The First African Regional Conference of the International Labour Organisation

Lagos, December 1960

The following article gives a general survey of the work of the First African Regional Conference of the International Labour Organisation. It does not attempt to be exhaustive. A fuller account is contained in Industry and Labour, also published by the I.L.O.¹ The texts of the resolutions and conclusions adopted by the Conference will be published in the Official Bulletin.

The First African Regional Conference of the International Labour Organisation, which met in Lagos in the Federation of Nigeria from 5 to 16 December 1960, was the largest regional conference the I.L.O. has ever held. Meeting towards the end of a year which has everywhere been termed “the year of Africa”, both because of the emergence in 1960 of a large number of new independent African States and because of the extent to which the attention of the world was concentrated in 1960 on the problems of the African Continent, it attracted world attention. One indication of this consisted in the messages of goodwill and wishes for the success of the Conference which came from His Majesty the Emperor of Ethiopia Haile Selassie I, the President of the United States, Mr. Dwight D. Eisenhower, the Chairman of the U.S.S.R. Council of Ministers, Mr. Nikita Khrushchev, and the President of the Republic of Brazil, Dr. Juscelino Kubitschek de Oliveira; these messages were in addition to those brought orally from the heads of African governments by the leaders of delegations attending the Conference.

At the same time the Conference met at a stage at which the social, economic and political ferment which characterises the Africa of the mid-twentieth century was at a crucial point and at which there were grave differences of view in Africa on political issues. In the long run it is possible that the major achievement of

the First African Regional Conference of the I.L.O. will be considered to be the proof it afforded that the representatives of governments, employers and workers from all Africa could cooperate fruitfully and effectively to seek solutions to the social and economic problems of the continent with a view to securing a better life for its peoples.

The Prime Minister of the Federation of Nigeria, His Excellency Alhaji Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, in his opening address to the Conference made an appeal in this sense—

I have noted with a good deal of sympathy the request in the latest Report of the Director-General that this Conference should avoid political issues, but I must confess that my sympathy is divided equally between the Director-General and those delegates who believe in all honesty that labour problems are so closely related to politics that it is unrealistic to try to separate them. For instance, in this continent the principles of the International Labour Organisation regarding freedom of association, freedom of choice of employment, and equality of treatment for workers irrespective of their race or religion or sex, are being shamefully ignored. Nevertheless, I do assure you that these matters are being taken up elsewhere by the political leaders of the African States, and I therefore associate myself with the Director-General’s request, because I believe that we can better promote the welfare of our people if we concentrate at this Conference on finding effective solutions to the problems which you are invited to discuss.

The Chairman of the Governing Body, Mr. George C. Lodge, made a similar appeal at the opening sitting—

Before referring in more detail to the heavy task the Conference will have in dealing adequately with its substantial agenda, I should like to refer to a question dealt with in the introduction to the Report of the Director-General and one which was given very close consideration by the Governing Body of the International Labour Office. It was also a question referred to by the Prime Minister. The objective of this Conference is not to deal with political issues on which African peoples may be divided and which we in the I.L.O. have no competence to discuss or to decide. The objective of this Conference is to formulate policy on social issues which are our responsibility and on which we can reasonably hope to secure a wide measure of agreement. The unanimous opinion in the Governing Body when convening this Conference, as indicated by the views put forward by Governments, Workers and Employers, was that the Conference should not take up or allow itself to be diverted into political avenues, but should concentrate on the subjects on its agenda, on the subjects which are vital and urgent to the peoples of this continent. And as Chairman of the Governing Body I associate myself fully with the request made by the Director-General in his Report that all members of delegations should respect that understanding in the course of their participation in debates.

The substantial practical work of the Conference is the clearest demonstration of the effectiveness of these appeals. The spirit in which its work was to be conducted was foreshadowed by the President of the Conference, Mr. J. M. Johnson, Minister of Labour of the Federation of Nigeria, in his opening presidential address—
It is now generally accepted that 1960 has become, as the Director-General pointed out in his Report, "the year of Africa". The truth of this statement becomes clearer as we draw near the close of this momentous year—a year which has seen the greater part of the countries and peoples of Africa become masters of their own affairs. But if 1960 were to be marked by no more than political independence, not only Africa but the world at large would soon be faced with a period of dangerous disillusionment; for independence cannot and should not be regarded as an end in itself. It has accordingly become the duty of all African countries to indicate that this year of destiny shall be marked not only by the attainment of independence, which is undoubtedly a glorious achievement, but also as the year in which we showed the capacity to bring to bear on world problems in general and on African problems in particular the maturity of judgment and the honesty of purpose which alone will ensure a peaceful and prosperous future in terms of social and economic development for our peoples.

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The First African Regional Conference, while marking a new and decisive step in the activities of the I.L.O. in Africa, represented at the same time the culmination and logical consequence of a long period of work by the I.L.O. in relation to African problems.

The years between the establishment of the Organisation and the outbreak of the Second World War were marked by the adoption by the International Labour Conference of a number of international labour Conventions and Recommendations having primary reference to African labour problems in the basic field of human rights and dealing essentially with forced labour and other forms of compulsion to labour.¹

A Committee of Experts on Native Labour ² was established to give the Governing Body of the International Labour Office the benefit of the advice of persons with extensive knowledge of African questions in connection with the technical preparation of these instruments. After the Second World War it was succeeded by the Committee of Experts on Social Policy in Non-Metropolitan Territories, which concentrated its attention more and more with the passage of the years on African problems. This Committee met on five occasions (London, 1947; Geneva, 1951; Lisbon, 1953; Dakar, 1955; and Geneva, 1957), and gave detailed study to prob-

¹ Notably the Forced Labour Convention, 1930; the Recruiting of Indigenous Workers Convention, 1936; the Contracts of Employment (Indigenous Workers) Convention, 1939; and the Penal Sanctions (Indigenous Workers) Convention, 1939.

² The Committee of Experts was established by the Governing Body of the I.L.O. in 1926 and was convened for five sessions, in 1927, 1928, 1930, 1932 and 1934. At the first three sessions the questions it studied were the various aspects of forced labour; at the two later sessions it gave attention to systems of recruiting, contracts of employment and penal sanctions in relation to indigenous workers.
lems of productivity, technical and vocational training, wage systems and policies, housing, social security, industrial relations, and migrant labour problems. Its final session in 1957 was devoted entirely to African problems, when its agenda comprised examination of a survey of labour and social policy in Africa, the outcome of its work being the *African Labour Survey*, subsequently published by the International Labour Office.\(^1\) A companion volume, the *Labour Survey of North Africa*, was published in 1960.\(^2\)

The International Labour Conference continued to mark its deep enduring interest in labour problems in Africa by the adoption of a series of further instruments primarily of relevance to the African Continent.\(^3\) The Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations as well as the International Labour Conference gave increasing attention to the problems of application of Conventions to non-metropolitan territories, a substantial proportion of which were African. The attendance at the International Labour Conference each year of a larger number of observer delegations from Africa was made possible by the revision of the Constitution of the International Labour Organisation which came into effect in 1946.

The establishment of the African Field Office in Lagos in January 1959 was a further step designed to enable the I.L.O. to develop its work in Africa. Since its creation this Office has contributed substantially to the expansion of I.L.O. technical assistance activities in Africa, particularly in the field of technical and vocational training.

The most recent development preceding the holding of the First African Regional Conference was the creation of a tripartite I.L.O. African Advisory Committee, which met for the first time in 1959 in Luanda, Angola; the work of this Committee contributed substantially to the preparation of the First African Regional Conference.

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An account of the work and achievement of the First African Regional Conference inevitably calls for some reference to the purposes which such regional conferences are designed to serve. They are clearly intended not only to offer the opportunity to exchange views and to seek to work for common solutions to the problems covered by the technical items on the agenda of the particular conference, but to enable participants to place their labour and social problems before the I.L.O. and their colleagues from other countries and territories in the region, so that they may call upon the services of the Organisation and the experience of other countries. The occasion to do this is offered primarily by the debate on the Director-General’s Report. One index of the success of the First African Regional Conference in this regard was that the number of speakers in this debate was far greater than at any other regional conference ever held by the I.L.O.

The Conference was opened by Mr. Lodge, Chairman of the Governing Body, and addressed in the first instance by Alhaji Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, Prime Minister of the Federation of Nigeria. Mr. J. M. Johnson, Minister of Labour of the Federation of Nigeria, was unanimously elected President of the Conference. The Vice-Presidents elected were Mr. Badiane, Minister of Technical Education, Senegal, Mr. Achour, Employers’ delegate, Tunisia, and Mr. Pongault, Workers’ delegate, Congo (Brazzaville).

Thirty-six African countries and territories were represented at the Conference. The total number of delegates and advisers was 229, including 66 Government delegates, 32 Employers’ delegates and 34 Workers’ delegates. The delegation of the Governing Body was composed of the Chairman of the Governing Body, two Government members, two Employers’ members and two Workers’ members. Observers from six member States from outside the African Continent attended the Conference. The United Nations and seven other official intergovernmental international organisations were represented and there were also representatives of eight non-governmental international organisations.

In addition to the Report of the Director-General, there were two further items on the agenda of the Conference—vocational training, and relations between employers and workers. An account of the discussions, resolutions and conclusions of the Conference and relevant committees in regard to these two subjects is given later in this article.

There was very full discussion of the Director-General’s Report, no less than 74 speakers taking part, including 16 government Ministers. The principal subjects receiving attention in the discussion were: problems of economic and social development, vocational training and general educational needs, industrial relations, the
development of the work of the I.L.O. in Africa, labour legislation
and the application of international labour standards, workers' 
education, the International Institute for Labour Studies and the 
technical assistance which the I.L.O. could provide for African 
countries.

In addition to the resolutions and conclusions adopted by the 
Conference on vocational training and relations between employers 
and workers, five further resolutions were adopted. The resolution 
of widest scope was that concerning the work of the International 
Labour Organisation in Africa, which dealt with the regional 
activities of the I.L.O. in Africa, the preparation, ratification and 
application of international labour Conventions and Recommenda-
tions in Africa, technical assistance, workers' education and the 
education of management of small and medium-sized undertakings. 
The other resolutions adopted concerned: (1) the stability of world 
commodity markets and their influence on levels of living and 
employment; (2) the International Institute for Labour Studies; 
(3) the living and working conditions of women and young workers 
in Africa; and (4) the ratification of the Indigenous and Tribal 
Populations Convention, 1957, and the revision of the Social Policy 

PROBLEMS OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

A substantial part of the statements made in the course of the 
discussion of the Director-General's Report consisted of accounts 
given by delegates of the current economic and social problems of 
their respective countries, the solutions that were being attempted 
and analyses of the over-all issues involved in the relationship 
between social progress and the necessities of economic develop-
ment. The role which the Conference considered that the I.L.O. 
might play in this regard was defined in the opening part of the 
resolution concerning the ratification of the Indigenous and Tribal 
Populations Convention, 1957, and the revision of the Social Policy 
(Non-Metropolitan Territories), Convention, 1947.

This declares that the chief concern of every nation should be 
social progress linked to economic development, and recommends 
that the governments of the independent States of Africa should 
give priority to the framing and progressive implementation of 
plans to this end. The authorities responsible for countries that are 
still dependent should create the conditions necessary for the early 
attainment of independence by the people of those countries to 
enable them to assume full responsibility for their economic and 
social policies. The resolution calls on the I.L.O. to combine its 
efforts in matters of economic and social development policy with
those of the governments and other international agencies concerned and asks that I.L.O. technical assistance programmes should be so oriented as to enable the I.L.O. to give effective assistance to the countries concerned in the framing and implementation of economic and social development plans.

Another aspect of economic and social development problems to which the Conference gave specific attention was dealt with in the resolution concerning the stability of world commodity markets and their influence on levels of living and employment. This resolution invites the Governing Body of the I.L.O., in the light of the extent to which levels of living and employment of the workers and peoples of a large number of African countries are affected by fluctuations in world prices of raw materials and commodities, to take all appropriate steps to ensure that in the framing or revision of international commodity agreements due account is taken of their social consequences, particularly on the levels of living and employment and the conditions of work of the peoples concerned.

As emphatic as the preoccupation of the Conference with the pressing need for social and economic advancement in Africa was the stress laid on the major role the I.L.O. should be called upon to play in furthering that advancement. Speaker after speaker made this point in different ways and the resolutions adopted by the Conference are an unequivocal confirmation of its strong feeling on this matter. It can be said without reservation that the First African Regional Conference, speaking with the voice of the representatives of governments, employers and workers of all Africa, marked the explicit adherence of the peoples of Africa to the objectives of the I.L.O. and their desire to have the Organisation assist them in practical ways to attain the level of social and economic development to which they are urgently aspiring.

**Vocational Training**

The subject of vocational training was the second item on the agenda of the Conference and a Committee on Vocational Training was set up to study this item. It should, however, be noted in addition that vocational training and educational needs generally were a central theme in most of the speeches made in the course of the debate on the Director-General's Report. In his reply the Director-General said—

In this Conference there has been a remarkable consensus of agreement on the nature of the main economic and social problems confronting the African countries—and also upon what needs to be done about them. No conclusion has emerged more clearly or with greater unanimity than the importance which should be given to education and training.
Discussion of this subject in the course of the debate on the Director-General's Report covered four main general topics: firstly, description and analysis by delegates of the problems in this field in their respective countries; secondly, accounts of the approaches being adopted, for example accelerated training methods; thirdly, emphasis on the importance of expanding educational facilities both for the needs of the communities concerned and also to facilitate vocational training programmes; and fourthly, reference to the important services which it was felt that the I.L.O. could provide through technical assistance in this field.

In the Committee on Vocational Training statements were made by a number of delegates outlining present training activities in their respective countries, with particular emphasis on matters requiring urgent attention, and especially international technical assistance. This general discussion was followed by examination of the problems connected with vocational and technical training, the main aspects discussed being the importance of reliable information on manpower supply and demand, the objectives of and factors influencing training policy, problems of training in industry and commerce, instructor training, accelerated training and upgrading training, long-term training and apprenticeship, problems and methods of training in agriculture, training in respect of small-scale industries and co-operatives, the training of intermediate and higher personnel, management training, the importance of adequate labour administrative services in connection with vocational and technical training programmes and the need for good central organisation and collaboration with employers' and workers' organisations in respect of such programmes.

Two resolutions were adopted by the Committee and subsequently by the Conference. The first concerns international technical assistance and calls for priority to be given to programmes related to the training of supervisors and instructors; such training should take place in specialised establishments in industry, commerce, agriculture and public services and be concerned in the first instance with the training of instructors for vocational training centres, foremen, and supervisory staff for co-operatives. The second resolution was a comprehensive one concerning vocational and technical training, which deals in detail with the points noted in the preceding paragraph as having been examined in the general discussion. In particular it emphasises that training programmes for African countries will need to have regard to the following main objectives:

(a) the training of sufficient numbers of skilled workers who are adjusted to modern industrial production and sufficiently adaptable to acquire the new skills and work methods which economic development will bring with it;
(b) the formation of a cadre of managers, engineers, technicians and supervisors adequate to fill shortages in industrial and commercial establishments and to meet the needs of economic growth in the years ahead;

(c) the achievement of higher productivity and better living standards in rural communities through improvement of existing skills and introduction of more efficient methods of agricultural production and husbandry;

(d) the training in organisational and administrative practices of officials for the co-operative movement and for the public services dealing with labour and manpower questions.

A final section of the resolution deals with action by the International Labour Organisation in this field. It requests the I.L.O. to continue and expand its study of training problems in respect of Africa, makes proposals as to the priorities in training programmes, analyses the forms that I.L.O. assistance can most usefully take and requests the Governing Body to give consideration to the establishment of a special African Training Committee to advise the Organisation on its activities in this field.

RELATIONS BETWEEN EMPLOYERS AND WORKERS

The third item on the agenda of the Conference was relations between employers and workers, covering (a) freedom of association, (b) joint consultation and (c) collective bargaining. In addition to the discussions in the Committee on Relations between Employers and Workers which was set up by the Conference, this subject was frequently referred to during the debate on the Director-General’s Report; a number of speakers emphasised the importance of the problems in this field at a time when the tempo of economic development was resulting in a rapid increase in the wage-earning population of African countries.

In the Committee the discussion on freedom of association centred around the following points: the extent to which the changing circumstances of Africa made it desirable for the new African States to ratify and apply the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948, and the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949, rather than to continue to discharge responsibilities assumed under the Right of Association (Non-Metropolitan Territories) Convention, 1947; the rights which it was specially important to protect, including the right to strike; the desirability that national constitutions should contain provisions safeguarding the right of association; the characteristics of the trade union situation in the different African countries; the practical effect of the ratification of the Conventions in question; the special problems deriving from the multiplicity of trade unions; the circumstances under which
the automatic deduction of trade union dues from wages was appropriate; and problems of racial discrimination in relation to the exercise of the right of association. In regard to joint consultation and collective bargaining, time permitted only a relatively brief exchange of views.

The Committee, and subsequently the Conference, unanimously adopted a resolution concerning freedom of association and protection of the right to organise, and conclusions concerning collective bargaining and joint consultation.

The resolution appeals urgently to African States and governments responsible for territories in Africa in which the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948, and the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949, are in force to apply their provisions fully, to African States in which these Conventions are not in force to consider ratifying them and ensuring their application, and to governments responsible for non-metropolitan territories in Africa in which all the provisions of the two Conventions are not fully in force to examine the possibility of accepting and applying all their provisions. A further urgent appeal is made for the guarantee in all African countries and territories of certain basic rights in respect of freedom of association. The Governing Body is requested to have impartial surveys of the practical application of the right of freedom of association carried out in the various countries of Africa, to invite the governments concerned to co-operate fully with the Governing Body Committee on Freedom of Association, to accelerate the procedure of this Committee and to give greater publicity to its conclusions, particularly when any government fails to co-operate fully with it.

The conclusions on collective bargaining and joint consultation emphasise that "collective bargaining constitutes the method of determining wages and conditions of employment which is in the best interest of all parties and is the most conducive to equitable and harmonious relations between employer and workers".

All appropriate steps should be taken to guarantee generally in Africa the right to organise and bargain collectively and to facilitate collective bargaining in practice, as well as to create a better understanding in African countries of the importance of collective bargaining. Stress is also laid on the need for the development of organisations of employers and workers and on practical measures to encourage collective bargaining and delimit its sphere of utility.

In respect of joint consultation, the conclusions note the varying patterns established in different African countries and indicate in detail a number of measures to facilitate joint consultation arrange-
ments at different levels. It is emphasised at the same time that joint consultation lends itself particularly well to existing circumstances in Africa, where wide differences of background frequently exist between employers and their workers, and between managers, or supervisors, and workers. Finally it is recommended that the attention of governments and of employers' and workers' organisations should be drawn to the I.L.O. programme of action on labour-management relations, so that African countries can contribute to and benefit from it.

Development of the Work of the I.L.O. in Africa

One of the principal themes recurring in the course of the debate on the Director-General’s Report was the question of the development of the I.L.O.'s work in Africa. The statements made in the course of the discussion were essentially of a general character and may be summarised as indicating a widespread feeling that substantial expansion was called for. In a more concrete way, and in more precise terms, the resolution adopted concerning the work of the International Labour Organisation in Africa dealt with five main aspects of this question: regional activities, international labour standards, technical assistance, workers' education and the education of management. The last four of these questions are treated separately below.

The part of the resolution dealing with regional activities requests the Governing Body to give special attention to the conclusions submitted to it by the First African Regional Conference and to convey to governments and employers' and workers' organisations in Africa the hope of the Conference that they will fully support the work of the I.L.O. The resolution recommends that further African Regional Conferences should be convened at intervals not exceeding four years and that a tripartite African Advisory Committee representative of the whole of Africa should meet regularly at least once every two years; other proposals are made for the intensification and expansion of the I.L.O.'s work in Africa.

Application of International Labour Standards in Africa

The important influence which international labour Conventions and Recommendations have already had in shaping labour legislation and social and labour policy in Africa as well as the means by which that influence might be extended in the future were important themes of discussion and decision at the Conference. In addition to the attention the subject was given in the debate on the Director-
General’s Report, the resolutions adopted by the Conference emphasised in a number of instances the importance it attached to this aspect of the I.L.O.’s work.

At the opening sitting of the Conference both the Prime Minister and the Minister of Labour of the Federation of Nigeria referred to the major part played by I.L.O. standards in shaping the labour legislation and social policy of their country; the latter, in particular, stated—

Practically all our labour legislation ... even that dating as far back as 30 years, has been largely based upon the principles enunciated, accepted and codified by the I.L.O. The same applies in varying extent to most of the African countries and territories represented here today. This is evidenced by the numbers of Conventions ratified by member States in Africa.

The following statement of the Minister of Labour of the United Kingdom was equally a major tribute to this aspect of the I.L.O.’s work:

The outstanding contribution of the I.L.O. to mankind has been the creation of international labour and working standards by means of Conventions and Recommendations. These have been and will remain a powerful influence in improving conditions of life and labour throughout the world, and the more universally they are applied the better.

Among the speakers in the debate who referred to the importance of the international labour Conventions and Recommendations, whether in relation to the labour legislation of their own countries or as a basis for social progress in Africa, were the Government delegates of Cameroun, the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, Gabon, Guinea, Libya, Mali, the Malagasy Republic, Portugal, Senegal, Togo, Uganda and the United Arab Republic as well as the Workers’ delegates from Kenya, the Malagasy Republic, Mali, Northern Rhodesia, Senegal and Tanganyika.

The resolutions adopted by the Conference in regard to vocational training and relations between employers and workers both contain specific reference to international labour standards, particularly in regard to the second of these questions. It is, however, in two of the wider resolutions that more specific attention is given to the question of the application as a whole of international labour standards to Africa.

The resolution adopted concerning the work of the International Labour Organisation in Africa contains an important section entitled “Preparation, Ratification and Application of International Labour Conventions and Recommendations in Africa”. A solemn appeal is addressed to all African States Members of the I.L.O. to re-examine periodically all Conventions with a view to their progressive application and ratification; a similar appeal is made in regard to the acceptance of Recommendations. The resolu-
tion refers in particular to a number of Conventions concerning the protection of certain fundamental human rights, ratification and strict application of which should be regarded by all African States as a question of honour and prestige, namely the Forced Labour Convention, 1930; the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957; the Penal Sanctions (Indigenous Workers) Convention, 1939; the Abolition of Penal Sanctions (Indigenous Workers) Convention, 1955; the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948; the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949; and the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958. Attention is drawn to the contribution which the application and ratification of certain other Conventions could make to further social progress in African countries, and the Governing Body of the I.L.O. is invited to examine how special regional needs could be taken into consideration in international labour standards. Finally the resolution calls for factual surveys to enable the report of the McNair Committee on the state of law and regulations concerning the freedom and independence of employers’ and workers’ organisations to be brought up to date and completed in respect of the new African member States.

Another resolution adopted by the Conference, taking into account the fact that the attainment of independence by a large number of African countries meant that the Social Policy (Non-Metropolitan Territories) Convention, 1947, was no longer applicable to them, asks that ways and means be found to enable African States to accept, or to continue to discharge, the obligations laid down in this Convention and draws the attention of governments of independent African States to the desirability of their giving early consideration to the possibility of ratifying the Indigenous and Tribal Populations Convention, 1957.

Workers' Education

Workers' education, which was given separate treatment in the Director-General's Report in accordance with a suggestion to this effect made by the African Advisory Committee, was the subject of frequent reference in the debate on this Report and of an important section in the resolution concerning the work of the International Labour Organisation in Africa.

Among Government delegates who referred to the question in the discussion of the Director-General's Report were those of the Central African Republic, the Congo (Brazzaville), Chad, Cameroun, Kenya, the Malagasy Republic, Nigeria, Tanganyika and Togo. Frequent mention was also made of the subject by Workers' deleg-
ates. For example the Workers' delegate from Senegal emphasised
that training needed to be provided to enable trade union leaders to
discharge their many functions not only for the benefit of the
organisations to which they belong but also for that of the working
class as a whole. The Workers' delegate from the Malagasy Repub-
lic hoped that the I.L.O. might be able to provide technical assist-
ance in this field to the trade unions in Madagascar, and those from
Nigeria and the United Arab Republic referred with appreciation to
the work which had been done by the I.L.O. in their countries.

The part of the resolution concerning the work of the I.L.O. in
Africa which deals with workers' education problems and policies
expresses appreciation of the work already done in Africa by the
I.L.O. and urges it to expand and intensify its efforts. It requests
the Governing Body to appeal to educational institutions to assist
the trade unions in appropriate ways in their educational activities
and to authorise the Director-General to take action in a number of
specific directions with the same objective, particularly through
expansion of the workers' education programme, the holding of
seminars and the provision of fellowships and mobile equipment,
and by giving all practicable support to promising new develop-
ments in the field of workers' education in Africa.

Education of Management of Small and
Medium-Sized Undertakings

During the debate on the Director-General's Report several
speakers referred to the importance of various aspects of manage-
ment training in the present circumstances of Africa. Part of the
resolution adopted by the Conference concerning the work of the
I.L.O. in Africa also stressed this need; it called for steps to be
taken to enable the I.L.O. to respond generously to requests from
employers' organisations to provide training for their members and
asked for an intensification of the activities of the I.L.O. in this field
in African countries and in other parts of the world in the process of
development.

The International Institute for Labour Studies

Reference was made by a number of speakers to the contribu-
tion that the International Institute for Labour Studies could make
in respect of Africa at the present time.

This Institute is to provide persons with responsibility in labour
and social matters from different countries—whether from manage-
ment, trade unions, the public service, the professions or other
occupations—with opportunities to exchange experience and to
study together the issues which arise in framing policies in these
fields. Its work, which is to begin shortly, will be directed particularly to the labour and social problems arising in connection with economic growth.

Many delegates expressed hopes as to the role the Institute would fulfil, especially for Africa. The Workers’ delegate from the United Arab Republic considered that, in the light of the pressing needs of Africa, the biggest share of the funds of the Institute should be devoted to African trade unionists and that, if this were not possible, consideration should be given to the establishment of a similar institution in the African Continent. Among the speakers who referred to the important services the Institute could render to Africa were the Government delegates of Ethiopia, the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, Mali, Nigeria and Togo, the Employers’ delegate of Guinea and the Workers’ delegate of the Malagasy Republic.

The interest of the Conference found concrete expression in the adoption of a resolution concerning the Institute. This welcomes the creation of the Institute and expresses the hope that its work will soon begin and will give due regard to the aspirations of workers and employers in Africa. It further requests that consideration be given in the work of the Institute to the use of languages other than the official languages of the I.L.O. and that the Institute should give special attention to African problems and examples of the successful solution of such problems.

**TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

Reference has already been made to the statements of several speakers in the debate on the Director-General’s Report regarding the value of I.L.O. technical assistance in various fields, particularly in respect of vocational and technical training. The whole subject, however, was one of the major themes of discussion, and the resolution concerning the work of the I.L.O. in Africa also contains a section on technical assistance.

A number of the points made in regard to technical assistance would seem to merit particular mention. The Minister of Technical Education of Senegal expressed the view that bilateral technical assistance should be replaced by multilateral forms such as that afforded by the I.L.O., as these did not imply political or economic concessions. The Government delegate of the Congo (Leopoldville) referred with appreciation to the technical assistance which had been afforded his country by the I.L.O. The Minister of Labour of the Congo (Brazzaville) made the following assessment of the value of I.L.O. technical assistance:

*Technical assistance is the most important service which the I.L.O. can render to Africa. We are therefore particularly glad to hear of the establish-*
ment of the International Institute for Labour Studies. Although we do not neglect the importance of the I.L.O. Conventions and Recommendations we think that as far as Africa is concerned the Organisation should direct its main effort to technical assistance. If we receive this necessary assistance our country, which has latent wealth, will be able to progress. Aware of this necessity, the I.L.O. has rightly established a Field Office here in Lagos; this will do very much to help Africa to overcome its peculiar difficulties. The kind attention given to us at the international level will help Africa to solve its problems and contradictions, but in the last resort it is Africa alone which can solve them completely.

A point of view shared by several speakers was also expressed by the Government delegate of Kenya as follows:

Finally, may I add the plaintive voice of Kenya to those others that express appreciation for I.L.O. aid, notably technical assistance, and in the same breath ask for more. Africa needs aid and, though I have no doubt that other parts of the world do also, I am equally sure that nowhere could it be more fruitfully applied than in this continent of rapid and sometimes unsettling change.

The section of the resolution concerning the work of the I.L.O. in Africa which deals with technical assistance questions invites African States Members to make full use of I.L.O. technical assistance facilities and to give consideration to larger-scale projects and long-term programmes requiring concerted requests and action. The I.L.O. is invited to respond generously to such requests and the hope is expressed that an increase in funds will be available to cover them. Finally States Members of the I.L.O. and the United Nations are urged to give priority to international technical assistance and to co-ordinate other assistance programmes with those of the international organisations in the United Nations family.

**REPLY OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL TO THE DEBATE ON HIS REPORT**

Replying to the debate on his Report, the Director-General stressed the importance of the occasion which the Conference had afforded for representatives from States in all parts of Africa to discuss the social and labour problems in the forefront of concern for African development at the present time. A matter of major concern in Africa was the rate of increase of population and the consequent pressure on food supply; a revolution in agricultural production was needed to cope with this problem. The sustained economic development called for in Africa required above all else investment in education and training to enable the valuable natural resources of the continent to be utilised to secure a better life for its peoples. Such training had to be envisaged within the context of a society changing in all its aspects, for example in respect of migrant labour systems.
New ways of life and new institutions confronted the African worker. In this connection the Director-General said—

I do not believe these institutions of the new emerging African countries will necessarily follow a uniform pattern. There is evidence of much diversity and variety of initiative in this continent when it comes to devising the new social relationships for a more productive industry and agriculture. Africans must jealously guard their prerogative to work out their own answers to their problems, answers which will be understood and freely accepted by African peoples. No person and no organisation can do this for Africa in any sphere of social policy. But Africans can—and I submit, should—profit by the experience of others, as others have before us, elsewhere, and by the disinterested help which they will find others willing to give through the international organisations.

Modern systems of production meant fundamental changes in established forms of community life, and in this context good industrial relations were a basic requirement for economic development. In the circumstances of Africa, workers' education and management training could do much to promote harmonious industrial relations. The contribution of the I.L.O. in Africa had in the past been primarily in the field of international labour standards; for the future, equally important would be technical assistance, which should take the form of genuine technical co-operation between the people of the country concerned and the I.L.O. experts who went to that country to contribute their experience in technical matters. The Director-General pointed out that—

The I.L.O., when it sends experts to Africa—or to any part of the world as a matter of fact—does not, through these experts, attempt to transplant into a developing country some technique, technological process or institution which has been devised in the different conditions of an industrialised country. We do not do this; this would be wrong, it just would not work; and if we tried to do this our operations would fail. Our aim, and I would like to make this clear, is for I.L.O. experts to work with people of the country concerned so that the knowledge of the people, their customs and their desires which only a national can fully possess can, together with the expert's experience in technical matters, create something essentially new, something which is the right thing for the country. Our philosophy of operations is that a new technology and new ways of doing things have to be devised by co-operation between experts and nationals. That is why I say we should call the process "technical co-operation".

Other ways in which the I.L.O. might provide useful service would be by making available to all African countries up-to-date information on developments in the social and labour field in Africa itself and through the work of the International Institute for Labour Studies. Above all else, the problem of freedom in the African context would depend on the approach to education and training which African countries adopted.

The problem of education and training posed in these terms is, I believe, fundamental to the problem of freedom in modern society. I am not using
this word "freedom" as a political slogan. The essence of freedom as I see it is a sense of mastery over one's destiny. Nothing so undermines this sense as the feeling of being lost in a strange impersonal world, the creature of forces which can be neither understood nor controlled. This is the predicament in which the African migrant worker may find himself on taking up a job in an industrial town: nothing in his traditional culture prepares him for the shock of modern impersonal industrial society. In such despair men are most likely to rebel and to look to a self-appointed saviour for an illusory deliverance.

The fundamental task of education and training should be, again as I see it, to combat these enslaving tendencies, to give men the power of understanding which can make them free. This brings us to the ultimate question confronting us all: What is the place of man? Does man exist for economic development and higher production? Or is economic progress the means to greater happiness for men? The way we put and answer this question will determine the means we use to further economic growth and the kind of education and training we provide for individuals. I have no doubt myself what the answer should be.

The understanding which it is our duty to make flower is not a passive thing. It will create new and better ways of doing work; it will arouse demands for fuller participation in making decisions. It will, in short, be a force for economic expansion and for social inventiveness—a strength to freedom and the creator of prosperity.