

of Experts on the application of Conventions seems to allow nothing to pass which ought to be challenged. The very existence of this Committee must have a salutary effect on Governments which have been careless about their undertakings. Even the explanations given by the Governments are open to challenge by their own workers or employers, and so something of the efficacy of the verdict of a jury is achieved. If it is difficult to carry out the extreme penalty on a Government for a serious offence, it is something to have an offending Government brought to the Bar of this House and made to realize its delinquency. Speaking for myself, the greatest value of the Organization seems to be the collection and dissemination of information about industrial and economic matters in every country. This could not otherwise be obtained in the immediate and practical way in which it is placed before us. More light upon what everybody else is doing has in itself a beneficial effect. No country can carry on with bad and old-fashioned habits without being made aware that there is a better and more effective way. While the Conference differs from a university, it has that function of a university in that it provides a fuller and better knowledge of the larger world in part of which we live. . . . ”

MR. COLBJÖRNSEN (Government Delegate, Norway).—“ . . . In the last words of his last report the Director reaffirms his faith in the human spirit and human progress by saying that ‘there is no reason to fear that the world, having known the joys of freedom and enlightenment, is destined to relapse into the brutish obscurity of another Dark Age.’ Mr. Butler has made a considerable and lasting contribution to mankind and to that peaceful revolution which is constantly going on and will by and by create the foundations of a new and better world. We are moving towards a synthesis of social and economic efforts which is also a synthesis of freedom and security. Perhaps the biggest problem of our time is to reconcile and merge individual and collective freedom with personal and social security. The path goes through more and better economic and social planning, organization, and co-ordination directed towards the aim of peaceful social development and a better standard of life for the whole community. . . . ”

MR. RAMADIER (Minister of Labour, France).—“ . . . If the regulation of hours of work has been an important factor in overcoming the depression, then it may be said that the balance-sheet is not unfavourable as regards this reform. We may draw the conclusion that social reform can be a valuable aid in critical moments; but no doubt it is still more prudent not to wait too long and to prevent a social depression by the adoption of the necessary reforms. No doubt the fact that new difficulties have arisen is due to the fact that the new regulation coincided with a marked economic recovery. We had to produce more than in previous years, and we had to do so under stricter conditions regarding labour without any previous measures of adjustment.

“I agree that difficulties of this sort could not be avoided in France, though they should be avoided where possible. In our case the transition was a rapid one. When a transitional scheme could be adopted, it facilitated the introduction of the scheme. The forty-hour week takes account of the progress of mechanization and rationalization, but it reckons on their being general, and perhaps on their being carried still further than at present. Undoubtedly it is better to take time over a reform of this sort and not to make a transformation at a stroke.

“It is also necessary for the new scheme to be adapted to the requirements of different industries and trades. Little by little our scheme, which is less rigid than some believe, is being adapted where necessary, without abandonment of the principle. And the introduction of the scheme in stages is also a valuable measure. The rules relating to making up time lost and to overtime have already been considerably altered by the decrees of 21st December, 1937, and 24th May, 1938.

“Practical experience reveals certain needs which were first of all not recognized, and the necessary modifications are being made; but there is no essential contradiction between the principles of the reform and its careful and flexible application. France is thus gradually recovering its equilibrium, which at one time seemed to be in danger.

“I should like to refer to the great lesson which the French experiment can teach to the International Labour Organization. The troubles of June, 1936, may have appeared grave and have threatened the very basis of our country, but France easily found its way to salvation, thanks to its democratic system, for democracy prevents violence by showing how unnecessary it is. France owes its salvation also to an energetic policy of social reform. Social reform is not only an element of progress; it is also one of the essential elements of a nation's stability and force. It is a bulwark which protects civilization, weakness, and impatience.

“The French experiment therefore, despite certain difficulties, has succeeded. It may be of general value to the world. In any case, the International Labour Office, which has the duty of promoting social progress throughout the world, should learn the lessons of our experiment. The Office has accomplished its duty