

Quednau, H. W.; Zoetewij, H.; Richer, L.

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# INTERVIEW

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## The ILO Sets International Labour Standards

### The Activities of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) at Geneva

**More than 2,000 officials of some hundred nations are working at the headquarter of the International Labour Organisation at Geneva and round the world. They are responsible for the execution of the programmes of international action to raise living and working standards. Next year the ILO will exist fifty years. INTERECONOMICS had the opportunity to speak with three representatives of the organisation about the wide-spread activities of the Organisation and their results.**

**QUESTION:** Vocational training ranks first among technical aid programmes of ILO. What are the employment categories towards which the promotion of vocational training is mainly directed?

**QUEDNAU:** The employment categories for which ILO provides assistance include technical categories, personnel training for industrial, rural and clerical occupations. A new field which has come up more recently concerns the training of personnel for tourist industries, i.e. restaurant, kitchen and other hotel occupations. Among the industrial occupations, much emphasis is placed on the training of building workers, automotive and railway maintenance and other repair personnel particularly in the

metal and electrical trades, in order to help developing countries to utilise modern transportation and manufacturing equipment.

By functions of personnel the employment categories covered by the training concern workers trained by apprenticeship or accelerated methods, foremen and other shop-floor level supervisors, instructors for in-plant training and training centres and technicians for lower and middle management.

In order to indicate the relative importance of vocational training within the ILO technical assistance programme, I might point out that up to now nearly 63 per cent of the funds put at the disposal of developing countries concerned vocational training projects.

**QUESTION:** What general guidelines has ILO developed for vocational training?

**QUEDNAU:** As a general guideline, the International Labour Conference, in 1962, adopted a Recommendation concerning Vocational Training (No. 117), which the member States are called upon to implement. This Recommendation sets out the concept of vocational training, the principles of national planning and administration, including co-operation with employers' and workers' organisations, the methods and means of training in undertakings, as well as centres, and the policy for the selection and training of vocational training staff.

For some categories of personnel, special Recommendations have been issued, namely for sea service, Recommendation No. 77, 1946, vocational training in agriculture, Recommendation No. 101, 1956, and vocational training of fishermen, Recommendation No. 126, 1966.

Besides these international instruments, the ILO exercises influence on vocational training by preparing documents on individual topics for discussion in the International Labour Conference, which takes place annually in June, in Geneva, and for the Regional Con-

**Dr H. W. Quednau**, German industrial engineer, joined ILO in 1964, was initially Chief of the Vocational Training Branch and is now Deputy Chief of the Field Department, and thus in charge of the coordination of ILO assistance to developing countries.

**Dr H. Zoeteveij**, Dutch economist, worked in various positions in the Central Bank of the Netherlands and the Ministry of Economic Affairs, joined ILO in 1950 and is now Deputy Chief of the Research and Planning Department.

**Dr L. Richter**, German agronomist, worked at the Institute for Agricultural Policy and Marketing Research at the University of Bonn. He joined ILO in 1956, and now looks after rural manpower and employment in the Manpower Planning and Organisation Branch.

ferences, which are periodically held in Africa, Asia, the Americas and Europe.

### **Industrialisation in DCs**

**QUESTION:** Promotion of vocational training by ILO above all in the industrial sector also implies co-operation in the industrialisation of developing countries. Have the International Labour Conferences been able to elaborate a clear common policy for the industrialisation of developing countries?

**ZOETEWELJ:** The topic of industrialisation in developing countries was discussed by the International Labour Conference in 1966 and again in 1967. In 1966 there was a general debate in plenary session on the basis of the Director-General's main report to the Conference which was entitled *Industrialisation and Labour*.

In a resolution following that debate the Conference requested a report on the Director-General's plans for the ILO's future work in the field of industrialisation of developing countries. Such a report was submitted to the 1967 session and led to the adoption by the Conference of a number of conclusions which certainly constitute a clear policy regarding the ILO's concern with industrialisation.

One important principle of this policy is that the ILO's action is to be undertaken in close collaboration with the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation, which plays a leading role in this field. Another principle is that concern with industrialisation should not lead to neglect of rural development in the poor countries.

More detailed conclusions were adopted as to the ILO's activities as regards human resources for industrialisation, conditions of work in industry, and industrial relations. The conclusions concerning human resources are especially important. In view of the great problems of unemployment in developing countries, the Conference recommended measures to make industry in these countries labour-intensive without making it inefficient.

Two other recommendations are also of special interest to the industrialised countries. One calls for action to reduce the harmful effects of the "brain drain". The other concerns imports by the industrialised countries of products made by the new industries of developing countries. Trade policy as such is not the business of the ILO, but some of the opposition to freer trade results from fears of unemployment in industries in the developed countries that would be exposed to competition from the industries of the poor countries. In the Conference Recommendations it is pointed out that the ILO should help to dispel such fears and to show how more active policies for retraining and redeployment of workers in such industries could overcome some of the obstacles that now exist in the way of increasing exports from the poor countries.

### **Training Systems for DCs**

**QUESTION:** Is it possible to work out—with the assistance of ILO—special training systems for individual countries, particularly developing countries?

**QUEDNAU:** The implementation of vocational training in developing countries is not so much a question of a special system, but rather a problem of finding, for each country, the most appropriate pattern of training. The structure and means of training depend on the structure and stage of the economy as well as the public administration structure available. Since these factors are quite different from one country to another, the training systems designed have been equally different, and so are the projects by which the ILO has assisted developing countries.

For instance, in India, emphasis was placed initially on training in centres established by the Labour Ministry. After a full decade required for building up a network of training centres and providing a substantial number of people who have undergone initial training for industrial occupations, efforts are being made to complement and improve the system by encourag-

ing and organising in-plant training in the industries. In Colombia, a national vocational training system has been established, largely on the initiative of the industries themselves, by pooling efforts and funds in order to provide facilities and training staff required as common services, thus making in-plant training more effective—for instance, by operating basic training centres and a national centre for development of training methods and teaching aids, and experimenting with new training methods.

Vocational training systems are naturally different for rural occupations. In Mali, for instance, the ILO has assisted in the setting up of a network of seasonal schools which train farmers during the "dead" seasons and, throughout the year, monitors who will provide advice and guidance to the rural populations on planning agricultural production and applying appropriate methods and tools.

A specific approach to meet the situation in developing countries as regards unemployment of young people is the implementation of prevocational training. Prevocational training takes care of young people who do not have the educational requirements, or the opportunity of entering full-scale vocational training. It aims at improving general education, exploring vocational interests and attitudes and giving an introduction to vocational training which would be basic for a number of occupations. Projects of this kind have been quite successful in Tunisia and India and are under preparation in a number of other countries.

### **Long-term Programmes**

**QUESTION:** Does ILO have long-term programmes in the field of vocational training? What sources of finance are available for ILO's assistance to developing countries?

**QUEDNAU:** The main source of finance available for ILO assistance to developing countries is the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), established in a merger of the previous United Nations Technical Assistance Pro-

gramme and the United Nations Special Fund. The money available for the UNDP has increased considerably, namely from some \$25 million in 1959 to \$180 million in 1968. However large this increase may appear, the amount is still small in relation to the needs of the developing countries. At present ILO's share of UNDP-fund is about \$17 million. Other sources of finance are technical assistance funds provided for under the ILO Regular Budget and through funds-in-trust arrangements from various donor countries totalling over \$3 million, so that \$20 million are available for ILO assistance to developing countries in 1968.

The ILO is now working on the preparation of a long-term programme based on a recommendation made by the American States at a Regional Conference held in Ottawa in 1966. Asian and African States are likely to recommend that the ILO works out similar programmes for their respective regions. These programmes, to be called Regional Employment Plans, envisage that projections will be made on the employment situation and that studies will be undertaken on the costs and effectiveness of various instruments of employment policy, with a view to establishing targets for increasing employment together with corresponding training plans and the necessary training facilities. These plans are to cover periods of the next 10, 15 or even more years. In a second phase the ILO will assist the governments in carrying out the plans and gear its own technical co-operation activities to those requirements which fall under ILO's field of competence.

### **Protection of the Worker**

**QUESTION:** A major part to the International Labour Code deals with the protection of the worker and his family against need and affliction caused by accidents, illness, death and unemployment. To what extent has it been possible to conclude Conventions on old-age and surviving dependants'

pensions and disablement insurance and to have them applied in member countries?

**ZOETEWELJ:** From its beginning the ILO has been under a constitutional obligation to improve conditions of labour by the protection of the worker against sickness, disaster and injury arising out of his employment and by provisions for old age.

The social security Conventions and Recommendations adopted by the International Labour Conference during the pre-war years dealt with matters of particular concern at the time: workmen's compensation, sickness and pension insurance and unemployment benefits.

In 1944, the International Labour Conference meeting in Philadelphia, adopted Recommendations on income security and medical care. These were regarded as a prelude to formal international obligations of a more comprehensive nature. In line with this new concept, the Conference adopted in 1952 the Convention (No. 102) concerning Minimum Standards of Social Security. The instrument embraces the whole field of social security, distinguishing nine main contingencies: condition requiring medical care, incapacity for work due to sickness, unemployment, old age, employment injury, responsibility for the maintenance of children, maternity, invalidity, and death of the breadwinner. It also provides, contrary to the pre-war Conventions, a numerical yardstick for ascertaining the scope of these schemes and requires that the rates of benefit for the standard beneficiary should be measured in terms of percentages of standard earnings.

The 1962 Conference passed a resolution on the expansion of ILO activities for the advancement of social security, which recalled the necessity of adapting the pre-war social security Conventions to modern developments in taking due account of the standards laid down in Convention No. 102 and of recent developments in national schemes. As a first step towards

the implementation of this long-term programme, the 1964 Conference adopted a Convention and Recommendation on employment injury benefits, revising Conventions Nos. 12, 17, 18 and 42. The second step in the remodelling of pre-war social security Conventions consisted in the revision of Conventions Nos. 35-40 on old age, invalidity and survivors' insurance, which was superseded in 1967 by the adoption of the new Invalidity, Old Age and Survivors' Benefit Convention (No. 128), complemented by a Recommendation. In 1966, it was decided to prepare, as a third step, revisions of Conventions Nos. 24 and 25 concerning Sickness Insurance. This work is under way at present.

### **Impact of Social Policy Standards**

**QUESTION:** There are great differences between the member States of ILO as regards their state of development and their social features. Does this not force the social guidelines of the International Labour Conference down to such a low level that they have little relevance to highly developed industrial nations?

**ZOETEWELJ:** Inevitably, the impact of standards of social policy differs as between countries and groups of countries; some member States have further to travel toward practical application of these standards than others. Nevertheless, there are three ways in which the ILO's role in standard setting remains meaningful for industrialised countries.

First, some standards can be differentiated according to the economic conditions of member States. An example is the Convention concerning Minimum Standards of Social Security. This is a wide-ranging instrument divided into several parts, and countries need not ratify it in full. Thus industrialised countries can accept all parts of the Convention, while less developed countries may agree to apply certain parts only. Another example is the Recommendation concerning Employment Policy. This also consists of various parts, some of which are primarily

directed towards employment problems arising from economic underdevelopment, while others are more relevant to developed countries.

The second reason why ILO standards are not necessarily irrelevant to industrialised countries is that many standards are in relative not in absolute terms, or bear no relationship to economic conditions at all. The Convention concerning Equal Pay for Men and Women is an example of a standard "in relative terms". As is well known, the question of equal pay is not quite settled yet in the Common Market; but it has been settled in some countries that are not highly developed economically. Several other standards concern industrial relations, i.e., the procedures for determining wages and other terms of employment. Standards of procedure can be equally valid for countries at different stages of economic development.

Thirdly, it should be mentioned here that in Europe the ILO has actively participated in the formulation of standards that have been adopted by regional organisations and that are higher than the ILO's own standards. Examples are the Social Charter of the Council of Europe, and certain social security arrangements applying in the Common Market.

### **The Rural Development Programme**

**QUESTION:** What contribution does the ILO make to rural development?

**RICHTER:** In 1960, the International Labour Conference adopted a resolution calling for a special long-term programme of practical research and operational activities as a contribution of the ILO to the raising of incomes and living conditions in rural communities, with particular reference to countries in the process of development.

The Permanent Agricultural Committee of the ILO which met subsequently to translate this resolution into practical action recommended that major attention in the rural programme should be devoted to activities in the following fields:

rural employment problems, vocational guidance and training in rural areas, the living and working conditions of rural workers, institutional adjustments and new approaches to rural development, co-operative organisations, small industries and indigenous and rural populations.

Under these major headings a variety of activities have been undertaken. Experts have been sent to many developing countries to supply direct advice in the above fields, following traditional technical assistance methods. A large proportion of the programme has been devoted to the initiation of pilot projects for rural employment promotion to test, under field conditions, the possibility of expanding rural employment opportunities in agriculture, in related occupations, in rural industries, in public works, etc., with the maximum use of local resources and a minimum of capital.

Considerable resources were devoted to field investigations to identify major problems in rural areas and appropriate remedial measures. These investigations have often paved the way for larger and long-term technical assistance activities.

The funds made available to the Rural Development Programme under the ILO Regular Budget have increased from roughly \$ 80,000 in 1962 to \$ 400,000 in 1963 and 1964, and to \$ 800,000 in 1968. Moreover, an increasing number of ILO rural development projects is being financed by the United Nations Development Programme.

### **Co-operatives in Developing Countries**

**QUESTION:** Many developing countries have noticed with lively interest the success of co-operatives in economically highly developed countries. Do you believe that the extension of the co-operative system can contribute much to the economic, social and cultural development of young nations?

**RICHTER:** Since the end of the second World War, the co-operative idea has become more wide-

spread in developing countries, which see in it a means of developing their economy.

Co-operatives have proved that when well managed and fully supported by their members they are capable of correcting a great many adverse situations in the economic and social fields. They are opening up new possibilities of production and sale in agriculture, trade, handicrafts and industry and they are rendering effective services to producers as well as to consumers.

In addition to these benefits offered to individual members, co-operatives also have a favourable impact on social conditions, particularly in developing countries. The usefulness of co-operative effort is especially evident during the period when many people tend to rely primarily on government action to improve their conditions of life and work. However, government action alone cannot provide the necessary relief and help to the large sections of the population in developing countries where the needs are greatest. Here the group spirit of initiative and the desire to change existing conditions come into their own. In this connection, co-operatives are instrumental in imparting to their members a sense of communal responsibility and helping them to develop their capabilities and take an active part in the economic and social life of their communities and of the country as a whole. For these reasons, in countries where the level of education is low and where training to enable the population to participate in economic development is a particularly urgent problem, co-operative societies have an even greater importance than elsewhere.

On the other hand, it would be rather unrealistic to expect from co-operatives an answer to all problems of development. A rational co-operative programme of governments can only be part of a general plan to improve conditions of life and work. In addition, there are a number of basic conditions which need to be met before co-operatives can be expected to progress. Among the more im-

portant of these conditions are the readiness of the people to accept co-operative principles, and the availability of dedicated co-operative leadership and management.

It is because of the important role that co-operatives can play in the economic and social development of developing countries that the ILO attaches a high priority to promoting co-operatives in its overall technical assistance programme.

#### **Results of the Co-operative Programme**

**QUESTION:** What practical results has the prosecution of the co-operative programme of ILO brought about to date?

**RICHTER:** As early as 1920, the ILO set up a co-operative service and an international centre for co-operative research, information and advice. Research and information remained the ILO's main activities in the field of co-operation between the two World Wars.

Questions on co-operatives have frequently been placed on the agenda of various technical committees and of regional expert meetings of the ILO. The 1962 Expert Meeting in Geneva deserves particular mention as its conclusions comprise a number of practical suggestions on, for instance, the role of the State in the growth of co-operation, forms of technical assistance for co-operatives, the importance of co-operatives for a nation's economic and social development. In 1966, the International Labour Conference adopted a Recommendation, No. 127, designed to provide governments of developing countries with guidelines for the establishing of national laws and practices for effective co-operative development. The scope

of the Recommendation extends to all types of co-operation. This is a new and important field of action for the ILO and it collaborates in this respect closely with the FAO, the International Co-operative Alliance and other international organisations concerned with such questions.

Technical assistance projects aimed at helping countries in strengthening, organising and developing their co-operative movements now have a prominent place in the ILO technical assistance programme. This activity may be divided into the following five major categories: the sending of co-operative experts to assist with plans and advice; the granting of fellowships to co-operative personnel; the organisation of seminars and courses on co-operation; the supply of teaching aids and technical equipment for training purposes; the establishment of Co-operative Enterprise Development Centres covering all aspects of economic and production activities of existing and new co-operative enterprises.

So far, some 200 co-operative experts have worked in more than 30 countries under this programme. Their tasks have included the founding of fishing co-operatives in West Africa, the establishment of co-operative banks in Gambia and Togo, the organisation of consumer co-operatives in Tanzania and Ceylon, and the preparation of co-operative training programmes in Central America and Africa.

**QUESTION:** Governments, workers and employers from different parts of the world, with differing expectations and demands meet within the framework of ILO. On the whole, is there a sufficiently

solid basis for undertaking major activities?

**ZOETEWELJ:** There is indeed a difference from other international organisations. There are differences of interest not only among governments (differences which exist also in purely inter-governmental agencies) but also between employers and workers. This means that, as in all organisations, more progress can be made in some directions than in others. Thus, there are no basic problems in reaching agreement on a high degree of specific conclusions in very important technical areas such as occupational safety and health or vocational training. On the other hand, it would be very difficult to reach agreement of more than a general nature in questions of the structure and level of wages or, especially, of "management prerogatives" and its reciprocal: "workers participation in management decisions". A field such as social security lies somewhere between these two extremes.

It is important to note, however, that ILO proceedings are strongly influenced by the functioning of the "groups". Each of the three categories of delegates has its own group meetings, and particularly the Employers' and Workers' groups display a high degree of internal discipline. Each of these groups seeks to iron out differences among its own members and to formulate an agreed group position. Naturally, this makes it easier to reach agreement at the Conference or ILO meetings on major issues. In this respect the groups perform a function that is very similar to that which trade unions and employers' delegations have to perform in the process of normal collective bargaining.



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