

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 Labor, 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 which 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 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 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 frame-work 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 him that, although the movement for shorter hours has been delayed by the armaments race, it remains, as Mr. Ramadier said, a necessity, because the essential causes which are making for shorter hours continue to operate. I was glad to note that Mr. Lambert-Ribot at the close of his interesting speech did not quarrel with this conclusion, as he recognized that shorter hours are a necessary consequence of technical progress.

"As I pointed out in my report, when the pace of the armaments race begins to slacken 'the tendencies making for a reduction of hours will have been accentuated rather than diminished. The problem will not only remain, but its solution will have become more urgent. Hence, although there is a temporary pause due to the tremendous drive for the production of war material in most of the principal industrial countries, there is no reason for supposing that the movement towards shorter hours has been arrested or reversed.' A good deal of evidence has been adduced to support this conclusion during the debate.

"It appears to be generally admitted that the intensification of production and the fatigue which results from it have generated an instinctive movement towards shorter hours. Mr. Moston has shown that the forty-hour week is working successfully in New Zealand. Miss Perkins has explained how the reduction of hours by collective agreement is likely to be reinforced by Federal legislation in the United States. Mr. Ramadier has shown that the difficulties to which the forty-hour week has given rise in France have been considerably exaggerated, and with the necessary adaptations will no doubt be overcome. Mr. Culley has told us that the forty-five-hour week has become general in Australia, largely owing to the adoption of the Forty-Hour Week Convention by this