

SAFETY PROVISIONS FOR WORKERS IN THE BUILDING INDUSTRY.

The general Conference of the International Labour Office considered a Draft Convention on Safety Provisions in the Building Industry submitted by the Drafting Committee, following data supplied as a result of discussions at the previous Conference. Conference referred the question to a committee of 48, comprising 24 Government members, 12 employers' members, and 12 workers' members. The Draft Recommendation was submitted and adopted, the voting being as follows—For, 120; against, 0; abstain, 13.

REDUCTION OF HOURS OF WORK IN THE TEXTILE INDUSTRY.

A committee was set up by decision of Conference to report on the textile industry. The Hon. H. T. Armstrong, New Zealand Government member, was elected Chairman of the Committee. Following the setting-up of the Drafting Committee, one of the elected members, Mr. Martin, British employers' representative, decided not to take part in the work of the Committee on the grounds that it was engaged not merely in the preparation of an account of the Committee's discussions, but also in preparation of the Texts of Articles of the proposed Draft Convention and the formulation of proposals for inclusion in the Convention.

In view of the fact that two other Committees of the Conference were considering proposals for Draft Conventions on the Reduction of Hours of Work in the Chemical Industry and in the Printing and Kindred Trades respectively, and of the desirability of securing as much uniformity as possible in the provisions of the texts which related to matters common to the three industries, the Committee decided to appoint representatives to act on a Co-ordinating Committee jointly with the representatives of the other two Committees. The Committee accordingly elected for this purpose Mr. Hinrichs, United States Government member, and Mr. Gorman, United States workers' member. The employers' members of the Committee declined to nominate a representative.

A lengthy general discussion then ensued in which the attitude of employers opposed to the adoption of the Draft Convention was expressed in speeches by the British, Netherlands, Indian, and Belgian employers' members of the Committee. At the close of the general discussion the employers' members of the Committee announced that, with the exception of the French and United States employers' members, they could not take part in the discussion or drafting of, or voting on any Article of a proposed Draft Convention, being convinced that the application of a Draft Convention to reduce working-hours would be impracticable, inequitable, and injurious to the textile industry. Following lengthy deliberations in Committee, the Committee then adopted on a record vote the text as a whole of the proposed Draft Convention for the reduction of hours of work in the textile industry, the voting being 73 to 40. The Committee accordingly proposed to Conference the adoption of the Draft Convention, the text of which is found in the *Official Bulletin*.

The Conference, having regard to the obligation imposed upon it by Article 19 (3) of the Constitution of the Organization—namely, that "in framing any Recommendation or Draft Convention of general application, the Conference shall have due regard to those countries in which climatic conditions, the imperfect development of industrial organization, or other special circumstances make the industrial conditions substantially different and shall suggest the modifications, if any, which it considers may be required to meet the case of such countries" requested the governing body of the International Labour Office to give immediate consideration to the question of the adoption of a special Draft Convention determining the modifications of the provisions of the Draft Convention on the reduction of hours of work in the textile industry for such countries with a view to the placing of this question on the Agenda of the Conference.

The Hon. H. T. Armstrong, in concluding the general discussion, said :—

"Now, the Committee worked very long and very hard in considering the proposals that were submitted to it. I am very sorry to say that the whole of the Committee did not work all the time, because on the first day the employers went on strike and decided that they were going to take no part whatever in the proceedings. They even refused to serve on the Drafting Committee or the Co-ordinating Committee, so that I am very sorry to say that, although the Committee was entitled to the assistance of the employers' just the same as they were entitled to the assistance of the Government and the workers' representatives, we did not receive that assistance at all, and I want just to point this out to the Conference. That is a very dangerous attitude to take up, because if the workers' representatives took up the same attitude, or if the Government representatives took up the same attitude, then the business of this Conference would be impossible and no business would be transacted at all. Not only that, but the people of the world would lose confidence in the organization altogether, and if that state of things were brought about it would be a very bad thing indeed for the world.

"There were two exceptions to the rule as far as the employers were concerned—namely, the employers' representatives from France and the United States of America. They did take part in the proceedings, and their assistance was very helpful indeed to the Committee. It surely has some influence on the representatives of other countries to know that the representatives of employers from the two countries mentioned, where they have considerable experience of the forty-hour week not only in the textile industry, but in other industries, are supporters of the reform, and they are acting under instructions from the employers of their respective countries. I think that is worth keeping in mind . . ."