

ECONOMIC  
AND  
SOCIAL COUNCILCONSEIL  
ECONOMIQUE  
ET SOCIALE/C.2/216  
20 July 1949

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Dual DistributionNinth Session

## COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

COMMUNICATION FROM THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOUR dated 19 July 1949,  
concerning Item 9 of the Agenda of the IXth Session of the Council.

Distributed to the members of the Council for their information in accordance with section 4, paragraph 2 of the Report of the Committee on Arrangements for Consultation with Non-Governmental Organizations, approved by the Council on 21 June 1946 (resolution No 2/3 of 21 June 1946) Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, first year; second session, pages 360-365.

The American Federation of Labour is most vitally interested in the development of underdeveloped areas and in giving those countries all the assistance that a long experience in its field enables it to grant. This interest originates in two motives; first we have learned to look at the world and the world economy as being in the development to a unit. In the long duration parts of this economy cannot remain sound when parts of it are suffering from depression, disequilibrium, underdevelopment and resulting poverty. Furthermore and perhaps more so we are interested in the human element of the economy. There is a possibility that great riches are being produced while those who produce them are forced to live under most deplorable conditions. If such a state of affairs prevails the country cannot be considered as living in prosperity. The latter exists only there where all parts of society are getting their fair share of the wealth created and are co-operating under conditions of mutual respect.

What is the background of the idea of Economic development and technical assistance? The principal motive is to speed up the process of development in those areas that have not reached yet a status guaranteeing a satisfactory share to all members of its population. The second one is to assist them in avoiding waste which countries starting the area of industrial production had to experience. Speaking of waste one thinks first and foremost of material waste. Much more serious and

regrettable however is the waste in human energies and human happiness. And it is for the purpose of avoiding this suffering that the nations of the early industrial development had to go through, that we offer to do our share in helping and advising the countries that are on threshold of their industrial era.

We have studied with great care the volume on "Technical Assistance for Economic Development" and especially the chapter dealing with the contribution of the International Labour Organization. We are convinced that the I.L.O. is able and will make a valuable contribution to the common work. But we are also convinced that this contribution has to be complemented by the contribution of labour from the field of daily practical experience through the labour movement of the more developed industrial countries themselves. This collaboration cannot be excluded without damage to the common purpose. I wish to give here only a short sketch of the main fields of assistance on our part.

On the basis of a smoothly functioning industrial society is a well organized maturing trade union movement. Much friction will be avoided if trade unions are recognized from the start and are built up on a democratic basis. The methods developed in the more industrially advanced countries in the direction of democratic administration beginning on the local level could be communicated as well as the practice of parliamentary procedure, the election of officers and where necessary, the delegation of selfadministration. There is a wealth of experience of which younger Trade Unions could well benefit in the realm of relationship of labour to employers and to governments, beginning on the local level up to the central authorities. In both forms of relationships present forms have been acquired only after costly and painful frictions which countries of younger industrial development might well be able to avoid. There is the important field of collective bargaining in which trade union functionaries - and not only the paid ones - have to be instructed and play their part. Union representatives have to learn how to draw up an agreement and have it observed by its membership until its expiration. The worker himself has to know his role in the process of Mediation and Arbitration as well as the role of government. The use of weapon of the strike which must be left to labour under any governmental system has to be learned as one to be resorted to only after other methods



have failed. The experience of some very successful trade unions who have obtained a high degree of welfare and very favourable conditions of life and of work for their membership might offer an example that could be followed profitably. In the realm of Labour Management relations there is the wide field of action on the shop level. The method of setting up shop rules as well as the institution of the Shop Steward are part of a system of smoothly functioning relationship, because the earlier causes for dissatisfaction are recognized and settled the less loss will be caused for the worker and for society. Wage Committees and grievance Committees would usefully complement the system. In specific cases labour management relationship may have to be extended to areas and eventually to whole industries. In the same field belongs the co-operation of the worker in the problem of sanitation and safety in the plant.

It is not possible to solve the problem of Training only by establishing vocational schools. If a country has broad development ~~plans~~ requiring a high number of semi-skilled and skilled workers within a short period of time it will need in addition to vocational schools an apprenticeship system starting from the principle of training on the job. Labour in the industrially more advanced countries could and would be willing to play an important part in assisting in this task, as they also could in the task of training of vocational teachers. Education is not solved completely by overcoming illiteracy. Labour education is an additional need in order to have a responsible membership, trained organizers and officers etc.

Even in the field of social security the task is not finished by the establishment of good legislation and efficient administration. Labour has to be able to make use of the system and to understand it.

To often economic development and technical assistance are thought of exclusively in terms of investment and industrial technique while the most essential factor, the human one, is treated a secondary one. However the success of the process will depend not less on the attitude and the skill of the worker. It is wise to set from the beginning standards of sound practice. Experience in industrial achievement has been accompanied by a constant fight for freedom. In the long run one cannot achieve efficiency at the expense of welfare.

By what methods can labour's direct participation be realized in the process of development?

It would be recommended to have in specific cases labour from the field included in Missions sent out to underdeveloped countries. This may be effected through collaboration with the International Labour Organization whose past performance has always been recognized by the trade union movement. To this may be added a practice of sending labour technicians out for taking direct contact with labour abroad, teaching the know how on the basic level. And finally the underdeveloped countries might send some of their own workers to the developed countries for purposes of training in the plant as well as in developing a sound trade union movement.

American Labour like other American institutions such as Rockefeller Foundation or the Institute of International Education, is able and willing to make its contribution in this new and bold enterprise. We hope that the United Nations will not commit the mistake to refuse the stretched out hand.