is worth while and assist in bringing about a better understanding between man and man, between employer and worker, and between nation and nation.

DIRECTOR'S REPLY.

The reply by the Director to the debate always receives the full attention of the Conference. On this occasion it was of particular and emotional interest, seeing that it was the last Mr. Harold Butler was to address in his capacity as Secretary-General to the Conference. The trend of the debate will be indicated by the following extract from Mr. Butler's speech, and his references to the International Labour Organization and how it might be more powerfully supported are of importance:—

"The first point that strikes me about the debate, to which I have listened as effectively as the acoustics of this part of the hall permitted during the last five days, has been the abundant proof which it affords that the International Labour Organization is certainly not a sinking ship. At times I wondered whether it was not a flying-boat. The Conference itself is as large as that of last year, which was the largest on record. It comprises the representatives of fifty nations, and has been distinguished by the presence of no less than nine Ministers of Labour. Among them for the first time is Miss Frances Perkins, the United States Secretary of Labour, to whom I owe a very special debt of gratitude for having insisted on fulfilling a personal promise which most Ministers would have felt bound to subordinate to the claims of home duties. I can assure her that both the Conference and myself deeply appreciate the effort she has made in coming, and I venture to think that the speech which she gave us yesterday could not have been made anywhere else but in this gathering with the effect it undoubtedly produced. In energy and enthusiasm this Conference certainly shows no falling away from the standards of previous years. At a time when international organizations are said to be in decline, it is encouraging to hear an experienced delegate like Mr. Berg, Government delegate, Norway, declare that the Organization is stronger than it has ever been; to hear Mr. Shri Ram say that 'the crisis, so far as the International Labour Organization is concerned, seems now definitely a matter of the past'; while a large number of delegates, including the Labour Ministers of France, Great Britain, Spain, the United States of America, and Yugoslavia, have proclaimed the determination of their countries that there should be no weakening of their support of the Organization and no relaxation in the endeavour to promote social progress. Mr. Jouhaux, workers' delegate, France, made an appeal that there should be no slackening in the effort to promote social justice because of the troublous times in which we live. This debate has given him the answer for which he asked.

"I will now turn to the appreciations of my report. I will omit any reference to the compliments which delegates have been good enough to pay to it, and which I very highly appreciated, and will turn to some of the comments and criticisms.

"In writing it, I tried throughout to look the facts in the face, and not to blink them or to try to fit them into the framework of preconceived theories or prejudices. I have been accused by some speakers of pessimism, by others of optimism, by others of a contradictory mixture of the two. I am quite prepared to plead guilty to all these accusations, because I think justification may be found for them all in the very nature of the present situation. A purely pessimistic picture would have been as inaccurate as a purely optimistic picture. Unfavourable factors are inextricably woven with favourable factors. On the one hand there is an enormous increase in capacity to produce; on the other is failure to put it to the best use. On the one hand is the gradual growth of an international social consciousness which ran like a golden thread through many speeches; on the other is the exaltation of violence and brutality which characterizes the wars actually in progress and which is the psychological assumption underlying competition in armaments. All these things are part of the world as it is to-day, and no review, however summary, could honestly omit them.

"It was therefore perhaps inevitable that an attempt to do justice to the facts as they are should make my report appear paradoxical to some readers. Mr. Jouhaux, for instance, reproaches me with pessimism in regard to the shorter working-week. I should not agree with him in thinking that the mission of the Office would be ended if no international agreement for the reduction of hours of work were arrived at in the immediate future. I should, however, agree with