

No less important in this connection, it was especially emphasized, was the establishment of machinery for regulating wages of hired labour in agriculture. The absence of organization, and consequently of collective bargaining, among agricultural workers made the establishment of such machinery particularly desirable. Farm labour, under prevailing circumstances, was liable to exploitation. Furthermore, the high birth-rate and the lack of alternative employment in rural areas had tended to favour a buyer's market in respect of labour, so that agricultural wage-rates compared very unfavourably with those in other occupations. It was also pointed out that those and related factors tended towards inefficiency in the use of agricultural labour. If wages were raised by means of minimum wage regulation, methods of efficient use of labour were bound to develop. Moreover, wage-fixing machinery was an effective way of ensuring that a share of the benefits of increased productivity was passed on to labour and was reflected in wage earnings.

The exchange of views showed general agreement on the desirability of relating wages of hired labour to earnings of primary producers, which, in their turn, depended on general productivity in agriculture. The advisability of setting up wage-fixing machinery was specially emphasized by the Committee, and attention was drawn to the urgent necessity of providing the necessary social and economic prerequisites which facilitated the functioning of such machinery. Freedom of association was felt to be particularly significant in this connection.

The Committee heard with satisfaction a statement made by the representative of the FAO regarding the activities of the Organization in the continent of Asia, and took note of the various programmes which had been drawn up in relation to general conditions of primary producers and hired labour.

During the discussion several references were made to the present serious shortage of food grains in Asian countries, and the particular importance of an immediate increase in the production of rice and wheat. The following draft resolution was submitted by the employers' group :—

" Having regard to the serious shortage of food in Asian countries and the necessity for action to secure an immediate increase in the food supply, the Governing Body is required to draw the attention of the Governments of the Asian countries and the appropriate international organizations to the vital need for an immediate increase in the production of rice and wheat, present production of which is substantially below the basic requirements of Asian countries. For this purpose and for the purpose of effecting an early improvement in the standard of living of a substantial majority of the primary producers of Asia, every possible step should be taken by the Governments concerned, with the assistance, where necessary, of the appropriate international organizations, in particular the FAO, to assure effective incentives to the increased production of rice and wheat."

But in view of the fact that this draft resolution dealt solely with an economic question and was therefore not within the competence of the International Labour Organization, and in view of the statement made by the representative of the FAO, the draft resolution was withdrawn by the employers' group notwithstanding the fact that the substance of the draft resolution found general favour with the Committee.

The Committee approved three resolutions.

The first deals with the need for the fullest co-operation by Asian Governments with the Food and Agriculture Organization and other appropriate international organizations in their efforts to increase productivity ; the necessity for the minimum-wage-fixing machinery in agriculture and the consequent need for budgetary surveys of household consumption ; methods of protection of wages ; and adequate inspection machinery.