Report III

Industrial Disputes: Statistics of Strikes

Third item on the agenda
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. OBJECTIVES AND USES OF STATISTICS OF STRIKES</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. TERMINOLOGY</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. MEASURES OF STRIKE ACTIVITY</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Basic unit of measurement for recording strikes</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Number of establishments involved</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Number of workers involved</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Work-time lost</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. SOME SPECIFIC PROBLEMS OF STATISTICS OF STRIKES</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Political or protest strikes</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. General strikes</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Minimum requirements for recording statistics of strikes</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. DATA CLASSIFICATIONS</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Matter in dispute</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Result of the strike and method of settlement</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Industries involved</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Importance of strikes</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Amount of wages lost by strikes</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. Occupations of workers involved</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. Other classifications</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. METHODS OF REPORTING</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII. INDICATORS OF STRIKE ACTIVITY</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSIONS</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANNEX I: RESOLUTION CONCERNING STATISTICS OF INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES ADOPTED BY THE THIRD INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF LABOUR STATISTICIANS (OCTOBER 1926)</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANNEX II: DRAFT RESOLUTION CONCERNING STATISTICS OF STRIKES</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANNEX III: SELECTED LIST OF DOCUMENTS EXAMINED</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHART I: MEASUREMENT OF STRIKE ACTIVITY</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I. INTRODUCTION

Statistics of strikes have been compiled in some industrialised countries for more than 100 years. The subject was examined, as far as 1926, by the Third International Conference of Labour Statisticians. On that occasion, the Conference adopted a resolution defining industrial disputes and laying down detailed principles for their classification and for determining their importance (see Annex I). That resolution still provides the only official international guide-lines for the measurement of industrial disputes.

The need for statistics of industrial disputes is recognised in the Labour Statistics Convention (No. 160) and Recommendation (No. 170), 1985, adopted by the International Labour Conference at its 71st Session, held in Geneva in June 1985. The Convention provides for the regular collection, compilation and publication of a set of basic labour statistics, progressively expanded in accordance with each country's resources. The Recommendation supplements the Convention by providing some guide-lines for classification and periodicity of the basic labour statistics.

During the preparatory work for the Convention, governments were asked, after consultation with organisations of employers and workers to give their views with respect to various aspects of the ILO's proposals. Their replies are analysed in report VI(2), presented at the 70th Session (1984) of the International Labour Conference. The report shows that 61 governments out of 62 considered that the Convention should provide for the regular collection, compilation and publication of statistics on industrial disputes; 56 out of 60 agreed that these statistics should cover the whole country and all branches of economic activity and 55 out of 60, that they should be compiled in such a way as to provide data classified at least according to branch of economic activity.

There is thus continued interest in assessing the importance and characteristics of strikes. For this purpose, many countries have roughly applied the terms of the 1926 resolution. But they have found it extremely difficult to analyse and interpret the data thus compiled.

The basic problem lies in the use of heterogeneous statistics for making comparisons within or between countries. This heterogeneity stems from the many differences in the definitions used to compile the statistics, and from the fact that the organisations responsible for collating and publishing the statistics often do not have any control over the quality of the data reported.

Problems of comparability of strike statistics have been examined and discussed in detail in a number of studies, including in particular Malcolm Fisher's "Measurement of labour disputes and their economic effects" (1973), commissioned by the OECD; Kenneth Walsh's "Industrial disputes - Methods and measurement in the European Community" (1982), commissioned by the statistical office of the European Communities; and Walsh's book entitled "Strikes in Europe and the United States - Measurement and incidence" (1983). A selected list of documents examined is given in Annex III.

The 1926 resolution was a child of its time, reflecting the preoccupations and measurement techniques of that period. While much of it remains valid, more than 60 years, witnessing many developments in the fields of both labour relations and statistics, have passed since its adoption. In view of this and what has been stated above, it is clear that new guide-lines are necessary to help both producers and users of strike statistics.

The Governing Body of the International Labour Office therefore decided at its 231st Session in November 1985, to place the question of industrial disputes on the agenda of the Fourteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians. The purpose of the present report is to facilitate the work and discussions of the Conference. It has been prepared on the basis of relevant individual studies and national practices. It proposes for consideration by the Conference a draft resolution on statistics of strikes to replace the 1926 resolution on industrial disputes. The reason for placing emphasis on strikes rather than all industrial disputes is explained in Chapter III.
II. OBJECTIVES AND USES OF STATISTICS OF STRIKES

Statistics of strikes are used to measure one aspect of social unrest: strikes can be considered as the extreme form of dissatisfaction on the part of workers with the handling of problems relating to their conditions of work and life.

Statistics of strikes can provide indicators of the state of labour-management relations. Thus, in some countries, a low percentage of disputes resulting in strikes, if the latter are not unlawful, could be interpreted as meaning that the existing machinery and procedures for the conciliation and the resolution of labour disputes is functioning efficiently and that workers and employers are willing to settle their disagreements before resorting to strike action. However, it should be borne in mind that, in certain circumstances, the strike is not commonly used as a means of action within the context of a dispute.

The statistics may also at times give an indication of socio-political consensus and stability, which is one of the factors taken into consideration when assessing a country's international economic competitiveness.

The measurement of strike activity may show the extent of trade union militancy or perseverance over demands, and/or employers' opposition to them. It can also be used to identify strike-prone industries. In themselves, the basic statistics of strikes do not measure the effects of strikes on the economy, but could be used in conjunction with other data to give some indication of such effects.

As with other economic and social statistics, most countries are keen to compare their levels of strike activity with those of other countries. International comparisons are officially made in a number of national publications. An example is the annual article on international comparisons of stoppages which appears in the Employment Gazette (United Kingdom). It provides a study of variations in strike activity as between countries and includes an assessment of the problems posed by the statistics involved.

Lastly, the subject of strikes is a matter to which the social partners, the government and the public at large are highly sensitive. It is widely taken up and commented on in the press and other media when, as often happens, international comparisons are made.

III. TERMINOLOGY

The terms used in relevant national legislation and by authors to describe the phenomenon vary to some extent and may create confusion. Thus, "industrial disputes", "labour disputes" or "work stoppages" in the existing literature are often equated with "strikes". Even the 1926 resolution used the term "disputes" when in fact it meant "strikes". "Industrial disputes" may appear to limit the coverage of the statistics to those disputes relating directly to problems of industrial relations, when in fact this is not necessarily the case. It is evident that disputes do not necessarily result in strikes nor are work stoppages due only to disputes.

Strikes nowadays are not always the consequence of a direct conflict between workers and their own employers. The conflict may also be between employers and workers and their representative organs, or between employers or workers and others. Thus, for example, official action to freeze wages or to increase taxes or to increase employers' labour cost may trigger a reaction leading to a work stoppage initiated either by the workers or by the employers even though the conflict may not be between the two social partners.

It should be noted that a dispute may or may not result in such action as a work to rule, go slow, overtime ban, lay-off, absence from work, labour turnover, strike or lockout. There is little or no official information on the types of action which do not result in a complete work stoppage. Their measurement would involve many problems of definition and methodology, and would probably be most appropriately done within the framework of a survey on use of working time.
This report is therefore concerned only with work stoppages in the form of strikes (when the decision about the stoppage is initiated by the workers) and lockouts (when the decision about the stoppage is initiated by the employer or group of employers).

The term "strikes" is used in different countries to cover the various forms of action listed below:

(a) (1) Constitutional or official strikes, which, for example, are undertaken in accordance with legislation and/or a collective agreement or are undertaken in accordance with the procedures in the trade union rule book.

(2) Unofficial (or wild-cat or unconstitutional) strikes are those that do not satisfy the conditions that would classify them as constitutional or official strikes. Examples are those which are mostly undertaken by subgroups within trade unions without the approval or support of their executive bodies. As in the case of constitutional or official strikes, this expression of discord among a trade union membership is an extreme form of disagreement with the handling of matters relating directly or indirectly to terms and conditions of work. They may or may not subsequently develop into official strikes.

It is not proposed to make a distinction between these types of strikes. The important point here is that both types of strikes are generally included in national statistics, and rightly so.

(b) Sympathetic strikes. These result from strong support for a group of workers already on strike on the part of other workers. In a sympathetic strike, the workers involved have no dispute or difference with their own employer. In principle, they have no direct interest in the issue, i.e. they do not stand to gain material improvements in their own terms or conditions of work, nor are they settling their own grievance. Sympathetic strikes are generally included in the national data of strikes.

(c) Political or protest strikes. There is no clear definition of what constitutes a political or protest strike or on what criteria a strike is considered as being a political or protest strike. In many countries, the term "political" or "protest" strike refers to those work stoppages not connected purely with industrial relations issues concerning terms and conditions of work. National practices vary as regards the inclusion or exclusion of such strikes.

(d) General strikes are not clearly defined. The term is used in France to apply to strikes that affect a wide geographic area, a whole industrial sector or a number of different industrial sectors. They may or may not result from a breakdown of negotiations between workers and their employers. Thus, in France, a general strike may be a sympathetic strike. National practices vary as regards the inclusion of general strikes.

(e) Lockouts are work stoppages initiated by employers. They rarely occur in practice. Consequently, most countries (for example, most of the member countries of the European Communities and the United States) do not publish separate information on lockouts.

IV. MEASURES OF STRIKE ACTIVITY

There are four measures of strike activity generally used by countries: number of strikes, number of establishments involved, number of workers involved and work-time lost. It should be noted that each of these measures provides information on only one aspect of strike activity. They need to be considered together in order to obtain a proper understanding of the situation, along with other types of information (i.e. economic, social) according to the type of analysis to be made.
The four measures were all covered in the 1926 resolution and remain valid but, as will be shown below, they require more clarification, clearer definition, etc.

A. Basic unit of measurement for recording strikes

The 1926 resolution defined the basic unit of the statistics as the case of dispute, defined as a temporary stoppage of work wilfully effected by a group of workers or by one or more employers with a view to enforcing a demand. It added that disputes affecting several establishments should be considered as one case if they are organised or directed by one person or organisation and that a distinction should be made between strikes and lockouts.

The central feature of the above definition of a strike is the association of a voluntary and temporary work stoppage by a group of persons with a common case of dispute.

If the common case of dispute (i.e. the issue or group of issues over which there is disagreement) is the basic unit of measurement, then the strike as thus defined is not influenced by considerations of time, location or organisation (i.e. whether the strike action should be measured at the plant, establishment, firm or enterprise level) nor by the various forms it may take. Thus "rotating" or "revolving" strikes which occur when employees at different locations take it in turn to strike, easily fit this ILO definition if enough effort is made to identify the common case of dispute. A number of countries consider as one strike those that break out simultaneously in several establishments as a result of a common dispute. The 1926 definition is however broader in the sense that such strikes taking place at different establishments do not have to be simultaneous. Strikes with a common case of dispute do not necessarily occur at the same time.

Critics of the existing definition have expatiated on the advantages and disadvantages of using the firm, the establishment or the local workplace as the unit of measurement. Some feel it is inappropriate to consider a general strike, involving many establishments and thousands of persons, on an equal basis with an establishment-specific strike involving, say, ten persons. Furthermore, a shift over time from establishment-specific strikes to more widespread strikes will show a decrease in the number of strikes while a count by establishments may show the contrary. However, the number of firms, establishments or local workplaces involved only provide indicators of the severity of the strike; it is the case of dispute that is the unit of observation, not the strike.

There are other difficulties, such as ascertaining whether a strike interrupted for a period of time but then resumed should be regarded as a new strike. In France, for example, any strike interrupted for more than 48 consecutive hours during normal working days is considered as terminated. Should the strike resume after that period, it is regarded as a new strike even if it occurs at the same workplace, involving the same workers and for the same reasons. In Australia, on the other hand, workers reinvolved in a dispute resuming at a later period are not classified as workers newly involved in a stoppage even in the second year after the dispute originated. These two approaches are at variance, but there is perhaps more validity in the French option. A group which fails to win a case in dispute may come back again on the same issue months or even one or more years later. It would be operationally difficult to identify the common case of dispute if such a strike is repeated over a certain period. It therefore seems valid to define a period of interruption of a strike, after which its resumption is to be counted as a new strike.

As stated earlier, the 1926 definition is not influenced by considerations of time, location or organisation nor by the various forms which a strike may take. What is being counted, measured and classified in the first instance is the common case of dispute. A strict application of this definition would mean that the actual number of strikes does not give any indication about the issue, magnitude and other characteristics of the strikes. Consequently, the 1926 resolution offers a good unit of observation.

The number of strikes alone is not therefore a significant indicator of strike activity. Strikes involve establishments or firms and persons, and hence the number of strikes should be used alongside some measure of the establishments and persons involved.
It is worth noting, however, that of the 88 countries providing figures on strikes to the ILO, only one does not measure the number of strikes.

As regards strikes and lockouts, there were proposals before the Third International Conference of Labour Statisticians not to distinguish between the two. However, the Conference decided that it would be desirable to distinguish between them, for this might help to reveal the underlying cause behind the origin of the dispute that led to the work stoppage. In fact, it does not. The origins of disputes and stoppages are complex and obscure. The real reason behind a dispute may not be the reason officially given.

But it is of interest to industrial relations specialists to have separate data on lockouts in order to identify which group took the effective decision to stop work. Therefore, even if it is acknowledged that the incidence of lockouts is low and national practices show that they are generally recorded together with strikes, it is recommended that, where possible, lockouts should be shown separately.

In view of the above, the following definition of a strike is proposed for statistical purposes:

A strike is a temporary work stoppage wilfully effected by a group of workers with a view to enforcing or resisting a demand or expressing a grievance. Strikes occurring at different times and/or at different establishments but due to the same case of dispute are regarded as one strike if they have not been interrupted for more than a defined period of time.

A corresponding definition of a lockout is also being proposed:

A lockout is a temporary work stoppage wilfully effected by one or more employers with a view to enforcing or resisting a demand or expressing a grievance. Lockouts occurring at different times and/or at different establishments but due to the same case of dispute are regarded as one lockout if they have not been interrupted for more than a defined period of time.

The term "strikes" as used in the remainder of this report includes "lockouts".

Statistics of strikes are collected for a certain period, sometimes a month, sometimes a year. Strikes in a particular period may be continuing from the previous period, begin within the period, terminate within the period or continue beyond the period.

The 1926 resolution recommended that the statistics should relate to strikes beginning in the period under review and also, but separately, to those continuing from the previous period. The total of these two groups of strikes represents the number of strikes in existence during the period under review. This is a valid recommendation that has been followed in many countries.

B. Number of establishments involved

This is a useful measure of the importance of strikes, because the establishments involved indicate points of tension. Assuming that there is a consistent definition of "establishment", it should not be difficult to record the number of establishments involved especially in the case of establishment-specific strikes.

The 1926 resolution recommended that the number of establishments involved should be based on the technical unit as defined in industrial censuses. At the time, there was no United Nations-recommended definition of "establishment" for the purposes of industrial censuses and surveys. Now most countries use, and most international recommendations refer to the definition of an establishment as given in the United Nations International Recommendations for Industrial Statistics\(^1\) in connection with other types of labour.

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\(^1\) United Nations document ST/ESA/STAT/SER.M 48, Rev.1 (Sales No. 83 XVII.8).
statistics, such as employment, wages and hours of work derived from establishment surveys. It is therefore proposed that the latest United Nations recommendation concerning the definition of an establishment be also used for statistics of strikes.

However, in the case of political or protest strikes and general strikes, it is not an easy matter to count the number of establishments involved unless there is adequate follow-up with enterprises, firms or establishments, and employers' and workers' organisations or a combination of these.

C. Number of workers involved

Statistics of the number of workers involved in strikes provide an indicator of the importance and severity of strikes. This measure by itself is insufficient. For instance, if in labour-intensive industries, there are large numbers of workers directly involved in strikes, one cannot necessarily conclude that strikes are more severe in these industries than in others where stoppages by a few specialised workers may result in major production losses. There is thus a need for supplementary information about the strikes and the production units in which they occur if the severity is to be gauged from an economic point of view. On the other hand, the number of workers involved does measure the degree of participation and qualifies the figures on the number of strikes, which alone are not a significant indicator of strike activity.

There are three types of workers' involvement in strikes. One relates to the workers participating voluntarily and directly in strikes (i.e. workers directly involved). This is the basic criterion in the definition of strikes given earlier. The number of workers voluntarily on strike may indicate the strength of union militancy. But this voluntary and direct involvement has the effect of rendering idle other workers in the same establishment (i.e. workers indirectly involved) or in establishments other than the reporting unit (i.e. the secondary effects of strikes).

National practices vary with respect to the inclusion or exclusion of workers indirectly involved. When included, it is rare (except, for example, in the case of the United Kingdom) that the indirect effects are shown separately. Countries do not generally measure the secondary effects of strikes.

Information on both direct and indirect involvement is necessary both from the social point of view of workers' welfare and from the economic standpoint of establishments.

But, as country practices vary, there seems to be no easy way around the problem. It is therefore proposed in the present report that, where possible, indirect effects be measured and, in that case, be shown separately. In this way, country-by-country comparisons can be made of the incidence of strikes by measuring the direct involvement of workers in strikes, while countries which wish to do so may, for their own national uses, also measure the workers indirectly involved. Once the issue of which workers should be covered is resolved, the problem then arises of how to measure their number.

The 1926 resolution recommended that the number of workers involved should be based on the vacancies created by the strike in the establishment involved. An average of the number of vacancies each day during which the dispute lasts would give the required number of workers involved. When this is not feasible, the resolution suggested an average of the number of vacancies recorded at weekly intervals. Many countries use this method. The use of the term "vacancies" is unfortunate since it suggests that these are jobs being offered by the employer. What was probably meant was the number of posts temporarily unoccupied as a result of the strike. Other countries prefer to use either the maximum number of workers involved in some way or other during the strike period, irrespective of the varying degrees of involvement of the workers (e.g. the United Kingdom and Canada) or the maximum number of workers involved on any particular day of the strike (e.g. the United States). Each method yields different results. There is no evidence as to which of these latter measures is the best. Conceptually, the best method would be to calculate the average of the number of posts temporarily unoccupied on each day of the strike, and this is therefore being proposed. However, it is left to countries to choose any of the methods mentioned above.
It should be noted that the number of workers involved in a strike should in principle include only those who, while being on strike, still have a job attachment, and should therefore exclude those who have been laid off and have no certainty of returning to work. Persons absent from work at the time of the strike for reasons such as sick leave, annual leave, etc. should also be excluded.

D. Work-time lost

Work-time lost is a measure resulting from the number of workers involved and the duration of the strike. In accordance with the 1926 resolution, the duration of the strike is usually expressed as the number of working-days (or work shifts) from the date on which the strike began in the first establishment involved to the date on which it terminated in the last one. It is generally given in terms of (a) actual working-days, i.e. days during which workers would have worked, had there been no strike, or (b) normal working-days, i.e. all ordinary working-days excluding Sundays, public holidays, etc. The first is probably the better concept since employment may vary in certain sectors according to the season in which the strike occurs. For instance, Sunday may be a normal working-day during the peak season in the hotel industry but not in the low season; the use of normal working-days, in such a case, would underestimate the duration of the strike.

Conceptually, work-time lost can be ascertained for each day of the strike or can be estimated by multiplying the number of days which the strike lasted by the average number of temporarily unoccupied posts recorded at weekly intervals. In practice, most countries estimate the work-time lost as the product of the workers involved and the duration of the stoppage. This estimate will, of course, depend on the accuracy of measurement of its components. The first method is to be preferred but when this is not possible, countries should use one of the other methods.

Work-time lost as a result of strikes is perhaps the most significant measure of strike activity. Unlike the number of strikes or the number of workers involved, it is less affected by minimum requirements for recording strikes (see later) in terms of duration of strikes or of workers involved or of both. The reason is obvious: the total work-time lost tends to be more influenced by strikes considered as being large strikes in terms of the number of workers involved.

Two problems should be noted, however: (a) with respect to part-time workers who are counted on the same basis as full-time workers, the number of workers involved and their shorter working days will lead to overestimates of work-time lost, especially for countries such as Japan where the majority of women workers are employed on a part-time basis; and (b) with respect to overtime, where the total work-time lost may be underestimated. It would be preferable to convert the number of part-time workers involved in strikes to full-time equivalents.

In accordance with the earlier proposal to collect data separately for workers directly or indirectly involved, it is also being proposed that, work-time lost should be estimated and published separately for workers directly involved and those indirectly involved. As stated earlier, figures of work-time lost by workers directly involved in strikes could be used for international comparisons while countries may wish to use the total work-time lost for national purposes.

V. SOME SPECIFIC PROBLEMS OF STATISTICS OF STRIKES

A. Political or protest strikes

National statistics on strikes sometimes exclude and sometimes include political or protest strikes. It is not clear who decides when a strike is political nor is the term "political" uniformly defined. In many countries, it is taken as meaning a strike which is not directly related to industrial relations matters or terms and conditions of work. These strikes may be an expression of dissatisfaction with the broader "socio-political"
environment relating to work, e.g. a government price/wage freeze, the closing-down of an industry, etc. A political or protest strike may even have its roots in a problem relating to terms and conditions of work beyond the direct control of the employer. Whatever the cause, like other forms of strikes, political or protest strikes affect the economy and workers' welfare. It is therefore being proposed this type of strike be counted and measured separately.

B. General strikes

General strikes are those which affect a large geographical area (if not the whole country), a whole industrial sector or a number of industrial sectors. Among the countries which supply data to the ILO, France is the only one which classifies general strikes separately. Depending on the structure of collective bargaining, a general strike can be a straightforward constitutional or official strike. For instance, a breakdown of industry-wide negotiations may lead to a strike of the whole sector.

On the other hand, in a general strike the workers involved may have no direct interest in the issue (as in the case of a general sympathetic strike), or the strike may be due to the socio-political environment (as in the case of a general political strike). In these circumstances, a general strike can be classified either as resulting from a dispute with the workers' own employers or as not related to a dispute with the workers' own employers, i.e. a sympathetic or political or other type of strike.

General strikes can thus be easily fitted into the framework given in Chart I; it is proposed that they should not be presented separately.

C. Minimum requirements for recording statistics of strikes

A considerable amount of resources and effort is required on the part of those providing the information on strikes and of those collecting and analysing the information. The vast majority of stoppages are of very short duration. Therefore, the amount of resources required could be considerably reduced if a minimum size for recording strikes is established since most of the work-time lost would still be measured.

This, however, raises a problem for international comparisons. A number of countries do not have such a minimum, while some of the more important developed countries do. Moreover, the criteria used in setting the minimum varies widely, as shown in the table below, although it is not always clear whether these relate only to workers directly involved or to workers both directly and indirectly involved.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Strikes excluded</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Less than 10 work-days lost.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Less than 10 work-days lost.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>Less than 100 work-days lost.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany, Fed. Rep. of</td>
<td>Less than 1 day's duration unless more than 100 work-days lost.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>Less than 10 workers involved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>Less than 10 work-days lost.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamaica</td>
<td>Less than 10 workers involved and less than 100 work-days lost.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>Less than half a day's duration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>Less than 1 day's duration.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Country | Strikes excluded
--- | ---
Pakistan | Less than 10 workers involved.
Philippines | Less than 1 day's duration or shift, or less than 6 workers involved.
Sri Lanka | Less than 5 workers involved, less than 1 day's duration unless more than 50 work-days lost.
United Kingdom | Less than 1 day's duration or less than 10 workers involved unless more than 100 work-days lost.
United States | Less than 1 day's duration or shift and less than 1,000 workers involved.

As can be seen, the minimum requirement can be in terms of the duration of the strike, the number of workers involved or man-days lost, or a combination of these. The first question to be answered is whether or not a cut-off point is desirable. Minimum requirements have generally been established in order to avoid the difficulty of identifying small strikes and to reduce costs. There is also the advantage that strike data can then be obtained in greater detail. But any cut-off point is to a certain extent arbitrary and not all countries will necessarily agree to an internationally defined minimum requirement.

A solution for comparative purposes would be to present strike data in the form of tables of size-classes showing the strikes during a period according to classes of duration, of number of workers involved and of work-time lost. As indicated earlier, the size-classes of the workers involved and the work-time lost would preferably be expressed in terms of direct involvement in the strike.

In terms of duration, many countries use the limit of one day; as to the workers involved and the work-days lost, the limits are generally in multiples of ten, though it is not clear whether "workers involved" means workers directly involved or the total number of workers directly and indirectly involved. The proposal in this report is to set the limit in terms of workers directly involved, as this is an important characteristic of strikes. For this reason, the following classes are being proposed:

Number of workers directly involved:
- Less than 10, 10-100, 101-1,000, 1,001-10,000, more than 10,000.

Duration of strike:
- Less than 1 day, 1-10, 11-50, 51-100, more than 100 days.

Aggregate work-days lost by workers directly involved:
- Less than 10, 10-100, 101-500, 501-1,000, 1,001-5,000, 5,001-10,000, 10,001-500,000, 500,001-1,000,000, more than 1,000,000.

VI. DATA CLASSIFICATIONS

The 1926 resolution defined in detail the following characteristics of strike activity for which many classifications are possible for national purposes:

(a) matter in dispute;
(b) result of the dispute;
(c) method of settlement;
(d) industries affected;
(e) importance of the dispute;
(f) amount of wages lost by the dispute.

These characteristics and their classifications are discussed below.

A. Matter in dispute

Few disputes concern one issue alone. Determining the key issue is not easy. Furthermore, the management's interpretation of the issue may be different from that of the workers. A labour dispute is an important phase in the process of collective bargaining. It may occur with respect to a collective agreement to be negotiated, to the terms of a collective agreement which have to be revised or the non-observance of existing rules. It may also occur with respect to matters not related to a collective agreement. In this connection, industrial relations specialists make an important distinction between "economic disputes" or "interest disputes" and "rights disputes". An economic or interest dispute is normally one arising in the course of negotiation or renegotiation of a collective agreement. A rights dispute is normally a dispute arising in connection with the interpretation or application of an existing rule (law or collective agreement).

Strikes not related to a dispute with the workers' own employers, i.e. those over which the employers have no control, would have to be identified separately. There are two identifiable important groups of this type of strike: sympathetic strikes undertaken in support of other workers actually involved in strikes, and the political or protest strikes mentioned earlier.

There are other forms of expression of dissatisfaction with an existing situation which could be identified separately but at least for international comparisons, a simple classification as proposed below may be sufficient:

1. Strikes resulting from a dispute with the workers' own employers:
   (a) concerning the negotiation or renegotiation of a collective agreement (interest disputes or economic disputes);
   (b) concerning the interpretation or application of a legal provision or a provision of a collective agreement (rights disputes);
   (c) others.

2. Strikes not related to a dispute with the workers' own employers:
   (a) sympathetic strikes;
   (b) political or protest strikes;
   (c) others.

B. Result of the strike and method of settlement

Few countries collect data on the outcome of strikes and there is little or no evidence as to their usefulness. It is therefore proposed that this characteristic of strike activity be dropped. Similarly, few countries collect data on methods of settlement, but apparently statistics on this characteristic could be useful in studies on industrial relations. For this reason, it is left to countries to decide whether to collect data on methods of settlement, depending on the uses to be made within the national context.
C. Industries involved

A classification by industry poses three problems. First, there are significant differences in national industrial classifications and this makes international comparisons difficult. But this problem applies also to other economic and social statistics and is resolved by making reference to the most recent version of the International Standard Industrial Classification of all Economic Activities (ISIC) adapted as necessary to take account of national circumstances. Secondly, there are difficulties of identification of an industry when a widespread strike affects many industries at the same time. The usual national practice is to apportion the measures of strike activity between the various industrial groups but the methods used are generally not described. The third problem concerns the exclusion of some industrial groups. For example, in France, agriculture and public administration are excluded from strike statistics. The ILO Recommendation concerning Labour Statistics, 1985 (No. 170) states that statistics of labour disputes should be classified at least according to branch of economic activity. Presenting strike activity, at least by major branch of economic activity, would enable the identification of strike-prone industries but would also prove useful for international comparisons, particularly when countries exclude certain sectors from their strike statistics.

D. Importance of strikes

The criteria used in the 1926 resolution are the number of establishments involved, the number of workers involved, the duration of the strike and the number of man-days lost presented in the framework of series of size-classes. These have been discussed in the preceding chapter.

E. Amount of wages lost by strikes

Only a few countries collect data on the amount of wages lost by strikes. It is proposed to drop this characteristic from the draft resolution, leaving it to countries to decide whether or not they wish to compile such data.

F. Occupations of workers involved

A few countries measure the occupations of workers involved in strikes. In cases where this is done, the police and the armed forces are generally excluded. It is recognised that there are difficulties in obtaining information on these occupations. The 1926 ILO resolution did not recommend that occupations be a characteristic for measuring strike activity.

G. Other classifications

Other classifications may be important for national purposes, e.g. by geographical regions, unions involved, etc. It is for each country to decide on the use of such classifications as may be required for its own analytical purposes and they are not being included in the present draft resolution.

VII. METHODS OF REPORTING

In many countries, the notification of disputes to the appropriate agency is voluntary. Also, once the agency responsible for gathering the data is aware of the outbreak of a strike, either through press reports, other media, the police or other sources, it obtains the details generally from the employers through standard forms. Supplementary information may be obtained from the State, industries or trade unions. The collating and publishing agency may not be the same as the one actually collecting the basic information. National systems of reporting have tended to remain unchanged over the years. It is difficult for
the ILO to suggest a formal method of reporting that would be not more costly than the traditional methods being used. It is therefore left to the Conference to decide whether or not an internationally agreed formal method of reporting should be developed.

VIII. INDICATORS OF STRIKE ACTIVITY

The various measures of strike activity have been described in Chapter IV. These figures alone, however, are not sufficient for a proper understanding of their meaning. For this, they need to be viewed in relation to the environment in which the strike activity is occurring.

Some basic useful indicators of strike activity are indicated below. These measure a number of aspects of a strike, such as its magnitude and extent, the extent of trade union perseverance over demands or the employer's opposition to them, and the extent of workers' involvement or of union militancy, and may thus be used to estimate certain economic effects of the strike. Where applicable, the indicators for workers directly involved, workers indirectly involved and total workers involved should be calculated separately. Where relevant, the indicators should be calculated either for the whole economy, for all the establishments in a particular industry or industry group, or for those establishments involved in the strike.

Indicators

Number of workers involved in each strike.
Number of establishments involved in each strike.
Aggregate of work-days lost in each strike.
Number of work-days lost per worker involved.
Number of workers involved in strikes as a proportion of all workers employed in all establishments.
Number of work-days lost per establishment involved.
Number of work-days lost as a proportion of total number of work-days available to be worked in all establishments.
Number of work-days lost per worker employed in all establishments.

CONCLUSIONS

The draft resolution in Annex II covers all forms of strikes, whether official or unofficial, sympathetic, political, protest or general, and whether related to the process of collective bargaining or not. It includes lockouts. It gives a revised definition of strikes. The four measures of strike activity proposed are: number of strikes, number of establishments involved, number of workers involved and aggregate number of work-days lost. It suggests that priority should be given to the measurement of workers directly involved in each type of strike but workers indirectly involved should, where possible, be identified separately.

It also proposes the presentation by size-classes of at least such strike measurements as: (a) number of workers directly involved, (b) duration, and (c) aggregate work-days lost by workers directly involved. These proposals have been made with a view to permitting better international comparisons of strike activity.
Attention is drawn to the fact that the proposals can be considered as a minimal set of measurements of strike activity, while it is left to countries to have other measurements or classifications to satisfy their own needs.

It should be noted that many countries collect more data than proposed in the draft resolution. This should not be interpreted as meaning that these other data should not be collected, since they have their uses in a national context.

Chart I, annexed to this report, presents a diagram of the framework being proposed.
ANNEX I

RESOLUTION CONCERNING STATISTICS OF INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES
ADOPTED BY THE THIRD INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
OF LABOUR STATISTICIANS (October 1926)

In each country statistics of industrial disputes should be compiled according to the following general principles:

1. The basic unit - the case of dispute - should be defined as a temporary stoppage of work wilfully effected by a group of workers or by one or more employers with a view to enforcing a demand. Disputes affecting several establishments should be considered as one case if they are organised or directed by one person or organisation.

It is desirable to make, as far as possible, a distinction between strikes and lockouts.

2. The statistics should relate to disputes beginning in the period under review and also, but separately, to those continuing from the previous period. The total of these two groups of disputes represents the number of disputes in existence during the period under review.

3. The importance of the dispute should be measured by ascertaining the number of establishments and of workers involved in the dispute, the duration of the dispute, and the number of man-days lost on account of the dispute.

The number of establishments affected should be based on the technical unit as defined in censuses of industries.

The number of workers involved should be based on the vacancies caused in the establishments affected by the dispute, and calculated by taking an average of the number of vacancies each day during which the dispute lasted, or, where this is not practicable, by taking an average of the number of vacancies recorded at weekly intervals.

The duration of the dispute should be expressed as the number of working days from the date on which the dispute began in the first establishment affected to the date on which it terminated in the last one.

The number of man-days lost should be based on the number of vacancies caused by the dispute during each day of the dispute, or, where this is not practicable, by multiplying the number of days for which the dispute lasted by the average number of vacancies recorded at weekly intervals.

4. The disputes should be classified according to their principal characteristics, indicating in each case the number of establishments affected and that of man-days lost:

A. The matter in dispute. The principal criterion should be the relation of the dispute to collective bargaining, as follows:

(a) Disputes related to collective bargaining:

(i) concerning trade unionism or refusal to conclude a collective agreement;

(ii) concerning conditions of employment:

(1) wages;

(2) hours of labour;
(3) engagement or dismissal of workers;
(4) others.

(b) Disputes not related to collective bargaining:

(i) sympathetic disputes;
(ii) political disputes;
(iii) others.

Groups (a) (ii) may also be classified into disputes concerning general terms of future employment and disputes concerning the interpretation of existing terms of employment.

B. The result of the disputes. Disputes should be classified according to their general result from the point of view of workers involved, as follows:

(a) disputes where the workers' demands have been entirely accepted;
(b) disputes where the workers' demands have been partially accepted;
(c) disputes where the workers' demands have been rejected;
(d) disputes where the employers' demands have been entirely accepted;
(e) disputes where the employers' demands have been partially accepted;
(f) disputes where the employers' demands have been rejected;
(g) disputes with indeterminate or unknown result.

C. The method of settlement of the disputes. Disputes should be classified according to the method of their settlement on the following lines:

(a) disputes settled by direct negotiations between the two parties;
(b) disputes settled by the medium of a third party:
   (i) through voluntary conciliation accepted by the parties to the dispute;
   (ii) through compulsory conciliation imposed by the law;
   (iii) through voluntary arbitration;
   (iv) through compulsory arbitration;
(c) disputes terminated without successful negotiations.

D. The industries affected. Disputes should be classified according to the principal industrial groups. The classification may be left to the domain of national statistics.

E. The importance of disputes. Disputes should be classified according to their importance, taking as criteria the number of establishments affected, the number of workers involved, the duration of the disputes, and the number of man-days lost:
(a) Disputes should be classified according to the number of establishments affected as follows:

(i) disputes affecting one establishment;
(ii) disputes affecting 2 to 10 establishments;
(iii) disputes affecting 11 to 20 establishments;
(iv) disputes affecting 21 to 100 establishments;
(v) disputes affecting more than 100 establishments.

(b) The classification of disputes by the number of workers involved should be as follows:

(i) disputes affecting less than 10 workers;
(ii) disputes affecting 10 to 100 workers;
(iii) disputes affecting 101 to 1,000 workers;
(iv) disputes affecting 1,001 to 10,000 workers;
(v) disputes affecting over 10,000 workers.

(c) The classification of disputes by their duration should be as follows:

(i) disputes lasting less than 2 working days;
(ii) disputes lasting from 2 to 10 working days;
(iii) disputes lasting from 11 to 50 working days;
(iv) disputes lasting from 51 to 100 working days;
(v) disputes lasting over 100 working days.

(d) Disputes should be classified by the number of man-days lost as follows:

(i) disputes involving the loss of less than 20 man-days;
(ii) disputes involving the loss of 20 to 1,000 man-days;
(iii) disputes involving the loss of 1,001 to 50,000 man-days;
(iv) disputes involving the loss of 50,001 to 1,000,000 man-days;
(v) disputes involving the loss of over 1,000,000 man-days.

F. Amount of wages lost by disputes. The wage loss caused by each dispute may be estimated by multiplying the number of man-days lost by the average daily wages of the workers affected. The classification of disputes according to the amount of wages lost may be left to the domain of national statistics.

5. For the purpose of comparing the risk of industrial disputes between different industries and countries, frequency and severity rates of disputes should be calculated.

The exposure to risk should be expressed in terms of the number of full-time workers, obtained by dividing the total number of days worked during the period by the total number of normal working days in the same period.
The frequency rate should show the number of disputes per 100,000 full-time workers. The severity rate should show the number of man-days lost per 10,000 full-time workers.

6. The above-mentioned data should be published at least yearly. It is desirable, however, that preliminary figures relating more particularly to the number of disputes should be published monthly.
ANNEX II

DRAFT RESOLUTION CONCERNING STATISTICS OF STRIKES

The Fourteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians,

Having been convened by the Governing Body of the International Labour Office and
having met in Geneva from 28 October to 6 November 1987,

Recalling the existing international standards contained in the Resolution concerning
statistics of industrial disputes adopted by the Third International Conference of Labour
Statisticians (October 1926),

Recalling the requirements of the Labour Statistics Convention, 1985 (No.160) and
the Labour Statistics Recommendation, 1985 (No. 170),

Recognising the need to revise the existing standards on statistics of industrial
disputes in order to provide guide-lines for the production of more comparable and better
national and international statistics of strikes,

Adopts, this ... day of ... 1987 the following resolution to replace the resolution
adopted in this field by the Third International Conference of Labour Statisticians:

GENERAL

1.0 Each country should regularly collect, compile and publish statistics of
strikes at least once a year.

2.0 Detailed descriptions of the sources, concepts, definitions, scope, coverage
and methodology used in compiling statistics of strikes should be produced and published.

TERMINOLOGY

3.0 For the purposes of this resolution, a strike is a temporary work stoppage
wilfully effected by a group of workers with a view to endorsing or resisting a demand or
expressing a grievance. Strikes occurring at different times and/or at different
establishments but due to the same case of dispute are regarded as one strike, if they
have not been interrupted for more than a defined period of time.

4.0 For the purposes of this resolution, a lockout is a temporary work stoppage
wilfully effected by one or more employers with a view to enforcing or resisting a
demand or expressing a grievance. Lockouts occurring at different times and/or different
establishments but due to the same case of dispute are regarded as one lockout, if they
have not been interrupted for more than a defined period of time.

MEASUREMENT OF STRIKE ACTIVITY

5.0 Statistics of strikes should be compiled in such a way as to be representative
of the country as a whole, covering, where possible, all branches of economic activity.

6.0 Statistics of strikes should relate to strikes beginning in the period under
review and also, but separately, to those continuing from the previous period. The total
of these two groups represents the number of strikes in existence during the period under review.

7.0 Statistics of strikes should be compiled for a period of at least one year.

8.0 The importance of a strike should be measured by ascertaining the number of workers involved, the duration of the strike and the aggregate work-days lost on account of the strike during the reference period. Where possible, the number of establishments involved should also be measured.

9.0 The number of establishments involved should be based on the definition of an establishment as given in the most recent version of the United Nations International Recommendations for Industrial Statistics.

10.0 The number of workers involved should be based on the number of posts temporarily unoccupied as a result of the strike. It should include only those workers who, while on strike, maintain their job attachment, and should exclude those laid off during the strike. Those absent from work for reasons other than the strike should also be excluded. Where there are part-time workers, the statistics on the number of workers involved should, if possible, be converted to the equivalent number of full-time workers.

11.0 The number of workers involved should be measured as the average of the number of posts temporarily unoccupied, as a result of the strike, each day during which the strike lasted. When this is not feasible, it should be measured as either (i) an average of the number of posts temporarily unoccupied as a result of the strike, recorded at weekly intervals, (ii) the maximum number of workers involved in some way or other during the strike period irrespective of the degree of involvement, or (iii) the maximum number of workers involved on any particular day of the strike.

12.0 The duration of a strike should be expressed as the number of working days (or shifts) from the date on which the strike began in the first establishment involved to the date on which it terminated in the last. It should preferably be the number of actual working days (or shifts) not worked, i.e. days during which workers would have worked, had there been no strike. When this is not feasible, it should be the normal number of working days, i.e. all ordinary working days excluding Sundays and public holidays.

13.0 Aggregate work-time lost should be ascertained for each day of the strike. When this is not feasible, it may be estimated either by multiplying the number of working days for which the strike lasted by the average number of posts temporarily unoccupied as a result of the strike, recorded at weekly intervals, or by multiplying the number of working days for which the strike lasted by the average number of posts temporarily unoccupied for the whole period of the strike.

14.0 The incidence of sympathetic, political or protest strikes not related to disputes with the workers' own employers should be measured separately.

15.0 Data on workers involved and work-days lost should be compiled and shown separately for workers directly involved, workers indirectly involved and for the total number of workers involved in strikes.

16.0 Lockouts should be treated in the same way as strikes, but it is desirable, when possible, to make a distinction between strikes and lockouts.

DATA CLASSIFICATION

17.0 Statistics of strikes should be classified according to their principal characteristics, including:
A. Types of strikes:
   1. Strikes resulting from a dispute with the workers' own employers -
      (a) concerning the negotiation or renegotiation of a collective agreement (interest or
economic disputes);
      (b) concerning the interpretation or application of a legal provision or a provision
of a collective agreement (rights disputes);
      (c) others.
   2. Strikes not related to a dispute with the workers' own employers -
      (a) sympathetic strikes;
      (b) political or protest strikes;
      (c) others.

B. Industries involved
   Strikes should be classified according to the major branches of economic activity,
as much as possible according to the ISIC.

C. Incidence and severity of strikes
   The incidence and severity of strikes in terms of workers involved, duration of
strikes and work-days lost should be presented according to the following size-classes -

   Number of workers directly involved:
   Less than 10, 10-100, 101-1,000, 1,001-10,000,
   more than 10,000.

   Duration of strike:
   Less than 1 day, 1-10, 11-50, 51-100, more than
   100 days.

   Aggregate number of work-days lost by workers directly involved:
   Less than 10 work-days, 10-100, 101-500, 501-1,000,
   1,001-5,000, 5,001-10,000, 10,001-500,000,
   500,001-1,000,000, more than 1,000,000 work-days.

COMPARATIVE MEASURES

18.0 One or more of the following basic ratios of strike activity will provide
statistical indicators of the magnitude, extent, incidence and severity of strikes:

   Number of workers involved in each strike.
   Number of establishments involved in each strike.
   Number of work-days lost in each strike.
   Number of work-days lost per worker involved.
   Number of workers involved as a proportion of workers employed in all
   establishments.
   Number of work-days lost per establishment involved.
Number of work-days lost as a proportion of total number of work-days available to be worked in all establishments.

Number of work-days lost per worker in all establishments.
ANNEX III

SELECTED LIST OF DOCUMENTS EXAMINED


12. ILO: Methods of compiling statistics of industrial disputes, Studies and Reports, Series N, No. 10 (Geneva), 1926.


Much background information was drawn from descriptions of individual country practices with regard to statistics of strikes contained in national statistical publications.
CHART 1

MEASUREMENT OF STRIKE ACTIVITY

TOTAL STRIKES

Strikes resulting from a dispute with workers' own employers

- Strikes concerning the negotiation or re-negotiation of a collective agreement (interest or economic disputes)
  - Establishments involved
    - Workers directly involved
      - Work time lost
    - Workers indirectly involved
      - Work time lost

- Strikes concerning the interpretation or application of a legal provision or a provision of a collective agreement (rights disputes)
  - Establishments involved
    - Workers directly involved
      - Work time lost
    - Workers indirectly involved
      - Work time lost

Strikes not related to a dispute with workers' own employers

- Others
- Sympathetic strikes
- Political or Protest strikes
  - Establishments involved
    - Workers directly involved
      - Work time lost
    - Workers indirectly involved
      - Work time lost

Others