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ALBERT THOMAS

INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL POLICY

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OFFICE

CONTENTS

	Page
I. <i>At the International Labour Office</i>	7
The Research Work of the International Labour Office	21
The Attempt to make the International Labour Organi- sation World-Wide	24
Workers and Employers	26
II. <i>Legislation and Social Justice</i>	41
The Protection of Children	46
The Raising of the School Leaving Age	49
The Eight-Hour Day	52
Facilities for Workers' Spare Time	58
Education as a Means to Freedom	63
III. <i>The Relation of Economic and Social Questions</i>	69
The Problem of Unemployment	76
Large Scale Public Works	86
The Question of Wages	90
The Forty-Hour Week	95
IV. <i>Economic Reorganisation</i>	99
Raw Materials and Migration	104
The Need for International Action	111
Planned Economy	117
Economic Order and Social Justice	126
V. <i>The Organisation of Peace</i>	131
Peace and Social Justice	135
The League of Nations	142
Disarmament	151

FOREWORD

The passages of which this book is composed are extracted from speeches, reports and articles by Albert Thomas dealing with the years during which he was Director of the International Labour Office at Geneva, that is, from 1920 until his death in 1932. They have not been chosen in accordance with any rigid principle, and are not meant to form a systematically organised sequence. The extracts have simply been arranged according to their subject. The idea has been to pick out, from a vast mass of material, a few characteristic views and suggestions about the subjects which Albert Thomas had most at heart.

The International Labour Office, social justice and labour legislation, the relation between economic and social questions, the reorganisation of economic life, peace — on these themes Albert Thomas, throughout the years, spoke, wrote, taught and argued with an ardour which death alone could still. In the passages reproduced here, those who knew him will find once more the quickening stir of life and the profound humanity of feeling which characterised everything that he said or wrote. Whether as a writer or a speaker, whether as an administrator or as a politician, Albert Thomas always gave the impression of a continual ebullition of creative ideas. These ideas were very much his own, and bore the stamp of his unique personality; his lucid intelligence constantly brought to bear on them the fruits of his extraordinarily wide culture and of his incomparable experience. It was not only that he had an immense store of knowledge on all kinds of subjects; by nature he was a man whose mind took a wide sweep and who saw things in the large. That was why, rising above the agitations of the moment, he saw justly.

Many of the extracts, whether they may be new or already familiar to readers of this book, will be found to be acutely relevant to the present situation, in spite of all that has happened since. They have many valuable lessons for us today. They are not intended to be either a study of Albert Thomas or a memorial to him. This book will have served its purpose if the selection which has been made gives the reader a true, even though an incomplete picture of an exceptional mind, and one which the passage of time reveals more and more clearly as one of the richest and most enlightened of our day.

The English translation of this book was made by Miss Monica Curtis, whom Albert Thomas considered the most faithful interpreter of the subtleties of his thought. The International Labour Office is deeply grateful to Miss Curtis for having thus helped once again to make better known the ideas and the work of its first Director.

MARIUS VIPLE.

At the International Labour Office

ALBERT THOMAS himself has described the manner in which he came to be appointed as Director of the International Labour Office. The Peace Treaty had been signed. . . .

. . . The invitations for the Washington Conference had been sent out. At that point my comrades of the French labour movement came to me and asked if I would be a candidate for the Directorship of the International Labour Office. They were prepared to enlist the support, not only of their comrades in other countries, but also of the employers and the Governments. They went to Washington with that intention. The Conference took place, the International Labour Office was set up, and when the Governing Body met they put forward my name. I was a man of the Opposition. I was elected provisionally by 11 votes to 9. The 11 votes in favour were those of the six Workers' members and five of the Employers. No Government voted against. I was informed of the result by telegram. The Workers sent a telegram urging me to accept. I did accept. The International Labour Office was now in being, and the Governing Body met for the first time in Paris in January 1920. This time the Governments unanimously ratified my appointment.

After the first session of the Governing Body, I studied the text of the Treaty not once but many times. What would it give us? I worked out theoretically, on paper, a scheme for a large-scale organisation with a diplomatic division, a research division, and technical sections.

What do written constitutions signify, and what can they give us in practice? There have been splendid constitutions

which have come to nothing. There have been great institutions, bulking large in history, which have grown out of two lines in some old monastic archive. There is a short document, dating from the earliest days of the French monarchy, which designated those among the clerks who specialised in justice; that was the origin of the famous Parliament of France. History tells us of constitutional texts drawn up at the beginning of the eighteenth century which were never put into execution at all. What would come of Part XIII of the Treaty? What would the continuous creative effort for which it provided mean to peace?

At that time we were swept forward on a great tide of moral and social forces. Immediately after the end of the war, and indeed even during its concluding stages, there was a great movement towards union among the workers in all industrial countries. With one accord, in their hundreds of thousands, in their millions, moved by a great sense of unrest and a great impulse of solidarity, they all at once united in powerful organisations. It was they who had made their voice heard at Berne, it was they who had brought pressure to bear on the Governments; and that pressure was the stronger because it corresponded to imperative necessities and to the revolutions which had taken place in the defeated countries. The workers were urging us to make of the International Labour Organisation such a new instrument of regeneration — I am almost tempted to say, such an instrument of social revolution — as they no doubt had in mind. . . .

Thus there began for Albert Thomas a period of intense and unslackening effort which was not to end until May 1932, when he was struck down in the full tide of his activity.

His conception of the task to which he was to devote the rest of his life was this: the first thing was to organise the International Labour Office and start it on its course, and to make of it a great institution so equipped as to be equal to the immense scope of the function laid down for it by the Labour Part of the Treaties.

The first workers' delegation which he received at Geneva, where the Office had recently established itself after a temporary sojourn in London, consisted of representatives attending the Congress of the International Miners' Federation (August 1920). He said:

... My staff in the International Labour Office and I, myself, hope to make of this institution which has been entrusted to us by the Peace Treaty, not a bureaucratic organisation, not a research department holding itself aloof on the outskirts of Geneva in splendid scientific isolation, but an adaptable and living organisation which will be in constant touch with the workers' organisations. . . .

It was his constant endeavour to develop the work of the Office, to keep it abreast of its ever-increasing tasks, to equip it to cope with the new problems created by the upheavals of the post-war period. Significant evidence of this may be found in an address which he gave to his staff immediately after the 1922 Session of the Conference. It was at once a summary of the experience acquired up to the moment — one might almost say a "critique of operations" — and a call to increased activity.

... So, if we are to try to find our soul, if we are to attempt a joint examination of conscience and to try to see clearly within ourselves, there is perhaps no better time to do it than the present. We have not met together since the Conference, but I think we all share the same impression — that it was rather a difficult, rather a trying Conference (we must always look facts in the face). Some Conferences have carried, impelled, urged the International Labour Organisation onwards; the one which has just closed has at any rate not done it harm. But I cannot say that it has very greatly advanced the affairs of our Organisation, and, taking it all in all, we cannot say that the moral benefits which it has brought us are very large. What is the reason for this?

Clearly, one of the reasons is the method which was followed. The year before, people had felt crushed under the weight of the decisions taken; the Conference attempted too much; Parliaments and Governments were swamped by so many new Conventions and Recommendations. So the Governing Body said: "We must limit the agenda, we must not try to do so much; we must put on the agenda only such questions as will not upset Governments -- questions which will not lead to new Conventions and Recommendations. If we do that, we shall avoid increasing our own burdens, the Governments will feel more at their ease, and the Conference will run a more tranquil course."

But we must always remember that there are things which depend on us and things which depend on other people. I do not want to return now to the phrase which I coined and which has become current — that the International Labour Office is a great thermometer of social progress. Its work cannot be worth more than what the employers' and workers' organisations are worth. If the world is full of activity, ardour and passion, then the International Labour Office too is in full blast, and it can initiate action on a large scale. It feels itself supported and carried forward by a world which is pregnant with creative activity; and when that is so it becomes the centre of support, criticism and attack from all sides — it is alive! But when everything around it is in a state of paralysis and stagnation, it is useless for the International Labour Office to redouble its efforts; it can only carry on a difficult task as best it can, without help from outside.

Thus, if we can manage, in spite of all vicissitudes, all political difficulties, to act, to press on, to keep going whatever the circumstances, then in a year's time, if each of us here does his share, however small — whether in the Relations or the Research or the Diplomatic Division — we shall succeed. If you will all help — draw attention to some fact, point out the importance of some circumstance — next year we may be able to collect a larger bouquet of ratifications, in which there will be plenty of flowers of the same sort; a great many carnations to represent the abolition of night work for women, a great many roses for the ratification of the Convention on night work of children, and perhaps even a few chrysanthemums for the Unemployment Convention.

But, I repeat, we must try in future to see that the agenda itself is such as to give our Conferences rather more life, more immediate usefulness. The Diplomatic Division knows what I have in mind — we shall put proposals before the Governing Body, not necessarily because we hope to get new Draft Conventions or Recommendations at once, but with the idea of having really vital questions discussed immediately — even if we risk setting the employers against the workers. There are some who say that we should even risk fights, which are the life-blood of our Organisation, and if we do that, some of the great problems of the day can be ventilated. . . .

(Address to the staff of the International Labour Office, 28 November 1922)

Albert Thomas did not mind being criticised for being an optimist. He held that to succeed one must believe in success. When there were difficulties, it was his way to meet them with redoubled ardour.

... The wind of the Spirit bloweth where it listeth. It bloweth when it listeth. Yet it is during the periods of inertia and indecision which sometimes lie between the great moments of enthusiasm, it is during those intervals of thankless effort that we should, as Shelley says, keep faithfully within us the memory of the visitations of the divinity in man. At such times we must cultivate within our own minds the ideals of justice which have been unanimously accepted and proclaimed; at such times we must strive, in our ordinary daily work, to create the conditions which will lead to a new upward movement. Then, when better times come again, justice shall yet flourish! Since we have, many of us, taken pleasure today in quoting old Latin proverbs, let me say that it is not at the cost of the destruction of the economic world that justice will triumph. On the contrary: *Fiat justitia et floreat mundus!* It is justice which will create the most intensive production, it is justice which will lead to fruitful work for the benefit of all mankind! . . .

(Speech at the International Labour Conference, 1923)

The same belief in the future is expressed in the speech which he made a few days later, at the laying of the foundation stone of the present International Labour Office building.

... It is not only in stone, wood and iron that the strength of the International Labour Organisation is attested. Its strength lies first and foremost in the hearts of men. Already we can note this with pride: it was not in the first flush of confident enthusiasm which greeted the birth of the Organisation that the nations decided to construct this building, but after four years of experience, four years of test and struggle, in which the conception of its founders has proved its vitality.

Notwithstanding the fears and anxieties which the stern competitive struggle arouses in all nations — nay rather, precisely because of those fears — they realise henceforward that it is their duty to bind themselves and to undertake the

obligations of Conventions for the protection of their workers. Never again, in Jaurès' admirable phrase, "can the nations which march towards the future isolate themselves from humanity". However heavy the burdens which weigh upon them, never again will those whose duty it is to direct and organise production fail to concern themselves with the health, the strength and the happiness of the wage-earner. Never again will the great trade unions decide to engage in costly struggles without having first striven to obtain the necessary reforms by the systematic and continuous acceptance of all the principles of justice !

You representatives of Governments, employers and workers here present, before ever your trowels have together laid the three symbolical stones, you have already laid the foundations of the ideal International Labour Office by your joint adhesion and your faithful attachment to the Labour Charter. A soul will live in the house which we are about to build.

In the parchment which I am going to place under the foundation stone, and which, according to custom, commemorates today's ceremony in the ancient Latin style, there is inscribed a motto. It sums up our Charter in a phrase. *Si vis pacem, cole justitiam*. If you wish for peace, cultivate justice. It is with hearts resolute in the passion for justice that we shall enter into the fair and radiant dwelling which we are founding today. . . .

On the same occasion he also said :

. . . But our legitimate satisfaction in the difficulties which we have overcome cannot prevent us from thinking of those which still lie ahead, and the difficult task which we must pursue. The Bible tells us that when Nehemiah, the Governor of Jerusalem, was rebuilding the walls of the city, Tobiah the Ammonite mocked at the Hebrews, saying : " Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall." And Nehemiah prayed to God : " Hear, O our God, for we are despised : and turn their reproach upon their own head . . . and let not their sin be blotted out from before Thee : for they have provoked Thee to anger before the builders." How can we, today, fail to feel the emotional force of such a prayer ? In the disorganised and chaotic post-war world, can

there be any more criminal error than to be implacable in hindering those who are building — those who are devoting themselves, amid endless difficulties, to the work of reconstruction ?

But those who build must realise that they will be attacked. They must know how to resist attack. Like the old citizens of Jerusalem, those who work on the ramparts must every one have his sword girded by his side. . . .

(Speech at the laying of the foundation stone of the International Labour Office building, 21 October 1923)

The same inspiration and the same ardour are to be found in the words in which he saluted the completion of this work, to which he had devoted so much care.

. . . In a few moments, the three constitutional keys will open the gates of our house of Labour. Between the two symbolical statues of Justice and Peace, our swarm of sturdy and industrious workers will pass through the door, on which are carved the ears of wheat and the sprays of mimosa which remind us of the wealth and of the fragrance of distant Australia, and will take possession once and for all of the cells of its new hive.

We shall, as we enter our new dwelling, bear with us in piety the memory of all those — statesmen, industrialists, brave and patient adherents of the labour movement — who in the past hundred years have worked to ensure that human individuality should be saved from the miseries and horrors of an industry which was yet in a state of barbarism.

To sustain our courage, we who are founding the new City will bring our traditions and our memories with us into our future home. We shall enter it in the hope of serving the great multitude of the workers of all countries, who, in the admirable phrase of President Wilson, wake up each morning without the stimulation of lively hope and on whom the great burden of sustaining the world must fall. Our thoughts turn in particular to the women, to the young children, to all those whose defencelessness calls for protection and help. We shall enter with the determination to accomplish our task like good workmen who love their trade.

In the inner hall, at the foot of the great staircase, the sculptor Constantin Meunier's iron-founder is on the watch for the precise moment of the cast ; and the miner, pick in hand, is

thinking where to place his props. Just so shall we, watchful and diligent, consider day by day by what means and at what moment we can best advance the great work which we have been given to accomplish. We shall enter in a joyful mood of confidence and of hope.

The three angels in the picture by Ferdinand Bol which hangs in our Governing Body room are announcing to Abraham that his issue shall be multiplied exceedingly. And God said of Sarah : " Yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations ; kings of people shall be of her."

Whatever may be the difficulties of the present time, however great the disorder of the world, we will never doubt that through a multitude of endeavours and of reforms, the work of justice and of peace shall be accomplished among mankind. . . .

(Speech at the opening of the International Labour Office building, 1926.)

His work as a constructor, both in the world of ideas and on a material plane, was by no means the whole of the contribution which Albert Thomas made to the work of the International Labour Organisation. He believed that, besides this, he had a personal contribution to make in spreading knowledge about the Organisation and its work, and in placing the influence which he had acquired at the service of labour legislation. In speaking to his old friends in the little town near Paris in which he was born, of which he had been Mayor, and which he had represented in Parliament, he once said :

. . . For years now I have lived in the cold, clear atmosphere of Geneva, where in the old days the *communards* used to grumble at the icy north wind and the forbidding character of the people, but which is today the centre of world peace. Or, when I am not there, I am hurrying from country to country and from continent to continent — from Berlin to New York, from Bucarest or Prague to Buenos Aires or Rio. Like a Wandering Jew of social progress, I go all over the world with my spectacles and my big despatch-case which give the cartoonists so much amusement — only too happy if with my spectacles I can see a little more clearly into national situations and international problems, and if I can carry back in my big despatch-case the ratification of some international Convention or the draft of some national Bill which means a small step forward towards the just and peaceful organisation of the world. . . .

(Speech at Champigny, 1925)

On another occasion he defined his rôle of "the Wandering Jew of social progress" as follows:

. . . I do not know whether you have any very clear idea of what the life of a Director of the International Labour Office is like. He hurries through all the capital cities of Europe, and indeed of the world. He calls on all the Ministers of Labour and on all the Governments. He tries to make them see the necessity of ratifying the international labour Conventions adopted by the Conference, at which all nations are represented. And when he is talking to heads of Governments or to Ministers, he is always being reminded that neither Governments nor Ministers can decide to ratify a Convention unless it accords with the prevailing public opinion in their country. He thus learns that he must endeavour to convince public opinion. Since, unfortunately, he is not endowed with the gift of speaking all languages, it happens that in some great capitals, in great cities such as Warsaw, he feels rather isolated, rather lost. He wants to make all the teeming multitudes which he sees around him feel the need for supporting the newly-founded Organisation, and yet he cannot make a direct approach to all the great masses of people for whose sake Part XIII of the Peace Treaty was established. . . .

(Speech at Warsaw, February 1924)

. . . Such are the conditions in which we have to act. The only method open to us is to induce the Governments and Parliaments to adopt and to send us their ratifications. It follows that since Governments and Parliaments always act to some extent under the pressure of public opinion, we have to appeal primarily to those who are directly concerned — to the workers' organisations which, under the terms of the Treaty itself, are called upon to watch over the application of the principles of the Treaty. That is why the members of my staff and I myself take our pilgrim's staves in hand and go from country to country to induce the fifty-four Members of the Organisation to give us ratifications of the Conventions which have already been adopted. . . .

(Lecture at Riga, 25 August 1924)

And again:

. . . You see, in questions of social policy even more than in other spheres, there is only one method, and that is to be on the spot, to practise the diplomacy of being there. When you are at the other end of a wire, when you send letters and telegrams, you do not know how the responsible and competent person across the sea is reacting, or what he is feeling, and then your efforts are in vain. But when a personal relation has been established, when you are not talking to an administrative abstraction, but to a man, a man who is clean-shaven or has a beard, as the case may be, then international relations begin to be real, and you may achieve something. It is in order to create these essential relations that I have undertaken this long journey. . . .

(Lecture at the University of Montevideo, July 1925)

. . . What can we do ? How can we succeed in inducing each State, acting freely and spontaneously, to accept the standards of social justice arrived at by the International Labour Conference ? There is only one means : the confidence of the peoples, the support of public opinion, the determination of the organised workers, the organised employers and the Governments to see that the principles laid down in the Treaty are observed. That is the reason for the journeys which the members of my staff and myself are constantly making to all countries. . . .

(Lecture in the Theatre of Athens, 5 March 1927)

During all these many journeys, Albert Thomas made a personal approach to members of Governments in order to induce the countries which he visited to accept the Conventions and Recommendations adopted by the International Labour Conference. But that was not all. He took every opportunity of getting into direct touch with employers' and workers' organisations and of arousing the interest of the general public. He discussed the great economic and social problems of the day in terms of the situation of the different countries, pleaded the cause of labour legislation, and at the same time endeavoured to make the Organisation and its aims better known and understood. He never tired of recalling the reasons for the existence of the Organisation and its immediate origins :

... A new element entered into the situation during and immediately after the war. While all minds were occupied with the progress of military operations, and later on, during the peace negotiations, while people were obsessed with territorial and economic questions, the enormous social reaction which was taking place was probably not fully realised. But after the war, because of the part which the working classes of all countries had played in national defence, a universal feeling arose that it was not possible to leave the living and working conditions of the wage-earners as they had been before the terrible catastrophe of the war. Round about 1918 and 1919 this idea took hold of people's minds everywhere. This was the idea which Mr. Lloyd George had in mind when he said that a new clause dealing with labour must be in the Treaty. It was in President Wilson's mind when he said, in the message announcing the establishment of the International Labour Organisation, that the time had arrived when there comes into the foreground the great body of the labouring people of the world, the men and women and children upon whom the great burden of sustaining the world must fall; and that they must no longer go to bed tired and wake up without the stimulation of lively hope. It was because of that idea that the International Labour Organisation was created and embodied in the Peace Treaty itself. . . .

(Lecture at the University of Montevideo, July 1925)

The International Labour Office owes its birth to a singular juncture of events. It was born at the time when, after the war, after the enormous sacrifices which the working people, both industrial workers and peasants, had made in the trenches or in the fields and factories, the men who controlled political and economic life decided that the aspirations for a better life and greater liberty which had haunted the minds of the workers for years past should at last, by a great act of resolution, receive satisfaction. It was born at a time when the working classes, on their side, believed in the determination, the sincerity of heart, and the clear-sightedness of those who bore the responsibility of directing economic affairs. It was born at a time when both sides believed that, in spite of antagonism, in spite of the class struggle, co-operation was possible. If the International Labour Office is to survive, it must, so to speak, preserve

in its daily activity the memory of that undreamed-of and fleeting moment.

An English poet has said that "poetry redeems from decay the visitations of the divinity in man". If the International Labour Organisation is to have a future, it must hold fast to the principles which, in a rare impulse of idealism, have been accepted by both sides, and it must seek at all costs to make them a reality. . . .

(Lecture at Geneva)

Albert Thomas devoted a very large number of articles, speeches and lectures to explaining the structure and working of the International Labour Organisation, the Conference and the International Labour Office. One of these is perhaps of special interest, because it analyses the relations between the Organisation and the League of Nations. This was a lecture given at Cambridge :

. . . Perhaps some of you, either singly or in a little group, may already have visited Geneva. Perhaps you have stopped for a few moments in front of what was once the Hotel National, and is now the headquarters of the League of Nations. You will probably have paused in reflection before the marble plaque where the name of President Wilson is inscribed between two wreaths. After that you may have wandered on a little along the lake side. If it was in the last few months that you came, you will have seen a large building in a plain style of architecture which has innumerable windows — as a matter of fact there are 1,067 — all looking out on the town. Perhaps you may have admired, or possibly criticised, the lines of its architecture. If you have looked closely, you will have found small medallions representing modern labour in the style of the ancient calendars of medieval cathedrals. And, if you are of an enquiring turn of mind, you will no doubt have wondered what was this building, this International Labour Office.

You may perhaps then have asked yourself a question. The Secretariat of the League of Nations, with its technical organisations — its Health Section, its Economic Section and so on — has its headquarters in one part of the city of Geneva. The International Labour Office came to Geneva before the Secretariat did ; for some years it lived apart on the hill of Pregny in what had once been a boys' school ; and then it asked the

Assembly of the League of Nations for special funds with which it has now established itself separately, in a building of its own.

Perhaps some of you, those who have a passion for unity, may have wondered what might be the peculiar administrative and legal position of this Organisation, which appears to have made a point of remaining apart from the rest of the League of Nations. You may have put the question to a member of the staff, and received the expected reply : the International Labour Organisation is an autonomous organisation. It is laid down in the financial and administrative regulations of the League of Nations that the institutions of the League as a whole comprise three main elements : the Secretariat and two autonomous organisations, the International Labour Office and the Permanent Court of International Justice.

The Organisation is autonomous, that is to say, it has its own Governing Body and its own Conference. The Council of the League of Nations recognises the autonomy of the Organisation, and gives it no special instructions. It does not supervise its work, and in so far as any supervision is necessary it is carried out by the Conference and by the Governing Body, which includes direct representatives of the Governments of Members of the Organisation. I may add that the work of the International Labour Organisation is so clearly separate that when for example last year, in 1925, the question of forced or contract labour was brought before the Assembly of the League of Nations, the Assembly refused to deal with it, saying that everything which related to labour fell within the sphere of the International Labour Organisation.

It even goes farther than that. The composition of the two international organisations is not precisely the same. Germany has only just entered the League of Nations, yet it has been a Member of the International Labour Organisation from the beginning — for the last seven years. Spain has for the time being left the League, but has remained a Member of the International Labour Organisation and has publicly declared that it intends to continue its participation. Argentina, which for some seven years past, ever since the First Session of the Assembly, has remained outside the League, has continued to be a Member of the International Labour Organisation. One of its representatives sits on the Governing Body. Thus, even in its composition, even in its striving for universality, the

International Labour Organisation displays its autonomous character.

You may ask whether it is a good thing that there should be an autonomous organisation as part of the institutions of the League of Nations. Would it not be better if the Organisation were subject to the same supervision, and if instead of an International Labour Organisation there were a labour section in the League of Nations just as there are an Economic Section, a Financial Section and a Health Section ? That was the view of some of the founders of the League. You have all heard of the much regretted French statesman who died about eighteen months ago and who was one of the chief movers in the foundation of the League of Nations — I mean Mr. Léon Bourgeois. He did not think it a good idea that the International Labour Organisation should be a separate organisation. We often used to have friendly talks together, and he used to say to me : “ Your International Labour Organisation is a natural child — a bastard.” I answered : “ You are quite right ; it is a natural child, it is a bastard born of a liaison which the League of Nations once had with the proletariat. I am bringing up this natural child as best I can. But you know, in the history of France there have been not a few bastards who have turned out a credit to their families. I hope that in the days to come the International Labour Organisation too will be a credit to the League.”

So much for the prejudice of my old friend Léon Bourgeois. But is it really such a bad thing that one of the international institutions which form part of the League of Nations should be kept apart and given some degree of independence ? First of all, do not let us exaggerate the position. We are, it is true, separate from the Secretariat, but we are not without connections with it. It would not be possible for an international organisation such as this to remain quite apart from the other institutions of the League. The Peace Treaty says that the International Labour Office is established “ as part of the organisation of the League ”. The Secretariat is our Chancery. As you know, all treaties concluded by the States Members of the League have to be registered with the League. Labour Conventions, when ratified, are treaties. It is the Secretariat, acting as the general Chancery, which registers our treaties, that is to say, the ratifications of international labour Conventions. What is

still more important, the Secretariat is our Ministry of Finance. It hands out our funds to us. Every year I have to submit my budget to the Fourth Committee of the Assembly of the League. Of course the Committee takes the view that since the Governing Body has taken certain decisions, and since the International Labour Conference too has adopted certain Resolutions, due weight must be given to these decisions taken by other bodies. It sometimes happens that the representative of a Government on the Fourth Committee makes a proposal for a reduction which is not quite in accordance with what our Governing Body decided. When that happens — well, I am no lawyer, but I have learned enough constitutional law to remind the representative of that Government of the unity of view and the unity of action of the Government of his country, and I ask him to be good enough to respect today the decision which was taken the day before.

So you will see that our Organisation, autonomous as it is, is still connected with the League of Nations, and its work is co-ordinated with the work of the League as a whole. . . .

(Lecture at the Arts School, Cambridge, 27 October 1926)

The Research Work of the International Labour Office

The work of the International Labour Office also has another aspect: research. Albert Thomas attached the highest value to work of this kind. As early as 1921 he wrote:

. . . Even if the International Labour Organisation were to be nothing more than a research department at the service of all those, whether employers, workers or students, who are working for social justice — an admitted safeguard of international peace — even if the International Labour Office only registered the progress made in the various countries; even then the International Labour Organisation would still be an invaluable part of the machinery of social evolution. Even then it would be worthy to hold the attention and to utilise the energies of men who would still keep in their hearts a more daring ideal but who, in the present confused state of the world, see no other effective methods of bringing immediate help to

those who are in distress or of hastening the advent of a juster world. . . .

(The International Labour Organisation : its Origins, Development and Future)

" We have taught the world to speak something like the same language on social questions " he once said at the University of Oslo. It was a matter of satisfaction to him that the International Labour Office should have become the great clearing-house for information on social questions all over the world.

. . . We have yet another mission : we were asked to be an information department, to collect and disseminate information on social questions. Have we succeeded, at least to some extent ? It was an American, once an opponent of our Organisation, who wrote not long ago that before the International Labour Office existed there was no intermediary which could enable the people and institutions concerned to follow closely the development of labour legislation and the evolution of industrial relations. The special enquiries of the International Labour Office, he added, had resulted in the collection of a body of information which could have come into existence in no other way.

In addition to the dissemination of information and the legislative side of our work, our principal duty is to stimulate the spirit of social reform in all countries. On this point, here is the judgment of one of the most critical and cautious minds in our Governing Body, the Employers' Vice-Chairman, Mr. Olivetti. Mr. Olivetti says that he has everywhere observed " the movement towards social progress which the International Labour Office has brought into being in all parts of the world, and the wholesome ferment of scientific research, progressive legislation, and public interest which it has initiated, guided or made more active and more fruitful ". . . .

(Address in the Reichstag, Berlin, 29 March 1930)

He often drew attention to the interest which the research work of the International Labour Office aroused in States which were not Members of the International Labour Organisation, including both the United States of America, as has been shown above, and also the Soviet Union.

. . . At the other end of Europe there is a country which always has been, and has perhaps become still more, profoundly different from our countries in its outlook and in its inner spirit : I refer to Russia. During the last ten years or so Russia has held aloof from the international institutions at Geneva and also from many of the countries of Western Europe. During that time there has been only one field in which we have been able to re-establish relations : the field of scientific research. The Russians are very enthusiastic about research. They often dream of becoming a powerful country like the United States of America, and they attach a great deal of importance to science. Even though they still regard me as the "social traitor" who has betrayed the cause of the working classes, even though the Office is part of the "capitalist League of Nations", nevertheless, all the People's Commissariats and all the research bodies of the Soviet Union exchange their publications with those of the International Labour Office. And that is not all — they ask us to carry out investigations and they reply to any requests for information which we send them. . . .

(Lecture at the University of Liège, 21 April 1929)

It would be easy to produce a large amount of evidence to show how much Albert Thomas counted on the research work of the Office as a means of bringing about closer relations with those countries which were still outside the Organisation. He was constantly seeking means of widening the scope of relations with such countries, in the hope that they might prepare the way for full participation. Thus, for instance, soon after he had passed through Russia on his way to the Far East, he said :

. . . The conclusion of all this is to confirm me in the attitude which I have consistently adopted during the last ten years : an attitude of steady, persevering, untiring effort, in spite of all difficulties and all friction, to win Russia over, to establish contact, to try to bring Russia back into international life, even at the cost of certain concessions. . . .

(Address to the National Committee for Social and Political Research, Paris,
4 March 1929)

The ardent hope which he so often expressed was to be fulfilled, for a time, when the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics joined the Organisation in 1934.

The Attempt to Make the International Labour Organisation World-Wide

Another of Albert Thomas' great aims was to make the work of the International Labour Organisation as nearly as possible world-wide. This was another reason for his travels ; their purpose was not only to establish contact and to strengthen the ties between the more distant countries and the Organisation, but also to persuade them to apply at home the social reforms already in being in the Western countries, and thus to bring about greater uniformity in conditions of work throughout the world.

... If the countries of Western Europe and those of the rest of the world constituted a well-established industrial unity in which satisfactory working conditions existed, how could it be thought that we could fail to concern ourselves with an immense reservoir of industrial workers with less good conditions than those in Western Europe, America and other countries, since the competition of industries with lower standards might be liable to depress conditions in the latter countries ? ...

(Speech at the International Labour Conference, 1922.)

He did not fail to realise the difficulties, and he returned to this subject in another speech :

... A more serious problem is the very spirit of our action, the content of our work. We are criticised for being too European — for having European interests, European organisations, European Conventions. "We hear of nothing but Europe" said Mr. Bandeira de Mello in particular. Poor Europe ! Torn by disunity and suffering, she has during the past year been turning and tossing on her bed of sickness, hardly venturing an attempt at agreement, compelled to seek it within the framework of the League of Nations — and her very effort seems to be made a reproach against us ! She has endeavoured, in the interest of international life, to put her house in order, as she is called upon to do. We are told that our Organisation is too European. One moment people say : "You take European conditions of work alone as the basis of your studies and of your Conventions." Yet the next moment we are blamed for trying to establish the

standard of labour legislation at a level below what already exists in the great industrial countries. We are asked to produce universal Conventions ; and yet a moment later there are requests for special conditions for certain countries. Such is the dilemma with which we have to struggle. It is not impossible to find a solution. . . .

Albert Thomas did not regard these obstacles as insuperable. He placed on record the progress which had been achieved — for example, the fact that in most of the new Conventions there were none of the clauses relating to “ special countries ” which the earlier sessions of the Conference had thought it necessary to include. Above all, he made a point of recording the rapid progress of labour legislation in the more distant countries. It was a great satisfaction to him that, thanks to the Organisation, there was less distress in the world than there had been before :

. . . Thus in every part of the world a series of great reforms are coming into being, slowly perhaps, but surely. In Japan there are some 80,000 women who have traditionally been employed at night in the cotton mills. For years their cry has gone up. They are women who spend three or four years of their life in the factories — young girls from the country, who work in the mills to earn their dowry, and then go back home. Many of them return exhausted and shattered in health. The spread of tuberculosis among them had reached disquieting proportions. Japan declared that it accepted the night work Convention, but would not ratify it yet because it was anxious to safeguard the family system in industry. We have now succeeded in obtaining the abolition of night work for tens of thousands of workers in the cotton mills. In India, under similar conditions, night work for children has been abolished, and hours of work have been shortened by two per week. Labour legislation is making progress in all countries. Today, even in colonial territories, Decrees have been promulgated on industrial accidents, or on the employment of women, or on the employment of children. The measures for which they provide do not always correspond with the terms of our Conventions, but they represent progress in the direction which the Convention indicates ; and, to use the terms of the Peace

Treaty, they confer lasting benefits on the wage-earners of the world. . . .

(Lecture at the University of Liège, 21 April 1929)

. . . In distant countries, at the other end of the world, in China, Japan and India, in regions where the very conception of industrial life had scarcely penetrated and in which the handicraft system of antiquity still persisted, the name of the International Labour Office has become known. Even if we cannot yet bring the benefits of labour legislation to all, the people of these distant countries send us their protests and their demands. . . .

(Lecture in the Town Hall of Barcelona, 28 November 1929)

Workers and Employers

Albert Thomas frequently referred to the share of the trade unions in the creation of the Organisation. Addressing Mr. Millerand, the first head of a Government to visit the International Labour Office, he reminded him of the part which they had both played before the war in the work of the International Association for Labour Legislation, which was the first nucleus of the Organisation.

. . . Very few were the workers who at that time gave us their help, very few the trade union members who did not despair in advance at the long time needed to achieve results. Still fewer were the countries where the central trade union organisation took part in the work of our national sections.

Then came the war. In that terrible cataclysm an instinctive sense of solidarity, an imperative need to unite and to organise themselves took possession of the workers. In all countries, millions of new members joined the trade unions. Simultaneously the workers, with one accord, became conscious of their dignity, their responsibility as producers, and their immediate interests. At Leeds in 1916, at Berne in 1919, the international trade union congresses called for international legislation, and demanded a Labour Charter. The statesmen who negotiated the Peace Treaty granted their demands and made use of their very phraseology in Part XIII, a document

the singular historic importance of which will be more and more fully realised as time goes on. In it they solemnly proclaimed the need for the reforms for which the workers called, and set up an organisation designed to translate them into reality.

Since that time, notwithstanding bitter criticism, notwithstanding the traditional discussions on points of dogma, the organised workers have come to understand what a potent instrument for social transformation the International Labour Organisation could and ought to be. They have shown the Office an attachment of which we are proud.

You will understand only too easily that it is not without anxiety, not without emotion, that we regard the hopes which the organised workers have placed in us. We realise what an act of resolution and of energy it has often meant for them to take their seats at the Conference or in the Governing Body. We feel most keenly what a serious matter it would be if their hopes and aspirations were not met, or were met only in part. That is why it will always be a great joy to us here to receive the visits of statesmen who understand and appreciate what we are doing, and who, cost what it may, despite all the vicissitudes of political life, are ready to help us in transforming those hopes into practical reality.

In an article published somewhat later in a German review, he reverted in the following terms to the part played by the workers' organisations affiliated to the International Federation of Trade Unions, whose headquarters were then in Amsterdam.

... I can truly say that it was first and foremost the men of Amsterdam who formulated the elementary principles of justice in the new terms which were to be embodied in the law of nations. Those men who, in 1919, were to achieve the unity of the labour movement in the International Federation of Trade Unions needed all their determination to secure the establishment of the International Labour Office, that is, of a permanent body responsible for undertaking in the economic world the defence of the worker in his capacity as a man, in all the lofty significance of the term. What the labour movement demanded was standards "designed to rescue labour from its social and legal handicaps and to restore to a weary world the incentive to live and prosper", and a method for ensuring that

those standards were observed. It was the men of the International Federation of Trade Unions who achieved that aim. True, they found unstinted support from eminent statesmen, but it was from them that the impulse and the determination proceeded. . . .

Speaking at the Congress of the International Federation of Trade Unions in 1922, Albert Thomas reminded his hearers that the International Labour Organisation had been set up in response to the demands repeatedly put forward by the labour movement, and showed how intimately its very existence depended on the close and constant co-operation of the workers' organisations.

Quite apart from the pleasure which it gives me to meet you all again, and without departing from the impartiality which is proper to the Director of the International Labour Office, it is my right and indeed my duty to tell you that your invitation is of particular importance from our point of view.

It is important for one primary reason : the very existence of the Office in the form in which it was set up by the Treaty of Peace depends on you more than on anyone else. In the first place it is an undeniable historical fact — and I would ask all the representatives of the workers not to forget it — that it was you who desired and demanded the International Labour Office. It was after the resolutions adopted at Leeds, at Stockholm and at Berne, and in order to give them satisfaction, that the Governments contemplated the establishment of the International Labour Office. Part XIII of the Treaty met your demands to a certain extent. It is true that the cumbrous machinery of international legislation which was imposed upon us by the need for respecting national sovereignty — the complicated system of Conventions — was not of your devising. The conceptions of the labour movement were simpler and more absolute. It is none the less true that the creation of the International Labour Office was called for by your resolutions, and that in setting it up the Governments were only doing what you had asked them. It is that fact which gave the Office its character of originality as compared with the semi-official institutions which existed before the war. Because it originated in this way, the labour movement has been intimately associated with its work.

If by some strange chance, yielding to some extraordinary aberration, the International Federation of Trade Unions were ever to withdraw from the International Labour Office, there might still remain in being an information department or a statistical office. But on that day the International Labour Office as it was conceived by the Treaty of Peace would have ceased to be.

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It would not be fair to lay upon us the responsibility for things which do not lie within our control. It cannot in justice be said that we are responsible for the ratification of Conventions. Conventions are a framework into which you must put the content of reality. They cannot but remain a dead letter unless you bring them to life.

When a Convention has been adopted, the Office has no power to compel anyone to ratify it. Ratification is a matter for the countries themselves. Like any other piece of progressive labour legislation, it can only be secured by the action of those concerned. Its fate depends primarily on the strength of the labour movement.

The Office is nothing else but a great international thermometer. If there is ardour and activity in the labour movement, its action expands. If, on the contrary, the activity of the labour movement slows down and stagnates, our work too contracts. I am not concerned now to ask whether it is from "political reaction" or "the economic depression" that you are suffering. All I say is, what we can do depends on what you can do. When you accuse us of impotence, it is your own impotence that you are criticising.

You may perhaps ask, "What is the good of the International Labour Office, then, if it can only do what the labour movement itself can do? If you have no power except by virtue of ours, what use are you? Why was an International Labour Office set up at all? What good can it do us?" I should like to tell you very briefly what I think the use of the Office is, and to show clearly what is its value within the framework established by the Treaty of Peace.

In the first place there is the information and research side of its work. Surely you of all people do not need to be convinced of the value of that. Information and research work today play an ever-increasing part in social controversy for all the

interests concerned. The men you have to meet when you are negotiating collective agreements are becoming ever better informed. The employers fully realise the value of research work. The great banks, the great trusts, the organisations which the employers have founded to defend their interests have in recent times set up highly efficient information services. You know what remarkable results in this direction have been achieved in France in particular. The employers with whom you have to negotiate are often very well informed indeed about questions of international trade competition and what their foreign competitors are doing.

You may perhaps ask whether there is not a danger that information of this kind, intended to be used for the defence of interests opposed to other interests, may itself be tendentious. The aim of the Office is to create a body of information which stands above parties, is available to all, and is based purely and simply on the search for truth. Day by day I study the publications of the International Labour Office, and I admit in all sincerity and humility that they are not yet all that I could wish them to be. I should wish all the figures and all the arguments put out by the International Labour Office to be so reliable that no one could contest them. I should wish that, from the point of view of information and research, the employers themselves should feel that we have outdone them, and that a real contribution had been made to the search for just solutions.

That is one side of our work. We also have another part to play in the general movement for social progress. We give that movement a continuity, a cohesion which it would not otherwise possess.

I have often heard it said in the course of your debates that we should all rise above national interests and seek the collective interest of the labour movement as a whole. To create a genuine international spirit and to see that everyone is permeated by it is no easy matter. A new spirit can only be created and prevail through new activity. International life cannot be a reality unless it has a clearly defined framework and objects. That is the great advantage provided by the International Labour Organisation, round which so much controversy still centres. Let us suppose that at one of your biennial congresses you declare that a fresh effort is needed to achieve some reform. Is international life well enough organised to allow you to hope

that every one of your affiliated organisations will be able to devote itself unreservedly to securing that reform? One national organisation will choose one field of action, while another will select a different objective. Even the manner in which the question is formulated will vary. There will be no real international action. The value of the International Labour Organisation lies in the unity of form which it gives to problems. The very fact that Governments, employers and workers all meet together in it makes this method possible.

I will give you just one example. I am personally convinced that the opposition to the eight-hour day at this very time would be much more acute and much more dangerous if the international Convention had not been adopted; our Organisation is a safeguard for the maintenance of reform measures already adopted. If the International Labour Conference had no other value, it has at least the advantage of giving new cohesion to the movement for international reform, and offering a firm platform for international co-operation.

But the International Labour Organisation does more than this. It does not merely provide an effective method for achieving international progress. It was founded in order to carry out a definite and unanimously agreed programme. . . .

The whole International Labour Organisation was created in order to realise in practice — this is definitely stated in the Peace Treaty — a certain number of principles. These principles, set forth in the Preamble to Part XIII and in Article 427, constitute a Labour Charter which has been solemnly agreed to by the signatories to the Treaty.

It may be that we are not only faced with serious technical difficulties, formidable differences of custom, tradition and climate; it may be that we are faced with powerful reactionary movements. . . . It may be that, Convention by Convention, article by article, the Governments, making use of their sovereign powers, may refuse to ratify the decisions adopted; but that must not deter us from maintaining with all the necessary prudence, yet at the same time with all the necessary firmness, the validity of the basic Charter of our Organisation. Otherwise it would in practice have ceased to exist. The Labour Charter is the reason for our existence, and it is in virtue of our Charter that we are entitled, in spite of all criticism, to appeal to the confidence which in the beginning you reposed in us. . . .

It is a common practice in the debates of the post-war period to refer to the acts and principles of the French Revolution. Let us draw a comparison. Just as during the French Revolution the noble principles which constitute the Rights of Man and of the citizen were accepted in a moment of clear realisation, just so at the time of the Armistice, as a result of the impulse given by the labour movement, certain principles of justice were embodied in Part XIII of the Peace Treaty in order to bring about social justice, which is the foundation of lasting peace. Yet it needed many years and many struggles before the principles of 1789 could be made a reality. In the same way the Conventions which are implicit in Part XIII of the Peace Treaty require from us an unceasing effort. In that effort we shall not slacken. But it is necessary that you should remain in close co-operation with us. No labour legislation, whether national or international, is possible, and no real reform can be achieved, without the co-operation of those who are directly concerned.

It is in that spirit that I ask you to do what lies in you to make the daily work of the International Labour Office fully effective. I repeat, it cannot live its life fully except with your help, and it is primarily through you that its life can expand.

(Speech at the Congress of the International Federation of Trade Unions,
Genoa, April 1922)

Both his background and his personal ideals, from which he never deviated but which he took care not to obtrude on the Organisation, led Albert Thomas' sympathies more particularly towards the International Federation of Trade Unions; but they by no means prevented him from appreciating the value of other labour movements and appealing to them for support. Thus he addressed himself to the Christian trade unions in the following terms:

. . . You are Christians. My background is different. Yet I can truly say that whenever, in the last eight years, we have worked side by side for the realisation of our common ideals, we have been able to do so, I will not say in a spirit of mutual tolerance, but rather with a faith which was equally ardent and passionate, notwithstanding the difference in the source from which it sprang. . . .

(Speech at the Congress of the International Federation of Christian Trade Unions, Munich, 1928)

He pointed out the essential part which the trade union organisations had to play in international labour legislation.

... It is the trade unions which today watch over the observance of labour legislation. But that is not all; it is to their unceasing struggle, to their spontaneous effort that we owe collective agreements, the idea and the reality of conciliation and arbitration machinery, and the idea and the reality of works councils. Still more; in most countries it has become the practice for central councils of labour, economic councils and economic parliaments to obtain the authorised views of representatives of employers' and workers' organisations. Both sides are conscious of the general interest of the community, rising above their sectional interests, and do their best to assist in stabilising the labour market, increasing and regularising production, and promoting economic stability and consequently peace. . . .

(Report to the International Labour Conference, 1926)

In contrast to the attitude of the workers' organisations, which were anxious to accomplish the greatest possible number of reforms in the shortest possible time, was the attitude of the employers' organisations "which", he once said, "are afraid that we might go beyond the Labour Charter, and are even uneasy about applying the terms of the Charter itself on account of the economic situation of the various countries".

... The employers, indeed, consider that it is their function in the Organisation to act as the opposition to the workers. "You yourself, Director", they say to me, "always want to go too fast. If you do not want the train to run off the rails, you must not complain that it has good brakes. We are the brakesmen." To that I answer that, since they are kind enough to allow me the function of engine-driver, I have never yet heard of an engine-driver who likes to have brakes that are put on against his will.

The employers defend their interests as seems good to them. Their opposition, cordial, friendly, but tenacious, often makes its effect felt. Nevertheless, however strongly organised the employers' international federation may be, the necessities of every-day life in the long run compel the acceptance of certain innovations. . . .

(Lecture at the University of Oslo, 15 August 1927)

Albert Thomas saw very clearly the problems which arose not merely from the employers' defence of their interests but also from the existence of an international solidarity between those interests which often proved stronger than considerations of competition.

It seems to me that it is a very difficult task to be Director of the International Labour Office. It also seems to me that it is a very difficult task to be a workers' representative. But I sometimes wonder whether it is not an even more difficult task to be a representative of the employers in the international world. The employers, it must be admitted, are torn between two conflicting impulses. If they let their attitude be determined exclusively by considerations of competition between one country and another, they are obliged to look on their opposite number from another country with some degree of caution and mistrust. They are bound to say to themselves that, true, he is a brother employer, but that he is also a competitor. Sometimes it seems to me that, looking at it from the standpoint of pure logic, the employers of the most advanced countries ought to support me in getting the less advanced countries to adopt progressive legislation. I often think, when I bring forward proposals for some measure or other, that I ought to be able to count on the support of this or that employer. Yet more often than not my expectation is disappointed. The employers say to themselves that possibly, from the international point of view, the employer in another country is a competitor, but that just as there is solidarity between all the workers, so there is perhaps an inevitable solidarity between all employers.

(Address to the Spanish Employers' Association, Madrid, 1928)

It may be that the great employers' organisations of all countries tell us : " There are almost insuperable economic difficulties ; there are reforms which cannot be realised at once. We must wait." That may be so. Yet no employers' organisation represented in the International Labour Office has ever said : " We refuse to bring into being the reforms laid down in the Treaty of Peace." All have accepted the general Charter which was discussed by those who drew up the Treaty of Versailles. I say discussed, because a number of amendments were made in the draft of Part XIII of the Treaty of Peace. It was not, to use the German word which we hear so often, a *Diktat*. It is

in that spirit that we work together in faithfulness to our common aims.

You, Mr. Vogel, have taken up Mr. Tzaut's simile of the train, which has had such a success — the train which, according to you, I want to drive too fast, and which you, our friends the employers, want to slow down. You, it has been said, are the brakesmen. Very well, let that be your function. But you are riding in the train; and though I will not say that the train knows where it is going, one thing is certain — it is moving towards a fixed goal. It cannot, like a motor car or an aeroplane, make detours or go off its road. A little more slowly or a little more quickly, but quite surely, we shall move on together towards social justice and peace. We shall move on together in the assurance that we shall find in our own Organisation some means of practical achievement. . . .

(Speech at a dinner of the German Employers' Association, 1928)

He refused to regard the opposition between employers and workers as meaning that they could not work together. To his way of thinking, co-operation could be achieved by the integration of sectional interests in a broader and more general conception.

. . . If the workers, even though they have become conscious of their common interests, even though they are organised in powerful unions, cannot see beyond the immediate goal of material improvements, if they are not constantly inspired by the noble ideal of the trade union movement — intellectual and moral emancipation — if they do not see in reforms such as the eight-hour day the opportunity of bringing into being a finer civilisation, then, as one of the best among them, Merrheim, has admirably shown, they will be in danger of once more falling victims to economic slavery and of witnessing the loss of benefits which they failed to appreciate at their true worth.

In the same way, if the employers, the modern industrialists, even the most aware and broad-minded among them, do not see in the reforms which they accept anything more than a means of making their business prosper and maintaining some degree of social stability, if they do not strive to see in their employees men who are their equals in dignity and, if I may use the term, in human potentiality — if, translating into modern terms the old family ideal of Daniel Le Grand, they do not try to associate

them more closely with the work of production which, in the modern world, they are responsible for directing — then they too will be but poor helpers in the essential civilising task which the protection of labour signifies. . . .

(Speech at the unveiling of a memorial to Daniel Le Grand)

But, he said :

. . . I do not mean co-operation in that false kind of social peace which the workers have always denounced and which seems to mean that all parties gave up their reasons for striving and abandoned their responsibilities. No : what I mean is the co-operation of men who, in the face of disequilibrium and disorder such as they see around them in the world today, in face of the unprecedented crises through which the world has passed during the last few years, are able to rediscover the deeply-rooted sense that they are human beings struggling for the defence of their species against the rigours of nature.

(Speech at the International Labour Conference, 1931)

. . . As I have said often enough at our international Conferences, the Office is in essence a thermometer of social progress. By the arithmetic of its Conventions it measures what has been achieved in the various countries. When, however, some people bring against us the heavy charge that we have not advanced social progress as much as we should, when they violently attack the International Labour Office because it has not accomplished a complete transformation of the social scene in a few brief years, they are rather like a man who feels too cold in a room and vents his annoyance by breaking the thermometer. Everyone must do his part.

(Lecture at Helsingfors, 20 August 1927)

He spoke appreciatively of the confidence and fidelity of the workers.

. . . Thus in spite of all the struggles, the controversies, the arguments, the griefs, the disappointments which are so frequent in life, we have the satisfaction of knowing that we have not lost any of the support which we have had from the labour movement. The workers who come to the International Labour

Organisation really feel that they are in a place where everyone is doing sound and solid work. . . .

(Lecture at the Institute of Oceanography, Paris, December 1927)

Even when the difficulties were greatest, he never lost faith or hope.

. . . My friends, I would say to you in all sincerity of heart, do not abandon the hopes which you have reposed in us. Even if some trees in the forest are stunted or dead, do not let them prevent you from seeing how vast is the forest itself. For the International Labour Organisation has already grown into a great forest. It is all aquiver with life, as on a day in spring. Everywhere living creatures are swarming, everywhere there is a stirring of life and sap among the young trees ; all are reaching upwards towards the light. Keep your trust in us. Keep up your hopes ; and I am sure than when better times come, as come they will, the Organisation will produce the results which you are entitled to expect from it. . . .

(Speech at the International Labour Conference, 1923)

In a striking summary of what had been achieved in the course of ten years' work, Albert Thomas wrote :

. . . But even more than the number of ratifications obtained — still not large, but yet appreciable — even more than the enforcement of the ratified Conventions, which every year becomes more complete ; even more than the research publications of the Office, which constitute the nucleus and sometimes the most important element of trade union libraries ; even more than its " palace " of wood and stone, soundly built in two years and four months, and well designed for its purpose ; even more than all these things, the International Labour Organisation can, after ten years of existence, be proud of the spread of its moral influence. Among Governments and representative assemblies, among Government departments, among employers' and workers' organisations, yes, and among the masses of the population too, the Organisation is made use of to a greater or less extent, its day-to-day working is more or less well under-

stood, but in almost all quarters the credit which it enjoys is increasing.

Yet it has encountered serious dangers since it was first set up. It came into being at a strange time, in the post-war period when the working class of all countries, both victors and vanquished, seemed called, prematurely perhaps, to a high destiny, and that in the near future. All the talk was of the accession of the workers' organisations to power and of the predominance of organised labour. Some people regarded the Office as a technical instrument which could produce ready-made a complete system of law and administration for the new societies. That was an immense danger. What was to happen when the economic depression came, and all that enthusiasm inevitably fell away?

As events turned out, the Organisation succeeded in retaining the stock of confidence and support with which it had started life. Despite inevitable disappointments, the workers' organisations which had desired and obtained the new institution remained faithful to it. Others joined them. The Office was not forced down into the narrow life of a small-scale bureaucracy. An atmosphere of hope never ceased to surround it. Indeed, its influence has extended more widely. Distant peoples in South America, in the Far East, have in the last few years taken a more regular part in its work. The workers' congresses of Japan, of China and of India have every year been more passionately concerned and, unfortunately, divided by the question of sending delegations to the Conference and the choice of their representatives. The first representatives of Native workers in colonial territories and protectorates are in their turn raising the question of their representation at the Conference. In the old-established industrial communities wage-earners of all kinds — seamen, agricultural workers, salaried employees, miners — feel that the available means of expressing their views on the various bodies set up under Part XIII are not enough, and are suggesting methods for closer and more technical co-operation. Moreover, now that the Permanent Court of International Justice has stated, in its advisory opinions, that Part XIII should not be interpreted in a restrictive way, and that its Preamble provides for the protection of all workers without distinction, the professional workers in their turn have asked that something should be done for them.

And lastly, is it not moving to note that in communities where modern forms of economic life are only just penetrating, the workers of the older industrial system — I mean handicraftsmen of all kinds — are also demanding protective measures ?

Finally, how should I not call to mind the ties with the International Labour Office which have been formed and constantly strengthened by the co-operative organisations of all countries and all tendencies ; these are organisations in which are manifested the sense of responsibility and the constructive forces of the labour movement.

May the Organisation never be deaf to the call of those who come knocking — sometimes very vigorously — at its door ! May it act with the sincerity, the ingenuity and the prudence which are needed to co-ordinate all these vital forces and use them to advance the great task of social justice which has been entrusted to it ! May it never disappoint them !

There are three great moral reasons, three great forces which enable the International Labour Organisation to look forward to the future with full confidence.

The first is the great authority enjoyed by the International Labour Conference. It has been called a Parliament of labour, and labour's world forum. Yet these comparisons are inadequate to express its value, which is imponderable. The fact is that every year, guided by what President Wilson called the "law of honour", the Governments of the States Members have been led almost irresistibly by the debates of the Conference to advance their national legislation and thus to prepare the way for the difficult work of ratification. The judgments of the Conference are simply moral judgments, but they carry increasing weight, and it is towards them that the hopes of the workers are turned.

In the second place, our programme holds good. The first series of reforms which have been adopted in the last ten years are only the beginning of its realisation. But the general acceptance of the Labour Charter, which was the great innovation in the Treaties of 1919, remains intact. The principles of the Preamble to Part XIII and of Article 427 continue to generate new measures and reforms. Their rich possibilities have not yet been fully recognised.

Lastly, and most important of all, the hearts and minds of those who are engaged in production are today swept upwards by a powerful current of aspiration. In Part XIII there is embodied a faith if not a doctrine. "Labour", it says, "should not be regarded merely as a commodity or article of commerce". The human personality counts for something; its essential dignity must be respected. The fact that during the last ten years the working population has seen an undeniable improvement in its material circumstances has reinforced its desire for culture, for intellectual and moral betterment. It has understood that the first and most essential requisite for such a betterment is the "fair and humane conditions of labour" which have been solemnly promised to it by the Treaties. Since that time it has attached even greater value to them. Since that time it has desired them with a stronger and more enlightened determination. That enlightenment and that determination are in the last resort the true foundations of the future of the International Labour Organisation. . . .

(Album : *Ten Years of the International Labour Organisation*, 1930)

II

Legislation and Social Justice

AS has been shown, Albert Thomas was constantly concerned with making the work of the International Labour Organisation universal in scope. This was not only a matter of countries, but also a matter of the different kinds of worker. He did not believe that any of them should be left outside the scope of the International Labour Organisation or without the benefits of international labour legislation. He welcomed with particular satisfaction every development of social reform in the more distant countries, and every step taken to free the Natives from forced labour in backward territories.

One of the first and hardest battles which he had to fight was that which centred round the competence of the Organisation to deal with agricultural work. In the end, the Permanent Court of International Justice at The Hague gave him full satisfaction on this point. In the meantime, Albert Thomas reassured the agriculturists and induced them to co-operate with the Office.

The agricultural organisations in the different countries are at present still too scattered and too diverse to exert the great influence which they ought to have in international affairs. They have themselves complained in the past that their share in the work of the International Institute of Agriculture has not been as great as they would have wished.

The International Labour Office, faithful to the spirit of Part XIII of the Treaty of Peace, could not but welcome with satisfaction a more fully organised method of representation for the agricultural world. In spite of certain divergencies of view which have been emphasised in some quarters, the Office is too confident in the sincerity of its own effort and the use-

fulness of its work to have any fear that these new forces will be held back by misunderstandings or petty disputes with it. The relations of the Office with the experts on the Mixed Advisory Agricultural Committee warrant this confidence.

(Report to the International Labour Conference, 1925)

He defined the work which the Organisation was endeavouring to do on agricultural questions in the following passage:

... In our endeavour to secure equal protection for wage-earners in agriculture and in industry there are thus no further initial difficulties. Yet I should like, for my part, to reassure the agriculturists. The International Labour Organisation has never proposed that reforms equivalent to those which may be adopted for industrial workers should be applied to workers in agriculture in the same form. I would remind you that according to the principles of our Constitution as formulated in Article 427 it is laid down that allowance should be made for differences of climate, habits and customs, economic opportunity and industrial tradition; while Article 405, which specifies the way in which our Conventions are to be drawn up, also states that regard should be had to special circumstances of production. Thus we have at no time claimed that the principles of the Preamble should be applied to agricultural workers in the same way as they are applied to workers in industry.

A certain number of special Conventions for agriculture have been adopted. In dealing with the protection of women in childbirth and the age for admission of children to agricultural employment, the Conventions adopted were sufficiently elastic to receive the adhesion of the great agricultural countries, whereas the parallel Conventions for industrial workers have encountered difficulties.

The International Labour Office has made allowance for the fact that conditions of work in agriculture, and the division of the various classes of wage-earner, were not the same as in industry, where there is a clear-cut distinction between employers and workers. I have no need, in speaking to such an audience as this, to describe in detail all the various kinds of agricultural worker, from the agricultural labourer in the strict sense through the *métayer* and the tenant farmer to the small landowner who works the farm with his family.

In the agricultural world, the important thing is not only working conditions, but also living conditions. For the small peasant proprietor, living conditions are the same as they are for the agricultural labourer, and this was a second consideration which had to be borne in mind.

While in industry, owing to the way in which it has developed, there has been an increasingly sharp division between employer and worker, the position in agriculture is different; there, the principal problem is to give the worker access to the ownership of land. That was a problem with which the International Labour Office could not fail to concern itself. The Office is endeavouring, within the limits which I have described, to see how the protection of agricultural workers as a whole can be achieved. I do not think that there can be any difficulty still remaining in our relations with you.

(Speech at the International Commission on Agriculture, Bienne, 25 May 1928)

A further example of his anxiety to extend the action of the International Labour Organisation to workers of all kinds may be found in the attention which he devoted to the position of professional workers.

In the post-war social scene there is no more tragic problem, no more acutely difficult situation, than that of professional workers. In most countries, to a greater or lesser extent, professional workers have in the post-war period suffered a severe loss of status. During the war and the periods of economic and monetary upheaval which followed it, industrial workers were able to defend their position. The various countries took steps to adapt wages almost constantly to prices and currency conditions. But in a great many, perhaps most countries, no similar adjustment was made for fixed-salary workers, as our Swiss friends call them. Neither was it made for professional workers.

The fact is that, owing to their particular mentality and outlook, professional workers had rather let things slide as regards the defence of their interests. While industrial workers were forming unions, organising, and putting forward their claims, professional workers found it hard to make contact with one another and to unite in associations. Professional men in many occupations regarded their individualism as an essential

safeguard for their talent. For that reason they tended to neglect the rather humdrum effort of the workers who form trade unions and organise themselves for the purpose of putting forward their demands. Besides, it must be admitted, professional workers wondered anxiously whether it would help them to organise, or whether their work was not of such a kind, so individual, that organisation would do them little good. What, for example, would be the utility of an association of painters, a trade union of sculptors or writers ? Sometimes, of course, it could do something to defend certain kinds of authors' rights against publishers. In general, however, the utility of an organisation was not very apparent. I remember the Federation of Ex-Service Artists which was formed in Paris. They made joint purchases of paints and brushes and other material, but on the whole that did not amount to very much from the financial point of view. They tried to combine in order to create a market for their work and to sell their pictures, but often they did not achieve anything very much. There was not much belief in the value of organisation.

(Address to professional workers, Copenhagen, 13 August 1927)

To his profound conviction that all workers are entitled to social justice must be attributed the perseverance which Albert Thomas showed whenever the fate of some reform measure was at stake :

I will give an example : our discussions with the most intellectually alert, but also the most tenaciously conservative body of employers that I know — I refer to the shipowners. The shipowners, particularly those of the Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon countries, form the chief centre of resistance against the principles for which the Office stands. At Genoa in 1920 we tried to carry through the international Convention regulating hours of work on board ship. The Convention failed by two votes to reach the two-thirds majority needed for its adoption. For two years, efforts were made to find some possibility of compromise or of making a new study of the question, and one day the most authoritative representative of the shipowners' group on the Joint Maritime Commission tried to prevent the question being brought up again before the Commission, saying that it had been discussed by the Conference at

Genoa and had been rejected. "The question is lost" were his words.

I replied: "Mr. Cuthbert Laws, in the International Labour Organisation there is no such thing as a lost question. If at one particular time we are unable to find a compromise on which agreement can be reached, or regulations which seem to us to express the principle of social justice laid down in the Preamble to Part XIII of the Treaty, our Labour Charter, then we must all set to work again with courage and good will to get justice, and to complete the whole of the task which has been entrusted to us. For us, no question is ever lost."

(Address at the University of Liège, 21 April 1929)

It would be impossible to describe what Albert Thomas did in connection with all the problems which arose at the various sessions of the International Labour Conference; to do so would be to write the entire history of the Organisation during the years when he was Director of the International Labour Office. It is possible, however, to pick out a few characteristic examples which illustrate his conception of international labour legislation, its immediate value, and the lofty aims which it could help towards future realisation.

The first labour Convention came into being because the industrial countries saw the fearful ravages which necrosis was making among the workers — women as well as men — in the match industry, and because it was found that the protective measures so far applied in the factories were not enough. Because of this it was decided, internationally, to prohibit the use of white phosphorus in the manufacture of matches. Later, in 1906, the public conscience was aroused at the situation of women industrial workers who had to work at night in all the great factories, and then, in the day-time, to take up their housewives' task again — to look after the children, to get meals for their menfolk — so that they could not rest by day as men do when they work at night. Then, in the name of the threatened future of the race, and in the name of pity, a Convention was adopted prohibiting the employment of women in factories during the night. Thus even before the war a beginning was made with labour legislation.

(Address at the University of Santiago, Chile, 7 August 1925)

The Protection of Children

"To preserve life in labour, to make labour innocuous to life" — this admirable phrase of Puccinotti summarised, in Albert Thomas' mind, the immediate aim of labour legislation. He himself spoke of the "battlefield of labour", and guided the work of the International Labour Organisation in the direction of protecting workers against occupational diseases and industrial accidents. He pointed out that the earliest measures of labour legislation had aimed at protecting those classes of workers who stood in most need of protection: children and women. Speaking of women, he formulated the reasons for special protective legislation as follows:

Night work is injurious to health, since women cannot rest properly because they have to work by day as well as by night; it disorganises family life and has harmful consequences for the children; as women cannot avoid doing their household tasks as well as working for pay, their resistance to industrial fatigue is less than that of men. Finally, the prohibition of night work, far from being detrimental to the position of women workers, has helped to bring about its abolition for all workers.

(Report to the International Labour Conference, 1928)

What moved him most of all was the undeserved misery of child workers.

The movement for labour legislation is, in its origin, a noble impulse of human solidarity. It was the distress of little children of five and six employed in spinning and weaving which aroused men like Robert Owen and Villerminé, who were the protagonists of the earliest stages of the movement. It was a sense of human sympathy for the terrible sufferings of workers who had contracted necrosis which led to the adoption of the first international Convention.

(Report to the International Labour Conference, 1921)

Unfortunately, the fact that this aim had been pursued for a century did not mean that it had been everywhere attained.

It has sometimes been thought that the first phase of labour legislation was over, that the most elementary reforms had been achieved, and that women and child workers were protected all over the world. Yet as, step by step, we try to find out how the Conventions are enforced, we find that even the work of Robert Owen has not yet been completed. Not long ago, in the course of one of my journeys, I saw hundreds and thousands of little children of six to eight years old employed in silk spinning works. Elsewhere, in other countries, in another hemisphere, I have also seen the labour of women and children exploited. I can only repeat with Robert Owen, who was the originator of protective measures for the workers, that the hideous evils which still afflict mankind, even today, must cease.

(Speech at the unveiling of a bust of Robert Owen, 11 March 1929)

On all occasions, but more particularly when he had a concrete instance before his eyes, Albert Thomas urged the necessity for pulling an end to abuses, even though by doing so he risked rousing opposition. An example is the following speech, made in Greece :

There is another point to which I have ventured to draw the attention of public opinion throughout the whole of Greece. Whatever economic conditions may be, whatever the exigencies of international competition, it is impossible to approve of little children being sent to work in factories ! It is impossible to approve of what we see in so many countries — children being hindered in their physical growth, prevented from attaining their full mental development, and sometimes even physically deformed by their work. Public opinion everywhere must make its unanimous protest heard.

I repeat : there are perhaps some reforms which can wait. There are perhaps Conventions which need not be ratified immediately. Yet any man who has a heart must be moved by the thought that the very future of the race may be imperilled by the employment of children when they are too young. It is not only the interests of the child itself, it is not only the interests of the parents, who sometimes have to bear in later years the consequences of their children's being sent to work too early. It is also the interest of the civic community as a whole.

The fine thing about what the Greeks have achieved, the fine thing about your work of economic reconstruction, is that you have gathered together all the members of the Greek family in the new national unity. You were determined to build up a single nation, capable of a new destiny and a great future. Surely you cannot fail to realise that if you expose the children to injury it is that very future which you are imperilling? Old Aeschylus said that the ramparts of the city are its citizens, the living men who must be preserved. If they are to be preserved, the children must be given the opportunities for physical and mental development which are the glory of the modern worker.

I was much impressed the other day when, after I had been talking about some of the things I had seen, some of the employers in my audience spontaneously said that their association would do itself credit if it put an end to the evil of child labour which still persists in certain factories. I appeal to the Government, the guardian of ratified Conventions, not that it should at once give us a social insurance system and labour regulations and a law on occupational diseases — that whole structure which a united nation will sooner or later feel to be its due — but that it should at any rate, without delay, make the elementary protection of children a reality both in law and in practice.

(Speech at Athens, 5 March 1927)

Similar ideas are expressed in the Report which he submitted to the International Labour Conference in 1927.

Speaking generally, it may be said that the scandal of the exploitation of child labour has almost disappeared in most industrial communities. Although the Conventions fixing the minimum age for employment at fourteen and prohibiting night work for young persons have not yet been as widely ratified as we could wish, there are in nearly all countries laws fixing the age of admission to employment at twelve or thirteen, so that the wretched spectacle of children seven or eight years old employed in factories has become an exception. Yet can such exceptions be tolerated? The International Labour Organisation does not think so, and it will be remembered that as long ago as 1921, using nothing but its moral authority, it intervened in certain countries to bring about the end of this abuse. In

the same way it is its duty to take action at any time when, in the country of any Member State, as a result of political catastrophes, movements of population or severe economic crises, the temptation to employ children may again prove too strong for some families or some employers. We welcome the attention which Governments are giving to these matters. Yet would not the best means of ensuring that such evils never recur be to embody in national legislation all the salutary provisions laid down in the Conventions adopted by the Conference ?

The Raising of the School Leaving Age

It is necessary to take a still longer view. If the life and intellectual development of children is to be properly safeguarded, it is essential to raise the school leaving age. Albert Thomas asked that it should be fixed at not lower than fourteen.

Even at Washington, one of the members of our Association who had for some years been engaged in promoting this idea - I refer to my friend Max Lazard — before his whole attention came to be absorbed by the reports on unemployment, submitted a Resolution which received a certain amount of support. It drew attention to the relation between the two problems, and asked the Conference to place the two following questions on the agenda of the next session :

(a) Co-ordination of the laws relating to the abolition of child labour with those relating to the school leaving age.

(b) Limitation of hours of work for young workers of both sexes with a view to the development of their vocational and general education.

(Address to the French Association for Social Progress, 1927)

In a later speech he developed these arguments as follows :

From the physiological point of view, all doctors are agreed that it is at about thirteen or fourteen years of age that the child completes its development, and that at that age it is not good for it to work in industry.

There is also the educational point of view. All educationists agree that it is between thirteen and fourteen years of age that children in elementary schools begin to receive the full benefit from education, and to read with ease ; and it is because so many French children of thirteen to fourteen years of age have to go to work that we still have in France the amazing percentage of illiterates which is found today in every contingent called up for military service. I have not the most recent figures, but I have those for 1924, 1925 and 1926. In 1925, 14,300 conscripts could neither read nor write ; 7,400 could only read. I cannot help wondering what is meant by this notion of being able to read but not to write. I am very much tempted to call these people illiterates too. Taking both classes together, there were in the 1925 call-up in France 9.18 per cent. who can be reckoned as illiterate ; in 1926 the proportion was still higher — there were 9.37 per cent. Yet in Germany there is one illiterate per thousand of the population, and in Switzerland less than one per thousand, and it is considered in the latter country that practically every conscript can read.

If, moreover, we remember the essential fact that, as the cantonal delegates have often pointed out, many children during their last school year can read a little but not easily, and that between the ages of fourteen and eighteen they almost completely forget how to read and how to learn, you will see what the position is. It is essential to state the facts as they are, and it must be admitted that the position is particularly serious at a time when all civilised countries are feeling more keenly than ever the need for the general education of all members of the community.

Education is necessary in industry, for the modern industrial worker must not continue to be the single-process worker of whom Proudhon spoke ; if he is to be a worker worthy of the name and capable of producing efficiently, he must have some notion of industry as a whole ; he must, as Claudel says in a magnificent passage, feel all the nobility which there is in being part of the great structure of modern industry.

Education is equally necessary for agriculture. How often have we been told that the agricultural worker did not require such a complete education ? Yet in such a country as Denmark, where agriculture is splendidly organised, higher agricultural education has been instituted, and it is there too that higher

elementary education has been most fully developed. It is impossible to develop the new agriculture for which the modern world calls unless the agricultural worker has facilities for higher elementary education at his disposal.

Finally, general education is a necessity for the civic community, for society as a whole. We are at the present time striving in this country to secure a satisfactory utilisation of the workers' spare time — a new aspiration towards that modern humanism at which all peoples are aiming. There is no possibility of securing a good and effective use of spare time in our country unless, as a foundation, we have elementary education enabling people to read with ease. For this reason all countries are beginning to recognise the need for raising the school leaving age. At the International Labour Conference in Geneva, their delegates have declared that children should not be admitted to employment in industry before the age of fourteen, or be employed on board ship before the age of fourteen, or go to work in agriculture before that age, except subject to certain conditions and for light work.

(Address at the Sorbonne, Paris, 22 February 1931)

Albert Thomas had this question very much at heart. As a Frenchman, he grieved that in this respect his country should lag behind many others. He dealt with this subject in many of his utterances.

Among the international labour Conventions which it is our duty to try to have ratified by all countries, there are none which I consider more valuable, none which I think need more of our attention, than those which deal with the protection of children and of adults. There is the prohibition of the employment of children under fourteen years of age in industry or on board ship. Why, alas! has the French Republic not ratified the Convention? Then there is the prohibition on employing children in agriculture during school hours; the prohibition of night work for young persons; the protection of motherhood; and finally, most important of all, there is the eight-hour day Convention, which gives the worker the opportunity to cultivate his mind and to develop all the qualities proper to a man, a citizen and a producer. Does not all that in truth represent the practical preliminary condition for the education of mankind?

No individual culture is possible, no civilisation is possible, if the child is flung too early into factory work, if the young person is worn out by excessive fatigue, if the adult worker cannot have a few hours to himself.

Yet what would be the use of protecting children and adults against premature and exhausting labour, what would be the use of ensuring that workers have spare time at their disposal, if we do not train them to cultivate all their potentialities ; if, in a word, we do not organise education ? How can we promote social reform, how can we keep daily watch over its application, without the help of properly educated workers who constantly manifest their desire to progress further towards emancipation in accordance with an ideal of justice and freedom ?

Turning towards the Minister for Education, I would say : that is how your work and mine are linked up. The connection between them is very close. . . . There is no possibility of regular and reliable development of social democracy unless it is founded on a complete system of education. Education has always been a watchword of the republicans. It was a watchword of the men of the French Revolution. It was the watchword of Cabet in the newly reconstructed Republican Party in 1834. It was the ideal of Carnot and the men of 1848. Education was our rallying cry at the time of the Dreyfus case, when our generation was receiving its training in political life. Education is still today, and will be tomorrow, the watchword of all republicans.

(Fortieth Congress of the French League for the Advancement of Education,
Valence, 2 November 1924)

The above speech is of particular significance since it links the problem of education with that of social legislation as a whole. That connection was one of Albert Thomas' fundamental ideas. He never tired of expounding it in connection with another great reform measure which he often called the keystone of international labour legislation — the eight-hour day.

The Eight-Hour Day

The international Convention on the eight-hour day and the forty-eight hour week in industry had been adopted by the International Labour Conference at Washington.

Was it by any decision of mine that the International Labour Organisation began its work with the eight-hour day Convention? Certainly not. Even before the war the working class of the whole world was demanding the eight-hour day. Not only from the point of view of production, but from that of working class civilisation, it represents a reform which no other reform can equal in value. It represents what the British workers have called the share in the distribution of the new wealth created by modern industry which the workers receive in the form of spare time. It is just because it provides the possibility of spare time, of individual culture, and, in a word, of the emancipation of the workers, that it had to be placed at the head of the list of all reforms. Even though we may, together with you, move in other directions and towards other milestones on our way, that reform must first of all be established and achieved. That is why, in accordance with your own interests, with your desire to proceed methodically, and with your idea of fixing a programme for the years to come, we ought perhaps to make a radical change in the order of business which you propose for us.

(Speech at the International Labour Conference, 1928)

Albert Thomas devoted himself passionately to this essential reform, defended it through the years against all impediments and all attacks, and pursued with tenacious resolution the ratification of the Washington Convention. He had devoted himself to securing the adoption of the eight-hour day in his own country even before he became Director of the International Labour Office.

The author of these lines may be permitted to recall here what was perhaps the most moving experience of his life — an experience in which the principles to which he had devoted all his efforts, and which he had nevertheless thought it necessary to relinquish for the time being, imposed themselves on him with convincing evidence of their truth.

It was during the war. France was short of munitions, and had been deprived by invasion of her most powerful industrial equipment. She appealed to the courage and self-sacrifice of all factory workers to make the fullest use of what was left. The working day was lengthened, night work in two shifts was introduced, the weekly rest was suspended as well as the

remainder of protective labour legislation. The slogan was work — work till you drop. This supreme effort, which the workers had accepted unanimously in a resolute spirit, could not be kept up for more than a few months. Soon the factory managers themselves, the men most concerned in completing their contracts to time, asked the Government to restore the labour laws. Notwithstanding, or rather because of, the danger which threatened the nation and the need to raise output to the highest possible level, working hours were again limited, night work in some cases abolished, the weekly rest everywhere restored; and output then improved.

(The Eight-Hour Day: Taking a Reckoning. July 1926)

He often pointed out how long the workers had been agitating for this reform.

Eight hours? You realise why it is eight? It is the exact division of the twenty-four hours of the day into three. Eight hours' sleep (all doctors today advise us to try to have eight hours' sleep. I myself try, though I do not always succeed — but all doctors advise it). Then eight hours' "play" as it is said; for eating, for recreation, for enjoying the pleasures of family life, for the family to be together if possible. Then finally, eight hours' work.

The idea is not a new one. It goes back a long way in history. In the time of philosophers like St. Thomas Aquinas, observations relating to this division of the day into three can be found. They can be found, too, in the writings of an autocratic ruler — King Philip II of Spain. The same idea was current, as President Masaryk has pointed out, at the time of the great miners' strike for the eight-hour day in 1891. The Czech philosopher Comenius said in the seventeenth century: "If, in order to meet the needs of life and health, you divide the twenty-four hours of the day into three, you have eight hours for sleep, eight hours for eating, walking, recreation and talk; you will have eight hours left for work, and you will be able to use them without hurry or anxiety, because each hour will produce something useful. If you work six days a week, you will have the seventh as a day of rest, and thus you will devote to work forty-eight hours a week and 2,576 hours a year."

You might almost think it was Comenius who drafted the French Act of April 1919.

In this way, by a sort of natural process of thought, the idea of the eight-hour day, which was so popular in the nineteenth century, has established itself firmly. Later, the idea of the "three eights" again became a rallying cry when the working class, in the nineteenth century, or perhaps even earlier, at the end of the eighteenth, began to feel how heavy was the burden of industrial servitude.

I should have liked to describe this chapter in human history to you in more detail. It is to be found in the literature of all industrialised countries such as Germany, France and Britain, even in the Middle Ages, in those times which classical historians represent as ages of barbarism. The rules of the guilds laid down that hours of work must be limited. At that time it was not the driving force of industry, not the pace of the machine, not the large-scale organisation of factories which, so to speak, regulated labour for the purpose of profit. Labour was regulated for two reasons. The first was the health of the worker. It was thought that he should not be asked, winter or summer, to work after sundown. The second was the worker's need for rest. It was thought that the principle of the weekly rest should be observed.

(Lecture at Lausanne, 9 January 1923.)

"Does the eight-hour day represent social progress?" the editor of a French trade union journal asked him. He replied:

... What do you mean exactly? Does the eight-hour day really mean social progress? I cannot think that the *Peuple* has any doubt what my answer will be. Does not the eight-hour day mean, for the great mass of the workers, the end of chronic overwork, with its crushing and depressing effects; an improvement in health, not only because the work itself is healthier and less likely to drive men to drink too much, less likely to cause accidents, but also because it means that the worker can have a house on the outskirts of the town and work in his own garden? Does it not mean that family life is restored, and that the worker can, comfortably and without overstrain, take part in the various forms of social life: trade union meetings, assemblies, lectures, the theatre? Does it not mean the development of technical and general education, and a widening

of intellectual horizons ? Does it not, last but not least, mean that life becomes finer and nobler for millions and millions of human beings whom it admits to the knowledge and enjoyment of the greatest good that mankind can have — the life of the mind and the spirit ? Who would dare, in face of these clear and now universally recognised facts, to deny that the eight-hour day is indeed social progress ?

(*Le Peuple*, Paris)

The effect of shorter working hours on economic life confirmed the fact that the eight-hour day was both possible and necessary.

... For many years past the protagonists of labour legislation have affirmed their conviction, and have repeatedly demonstrated that long working days, and, more generally, arduous conditions of work, do not make for larger output. The *Enquiry into Production* published by the International Labour Office contains a quantity of information of undeniable value on this point. To sum up the purport of these observations in a single passage, I will quote once again the considered statement which appears in the famous Report of the Industrial Commission of the United States in 1902 — a report which represents the result of four years' work and the testimony of more than 700 experts or interested persons, and which has been justified by the whole subsequent development of industrial practice in the United States. The Report states that the industries in which the fewest hours are worked and the highest wages are paid are also those whose products are most easily placed abroad by the United States. A further reduction in hours of work would still further increase the intelligence and output of the workers. The Report adds that : " a reduction in hours has never lessened the working people's ability to compete in the markets of the world. States with shorter workdays actually manufacture their product at a lower cost than States with longer workdays."

(*The Eight-Hour Day: Taking a Reckoning*, July 1926)

The general adoption of the reform would put an end to the objections raised against it in various countries.

... Surely there is a constructive policy for the eight-hour day to be pursued in the various countries. Surely, in

the search for practical methods of application of which we have heard so much, there is a possibility of devising a day-to-day industrial method in which the interests of all parties could be respected on the fundamental basis of the eight-hour day. Surely the Office, by means of the research work on output and on the actual facts of international competition which it has only just started — and which, be it noted, has never been attempted by anyone else — can help the various countries to devise such a constructive policy.

(Report to the International Labour Conference, 1922)

. . . My very definite conclusion is that everything should be done to expedite the establishment of the system of international agreements for which the Peace Treaty provides. Perhaps some people may think that I am impatient. It is my duty to be impatient. Serene optimists may believe that the eight-hour day cannot fail to prevail in the end, and become the standard for modern industrial work. I myself do not doubt it. The workers today regard the opportunity of having spare time as the guarantee of their independence and their civilisation. But if we can expedite, by however little, the hour of that triumph through the work of the International Labour Organisation, we can feel that our efforts have not been in vain. . . .

(Report to the International Labour Conference, 1924)

He regretted that the States Members should delay in giving their formal adhesion to the Washington Convention, but he showed that the Convention, even unratified, helped to consolidate the eight-hour day and to promote its more widespread adoption.

. . . In the last resort, however, it is not the formal act of ratification which will render this great reform unassailable. As has often been shown, it constitutes in itself the most far-reaching of revolutions. It brings in its train a number of technical, social and moral consequences, the development of which alone can make its position finally secure. If it should at any time be proved that it had struck a fatal blow at industrial production by excessively reducing output or by increasing costs of production beyond measure, ratification would not suffice to prevent a violent reaction. No effort must be spared to foster

the movement for scientific organisation of work and for profitable employment of the workers' spare time. . . .

(Report to the International Labour Conference, 1926)

Albert Thomas considered that the best prospect for the final victory of the eight-hour day was to be found in "a constructive eight-hour day policy".

. . . At the time when the French Chamber voted the Eight-Hour Day Act in April 1919, the present writer, while supporting this great humanitarian reform with complete faith and unreserved satisfaction, did not hesitate to remind the Chamber that unless production were intensified, mechanisation and factory organisation developed by employers to meet the further efforts required, and the capacities of the workers improved by systematically organised use of spare time and intensive cultivation of the personality, the reform itself might be detrimental to production and might cause a dangerous setback to civilisation.

It is just as true today as it was two years ago that the eight-hour day cannot be achieved, cannot attain universal success or be established in a world of international competition, unless those concerned make it the object of a great sustained effort such as any progressive measure of this kind requires.

(Report to the International Labour Conference, 1921)

Facilities for Workers' Spare Time

Even as early as 1922, Albert Thomas saw the organisation of facilities for the utilisation of workers' spare time as one of the tasks of the Organisation.

. . . Side by side with this great problem, I cherish the hope of bringing before the Governing Body and the Conference one of the most fascinating problems connected with the life of the workers — that of facilities for the utilisation of spare time, regarded as a stage in the preparation of a constructive eight-hour day policy. This is not the time to describe the efforts which are needed to bring the eight-hour day into being. I do

not know when the Convention will be ratified by the various countries ; I do not know what methods of application — in the phrase which has so often been used — will have to be introduced into national legislation, and perhaps sooner or later into the Convention itself ; I do not know what will be the outcome of the controversies which are now raging in all countries ; but what I do know, after all the research work which we have undertaken together, is that already the reform is, so to speak, accepted, recognised as necessary all over the world. Yet that there should be a retreat from such a principle is by no means an impossibility ; in social evolution nothing is impossible, though the attempt would be a very difficult one. The only thing is that nothing has as yet been done about the organising work which is needed if the eight-hour day is to advance the progress of civilisation ; and it is the duty of the Office, in its day-to-day work, to help to form a constructive eight-hour day policy in all countries. . . .

(Address to the staff of the International Labour Office. November 1922)

. . . When I suggested to the Governing Body two years ago that a policy for the utilisation of workers' spare time was needed, those who really care about the eight-hour day agreed that the question should be placed on the agenda of the Conference ; but how much ridicule I had to face ! " What ? " people said ; " this great Organisation is to spend its time discussing the question of workers' spare time ? What is it going to say to them ? What is it going to suggest ? You are not satisfied with regulating hours of work, with fixing the working day ; now you want to compel the workers to go in for athletics or to work on allotments ! " That is not the case. We have no desire to compel anyone to do anything whatever. Our reasoning is as follows : if the eight-hour day is to continue to exist, it must be liked. If it is to maintain its position in all countries, those who benefit by it must feel that it really is a benefit. They must be conscious of the whole movement which is unfolding, and they must feel that if the eight-hour day were to be endangered or lost, they would be losing something of themselves. If the International Labour Office succeeds in its endeavour to promote facilities for workers' spare time, if it ensures that they have at their immediate disposal opportunities for developing themselves politically,

mentally and physically, they will undoubtedly feel all the value and benefit of the eight-hour day. . . .

I foresee the objection which will be raised. People will say to me : "Spare time ? Workers' spare time ? But my dear sir, you have never looked at them ; you have not seen them on a Sunday, in industrial towns, loitering miserably through the streets, stopping in front of a public house, killing time before they go in, then finally going in with one or two friends, sitting down at a table, having one drink, then two, then three ! The workers ! The labouring population ! You are just an intellectual, you know nothing about them. Spare time ! Let us call a spade a spade : if they have any spare time, they will use it to get drunk." I hear that kind of thing every day in France, and I dare say you hear it too in Switzerland. The criticisms about workers' spare time are much the same in all countries. I reply that here again the facts contradict people's prejudices. . . .

(Lecture at Lausanne, 9 January 1932)

. . . Although problems of labour regulation continue to absorb much of the attention of the workers, there is at the same time increasing interest in the utilisation of spare time. It cannot be too strongly emphasised that the eight-hour day has revolutionised the life of the workers in the post-war period. It is the basis of a new civilisation. The problem of the utilisation of spare time is at bottom nothing else than an attempt to adapt custom and tradition to the new system of industrial work. . . .

(Report to the International Labour Conference, 1926)

. . . If, however, it is necessary as a result of modern industrial development to defend the workers' spare time and to try to increase it, the reason is that the curtailment of leisure was one of the chief abuses of industrialism in our day.

. . . One of the most striking features of the early days of industrialism is that in the seventeenth century, and in the eighteenth, when the first manufacturing industries were set up, the workers realised the servitude to which they were to be reduced. For example, if you read the regulations of the royal manufactory at Saint-Maur, in the seventeenth century, you will notice that they were directed principally against all leisurely

ways ; I will not say against habits of slackness, but rather of a slow pace of work. Again, if you study the early days of the industrial revolution in Germany, you may read, even in the popular songs of the day, the laments of the workers who saw that the change from the guild system to the factory system was going to deprive them of such little spare time as they had had — the numerous festivals of the guilds and brotherhoods — and that they were being more and more subjected to the regular, monotonous and intensive work of the new factory system. Gradually the cry of the workers grew louder all through the nineteenth century.

(Lecture at Prague, 4 July 1927)

Albert Thomas did a great deal in France itself to promote a satisfactory utilisation of workers' spare time, in agreement with co-operative and trade union organisations. In this connection he said :

... Leisure was the precious thing which the workers and handicraftsmen realised that they were losing when modern industrialism came into existence. Leisure was the thing which the workers were constantly demanding throughout the nineteenth century ; it has been the aspiration of the whole of the wage-earning classes in modern times — eight hours for work, eight hours for sleep, and eight hours' spare time. That is the formula which was constantly repeated in the demands put forward before the war. When the Socialists began their propaganda campaigns round about 1878, they regarded the enjoyment of spare time as the almost exclusive prerogative of the middle classes.

... Then there at once arose a second problem, a still more far-reaching revolution, the eight-hour day. Perhaps even now we have not fully realised what the establishment of the eight-hour day round about 1918 and 1919 as the normal working day in almost all countries of the world has meant to modern society.

At once, as soon as this revolution had occurred, a few men and a few organisations began to concern themselves with the problem of spare time. What would the proletariat do with the new leisure which had been granted to it, or rather which it had won by energetic campaigns in various countries ; how would it use and organise it ?

I remember that in 1919 a few of us — intellectuals, co-operators, trade unionists — met in a small office near the Madeleine. There were artists there; Gémier was there, and Jouhaux, and Merrheim; there were our comrades of the co-operative movement. We met together several times to discuss what arrangements could be made for the utilisation of spare time.

Some years have passed since then — difficult years; the struggles of 1920, the divisions in the labour movement, and still more important, the severe depressions of 1920 and 1921, the retreat from the eight-hour day in certain countries, the German Legislative Decrees of 1923. It was then that we in the International Labour Organisation again took up the question of spare time. We asked ourselves whether the best means of defending the newly established eight-hour day against constant attack would not be to organise facilities for the use of spare time, so as to make the workers realise more keenly its full value and to demonstrate its great advantages. In this way we should be defending the shorter working day. That is what I have called the *constructive eight-hour day policy*, and that is what we tried to embody in the 1924 Recommendation of the International Labour Conference.

Two points should be borne in mind in connection with the subject which we are discussing today. In the first place there is what might be called the *separation between work and life*. In former days the craftsman, who was often halfway between a craftsman and an artist, loved his work, had a certain degree of freedom in doing it, and worked with some measure of spontaneity; his work was part of his life; he could work in his home or close to it. He had not lost his pleasure in his work; there was something creative in it. For most men, modern industry has meant the end of all that. Most workers have become, in Proudhon's phrase, single-process workers; they now only do a microscopic portion of the work required to produce new commodities. Thus they are enslaved by their work; they are not like an artist or a scientist at his desk who wishes he had another hour in which to complete the piece of creative work of which he has dreamed; they keep their eye on the factory clock and wait impatiently for the bell which will set them free.

That is the condition of the worker today. Is it possible, as some have dreamed, to bring back the element of creativeness

and joy into modern industrial work ? Events seem to be evolving rapidly in the opposite direction ; so far from there being a restoration of creative craftsmanship or artistry in work, we are moving more and more in the direction of the Taylor system and work at the conveyor belt, which make the worker more and more of a slave.

If that is the case, then a place must be found for liberty and life elsewhere. A compensation for the working day which has to be lived through must be found in the worker's spare time, and he must be enabled to affirm his manhood, if I may use that phrase, outside his work. That is the special value of facilities for the utilisation of the worker's spare time.

After work in which he has been, so to speak, little better than a slave, after he has been subjected to various forms of compulsion all through the day, after having as Mr. Romier puts it, increasingly externalised his own life, every worker must feel the need to organise his life, to assert his freedom and his intelligence in that small corner of privacy and quiet to which he can look forward after the end of the day's work.

(Lecture at Royan on the organisation of facilities for the utilisation of workers' spare time)

Education as a Means to Freedom

Thus "leisure is a necessity for the human being". But it should be used first and foremost for social ends. It should promote education; it should help to bring about social justice. Here, Albert Thomas' thought runs on precisely the same lines as it did in connection with child labour.

"Only men who are physically and mentally cultivated can create a better society", he once said at Prague. He continued:

... Thus the idea already existed. The new thing is that this idea, which had already gained ground before the war, has now become general and popular. Every day, in workers' journals all over the world, in those of France, Germany and Belgium, it is stated that our first duty is to create men who are better, more vigorous, stronger and more conscious; that our first duty is to create the *citizens of the new city*. This, however, at once brings up another problem. *To create better men, to*

build up in each one of us the structure of modern mankind — that is a grand ideal. . . .

He reminded his hearers of the ideas of that great pioneer, Robert Owen:

. . . Even though education momentarily increases the danger, it is in Owen's view the true means of restoring the equilibrium and well-being of the community. Education is the means by which society can be transformed.

The second general result, according to Robert Owen, and the great discovery which completes scientific progress, is that men can be freed from the moral prejudices which have made them hate and despise one another, and from the ignorance which prevents them from benefiting individually from the new scientific power. There is, Owen says, a "six-fold barrier of error and prejudice" which prevents mankind from developing in accordance with its true nature. The barriers are religion, national prejudices, sectarian notions, language, class, and habits imbibed in childhood. Henceforward, with the experience acquired at New Lanark, "society may form new circumstances around children in every part of the world". It will be able to make each one of them into a worker who could, "aided by mechanical, chemical and other scientific power", create a surplus of new wealth, or property, far beyond what he can or will desire to retain for his own use. No one will be "poor, ignorant, and unprovided with proper employment". It is, in the last resort, on education that Owen counts to bring about a fair distribution of new wealth, and he asks the Allies and all the Governments of Europe and America to draw the conclusions from the truths thus established.

(Miscellany dedicated to Charles Andler, 1924)

Education is a fundamental condition for social progress and the liberation of the workers.

. . . I know the theory which is constantly brought forward in opposition to us, that on the contrary, the people should be left in their misery so that one day they may revolt against those who are responsible for it. That is an illusion! So Jaurès never ceased to proclaim throughout his life.

Depressed classes do not make liberating revolutions. Even if they manage to secure freedom for a time, they soon fall back under the yoke of authority. They may liberate themselves by some act of violence, but even if they did they would soon prove incapable of governing a great modern community.

Therefore, as Jaurès said, the only means of creating democracy is to ensure that every man has an opportunity of developing freely his faculties as a man; to ensure that every man is fitted, by his intellectual and moral qualities, to govern the city. I still remember how, at our Congress at Toulouse in 1908, he said that the best means of creating the new city was to give the wage-earning proletariat decent conditions of life and full opportunity for mental development at once.

By creating citizens, free and happy citizens — which means citizens whose conscience is free and who can share in all the interests of their country — we believe that we shall be creating new conditions for peace. Peace cannot be firmly established except between democratic nations, in which the masses take part in public life. That is the principle proclaimed in the Treaty of Peace : universal peace “ can be established only if it is based upon social justice ”. That is the ruling idea which is expressed in the motto we chose when the foundation stone of the new building which we are now constructing at Geneva was laid : *Si vis pacem, cole justitiam* : if you wish for peace, cultivate justice. . . .

Speaking to his friends of the French General Confederation of Labour, he said :

. . . Comrades, it is not for me to put forward any suggestion or indication today. I will only express one hope : that, as your magnificent congress shows you do, you may always maintain in its purity and strength that spirit of aspiration and of justice which has always characterised our workers' organisations ; that you may maintain in yourselves and develop in the coming generation those two splendid qualities which Proudhon regarded as the highest guarantees of the liberation of the workers — intelligence and courage. . . .

(Message to the Congress of the General Confederation of Labour, Paris, 1927)

He hoped for the systematic development of workers' educational institutions :

... Taking up the idea put forward by Charles Andler, I ask today that in the French universities, in the faculties which for so long have been closed to one another, institutes of labour should be set up ; not faculties of labour, but institutes in the modern sense as they exist in German universities, making up their courses with the help of the various faculties, and throwing them open to all elements of the nation and in particular to the working classes. This would be a modest beginning, not very different from the people's university. It would, however, be an important step as a means of training technical instructors, skilled workers, who are at present sent to technical schools and who sometimes have not acquired the necessary breadth of outlook and the training in educational method which they need if in future they are to train labour engineers possessing a university diploma. Is this idea practicable ? . . .

(Education, Labour and Peace. Lecture given in the Aula of the University of Geneva, 19 April 1928)

He paid a tribute to what the workers had done in this direction.

... The great merit of your Exhibition is that it is the outcome of a fine effort to promote intellectual and moral emancipation. Yet it is the destiny of those who seek social justice never to be satisfied with the first results obtained. Whatever these results may be, the movement which has given rise to them must be greatly broadened. The workers who contributed to this Exhibition have realised this. Their desire is to realise within themselves the fullness of their humanity ; their hope is, after having been producers enslaved and imprisoned in their trade, to free themselves, to stand above their work, to become men in the fullest and most complete sense of the word.

In order that this may be achieved, everyone is called upon to make a fresh effort. " To become men " — that is just a broad general phrase. The first idea that springs to the mind of any worker who hears it, just as it does to the mind of all those who have at any time engaged in prolonged intellectual meditation, is to ask himself what is meant by a man in the full sense of the word.

(Address at the Labour Exhibition, Montpellier, June, 1927)

He called upon the intellectuals to take part in this work :

. . . The intellectual, more than anyone else, is, it cannot be denied, the disinterested servant of spiritual values. At all times he has set up, in opposition to the realism of the masses, the principle of the life of the mind. A clerk who has not become a traitor, he believes in a life governed by other values than those of the material world.

Yet he does not seek those values solely for their own sake. He does not seek in them a mere selfish intoxication. He desires them to be the beam which sheds light on the apparent contradictions of the world, and which furnishes the criterion of a higher kind of life. Just as the engineer seeks in mathematical science the guiding principles which, tempered by the laws governing matter, will enable him to build the most durable structure, so the intellectual strives to discover the rules best designed to guide thought, in all its serenity, through the maze of this world. If he aims at a life in which the values of the spirit are supreme, it is not because he follows some secret cult. It is because he wants access to such a life to be open to every mind which thirsts not only for illumination and reassurance, but also for the vital strength which the life of the mind offers to those who seek it. . . .

(The Duties of the Intellectual Worker in Modern Society, 11 March 1930)

There now follows a brief passage from a speech the tone of which is sad, and indeed poignant. Paying a tribute to the memory of his friend Arthur Fontaine, the Chairman of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office, who had recently died, and whom Albert Thomas himself was so soon to follow to the grave, he said :

. . . One of the finest things about Arthur Fontaine was that in the midst of the most overwhelming pressure of work, and despite all the distractions of modern life, he never lost that supreme good which is so hard to preserve : the power to reflect. He always carried out his tasks in full consciousness of what he was doing ; he constantly judged himself ; he always strove to measure the significance of his acts and their moral value. He stood above his work ; he carried it out with great sureness because he linked it up with a few great and powerful

yet simple ideas which were his reason for living and which he served to his last breath.

The first was that it is our duty to safeguard the man in the worker ; that he must be enabled, by labour legislation, to uplift himself, to cultivate himself, to be conscious of his destiny, in short, to make himself free in the full sense of the word. This was the constant theme of his and my reflections, of our conversations and of his pronouncements throughout the last thirty years. The emancipation of the workers ! Some would restrict that principle to the emancipation of the worker in his work. Arthur Fontaine emphatically proclaimed : emancipation first and foremost outside his work, as a citizen.

(Speech at the funeral of Arthur Fontaine, Paris, September 1931)

III

The Relation of Economic and Social Questions

IN my Report to the last Session of the Conference I tried, in reply to certain criticisms, to convince the employers of the great industrial countries that the most effective means by which they could protect themselves against the dangers of competition lay in the increasingly complete and regular fulfilment of its functions by the International Labour Organisation. I said that in my view it was an illusion to believe that even in periods of economic depression it would still be politically and morally possible to force a working class which is becoming ever more strongly organised to accept worse conditions of work, longer hours and lower wages. Countries which have advanced labour legislation, I pointed out, have in reality nothing to lose by ratifying Conventions. On the contrary, they have everything to gain, since by ratifying a Convention they acquire the right to insist that other countries which have also ratified it should, equally with themselves, enforce the measures agreed upon by the Conference, and also the power to exert the necessary moral pressure to induce other countries too to ratify. I contrasted the inefficacy of protection by means of tariffs with the efficacy of a simultaneous raising of labour standards. . . .

(Report to the International Labour Conference, 1926)

This passage implicitly states the terms of a discussion in which Albert Thomas was often to take part at the sessions of the International Labour Conference: the relation between economic and social questions. It is hardly necessary to point out that the great successive economic upheavals of the post-war period constantly brought this question to the forefront in an acute form.

Albert Thomas fully recognised that the general economic situation affects the possibility of making progress in international labour legislation.

. . . Believe me, gentlemen, the International Labour Office realises that social justice has no sounder aim than a vigorous industrial production. It knows by experience that there is no possibility of achieving all the necessary measures of social protection and insurance except in periods of prosperity and high output. It knows that it must bear these considerations in mind. That is why it most heartily wishes success and prosperity to your organisation, and greatness to the industrial country to which you belong. It does so in all sincerity, because it knows that world peace is based upon social justice . . .

(Speech at a dinner given by the German Employers' Association, 1928)

At the same time, he could not agree that economic difficulties should be allowed to impede necessary progress in the social sphere.

. . . It is true that, as Director of the International Labour Office, I have no right to close my ears to the demands and protests which reach me from other quarters. It is true that I cannot ignore such documents as the Yugoslav employers' memoranda. It is true that I cannot be indifferent to their arguments — the high interest rates which may be charged on capital invested in undertakings, the differences which may exist between the output of the workers in different countries — though I must admit to a certain scepticism on the latter point. It is true, too, that I must take account of the general economic depression. Yet I should not be worthy to hold my office, and I should be a poor guardian of the Labour Charter incorporated in the Treaty of Peace, if I did not at all times remind you that the purpose of our Organisation and the solemn promise made by the High Contracting Parties in the Treaty was precisely that the health of the worker, his dignity as a human being, and the inexperience of women and children should not be at the mercy of bad conditions in industry, or of the effects of international competition. Whatever modes of application may be needed, whatever compromises may be devised to secure the more satisfactory enforcement of labour

legislation, that thought must always and everywhere be our guide. . . .

(Lecture at the Chamber of Labour, Belgrade, 28 February 1930)

He saw the justification of this attitude of his in the basic reasons for which the Organisation had been set up.

. . . As a preliminary to any discussion, it will be well to restate a principle to which all the States signatories of Part XIII have solemnly subscribed, and which is indeed the reason for the existence of the International Labour Organisation. That principle is that human labour must be placed outside and above the competitive struggle; in short, that labour is not an article of commerce. The intention of the Contracting Powers was to create for labour a sort of inviolable sanctuary where it would be safe from the Furies which, as in the ancient legend, pursue or threaten it in a world ravaged by rivalries and hostilities.

What the Treaty of Peace means is that men, women and children in industry must not be at the mercy of the changes and chances of industrial crises; that human personality is a sacred thing and must not be injured or degraded as a result of commercial struggles. If States were to put forward the needs of their national economy as a pretext for refusing even to attempt to apply the fair and humane conditions of labour prescribed by the Treaty, they would in reality be going counter to the mutual undertaking which is its basis.

It is true that the Treaty says that due regard should be had to "differences of climate, habits and customs, of economic opportunity and industrial tradition". The States agreed that in framing Conventions, delays or modifications should be allowed in some cases. Yet to lay it down as a principle that States could disregard the rules drawn up for the protection of the workers and might seek, by exploiting their own workers, no matter how harshly, to compete successfully against wealthier States whose workers are well treated — that is a conception which, if it were to take an absolute and categorical form, would undermine the whole Organisation.

If I may be permitted a comparison, I would say that when an industrial undertaking is established, there are certain natural necessities with which its founders have to reckon and

to which they must adapt themselves. They cannot change either the thickness or the depth of a seam of coal. They cannot change the geographical characteristics of the site on which they are obliged by force of circumstances to build their factory. The way they adapt themselves to these circumstances is the mark of their ability as industrialists. The innovation which the Peace Treaties made is that henceforward fair labour conditions, established by national law or laid down by international Conventions, are to constitute one of these inevitable conditions, one of the natural necessities with which manufacturers must reckon in the same way.

(Report to the International Labour Conference, 1926)

. . . The Governments took the view that after such sufferings it was inconceivable that the miseries of peace should be allowed to succeed to the miseries of war. They thought it inconceivable that women should continue to do exhausting work in factories, often paid at lower rates than men's. They thought it inconceivable that little children should be sent into factories before they were strong enough to work and before they had had a chance to develop their bodies and minds. They thought it inconceivable that the plague of unemployment should continue to afflict the workers. They thought it inconceivable that a man who had worked for many long years should be abandoned to a helpless and hopeless old age without some assistance from the community in the form of social insurance.

It was because of that conviction that the International Labour Organisation came into existence. Its object is to raise labour standards in a more or less uniform way in all countries, and to secure for the workers a minimum level of well-being and freedom. Its object is to create, in the midst of international competition, a sanctuary in which the workers can take refuge from the Furies which are ever circling round them and pursuing them, because nation is at war with nation on the economic battlefield. . . .

(Lecture in the Theatre of Athens, March 1927)

. . . In the first place there is the opening passage of Article 427. It states that the High Contracting Parties "recognise that differences of climate, habits and customs, of

economic opportunity and industrial tradition, make strict uniformity in the conditions of labour difficult of immediate attainment. But, holding as they do that labour should not be regarded merely as an article of commerce, they think that there are methods and principles for regulating labour conditions which all industrial communities should endeavour to apply". I have often re-read this clause, and it has occurred to me that the High Contracting Parties, and after them the League of Nations, simply by laying down the lines of a general and complete programme under which labour is not regarded as an article of commerce, had, by that very formulation, achieved a genuine social revolution. They did not merely propose this or that isolated reform, but a whole new conception of labour more in harmony with the aspirations of the workers today. Although the problems of ownership and social transformation as they appear in the programmes of the Socialist parties are at no time mentioned or even alluded to in the Treaty of Peace, I cannot help thinking that the statement that labour should not be regarded as an article of commerce in itself provides quite a number of indications for the future. . . .

(Speech to the International University Federation, Geneva, 8 June 1925)

The work of the International Labour Office, he said, cannot be reduced to mere opportunism or governed simply by the chance circumstances of the moment.

. . . Propaganda ? Propaganda about what ? What are the ideas to which we should constantly give the widest possible circulation ? People have often said : " The International Labour Office has no doctrine of its own. If it wants to succeed, it must not identify itself with any specific doctrine." This might be a cause of great embarrassment to us. For if, in order to create great countries, it has been necessary to rise above the conditions of local life and rally men round specific ideas to which they could all adhere, must not we too — we who have not even such tangible advantages as a common language or the common traditions and customs which make for national unity — must not we stand for a clearly defined doctrine ? Must not we affirm a faith in which the whole of mankind can believe ? No doctrine, you say ? But what is Part XIII of the Treaty of Peace if not the doctrine which can unite us all ?

(Lecture at the University of Barcelona, 28 November 1929)

It is surely inconceivable that the reconstruction of a country should be accomplished on the basis of conditions of work which have been condemned and outlawed by the Treaties of Peace. Yet Albert Thomas believed that he could take an even longer view. Social justice is in no way incompatible with economic prosperity ; on the contrary, it should be its foundation and its safeguard.

... In reality there can be no opposition between the interests of the working class in any particular country and the general interest of that country. Any radical improvement in the living conditions of the workers leads in the long run to a rise in the level of the national economy. It is illusory to try to make up for the inadequacies from which the industry of a country suffers by lowering labour standards.

(Report to the International Labour Conference, 1926)

Towards the end of his life, when the problem had again become urgent owing to the fresh economic depression which had set in during the autumn of 1929, Albert Thomas again stated his views on this whole question. He took up the challenge thrown down by the doctrinaire economic theorists who were conducting a campaign against social reform, even at the expense of the living conditions of the workers.

... Voices are raised in denunciation of social reform, maintaining that it shares in the responsibility for the present depression. A few days ago, in the Governing Body of the International Labour Office, we were told : " Caution ! Halt ! So you still want to draw up Conventions, and to secure the general adoption of measures which, in many countries, are a heavy burden on industry. You talk of the general adoption of insurance against old age, invalidity and death. You talk of making general the crushing burden of unemployment insurance. You talk of holidays with pay. These will be new, intolerable burdens on industry. Stop ! It can bear no more."

More than this, there is a widespread idea that the existing burdens are too heavy. High wages, it is said, had a share in causing the depression in certain countries ; and those social institutions which tend to keep up labour standards and in particular to prevent wages from falling simultaneously with wholesale prices are alleged to be the root of the trouble.

All of you here are acquainted with certain recent publications which have made a considerable stir. Oh yes, I know that their author prides himself on his impeccable objectivity and scientific impartiality. In his pride at having discovered a new economic law, he closes his ears to the call of human feeling and does not enquire whether his law will not be used in the current controversies of the day in a way which means individual suffering or social unrest. It would appear, according to Mr. Rueff, that the present unemployment crisis is mainly due to unemployment insurance. It is because unemployment insurance interferes with the play of natural laws and prevents wages from adapting themselves to the movement of prices automatically, easily and with elasticity that unemployment is so terribly prevalent in certain countries.

It seems that Mr. Rueff's ideas have found followers. Other institutions for the defence and protection of the workers are beginning to be condemned too. Read the German newspapers ; they say that wages are prevented from finding their natural level not only by unemployment insurance but also by collective agreements. If the agreements are to be observed, it is necessary to wait for months and perhaps for years before wages can be adapted to new conditions in industry. Collective agreements too counteract the play of natural forces ; so they too would have to be condemned.

Well, ladies and gentlemen, what poor simpletons we have been ! Thirty years ago, when we were beginning our propaganda work, our aim was precisely to maintain and defend the workers' living conditions even in periods of depression. If we supported collective agreements, it was just because individual contracts delivered the worker over to the most pernicious competition, and did not put him in a position to discuss matters with his employer on more or less equal terms. If we defended unemployment insurance, it was to prevent the many unemployed men who were waiting at the factory gate from depressing wage levels in their search for work ; it was to maintain an adequate standard of living for wage-earners and their families. Yet now, learned experts come forward and reveal to us that in doing what we did we were endangering the whole industrial economy by interfering with the play of natural laws, and that we are responsible for the disorder and decadence to which all civilised communities are now a prey.

The Problem of Unemployment

The grave and tragic problem of unemployment, with all the miseries which it entails for the workers and their families, all the burdens which it lays upon States, and all the social dangers which it implies, was a matter of constant concern to Albert Thomas.

... There are happy kinds of leisure, but there are sad ones too; the involuntary leisure of unemployment. It is a splendid sight to see workers who, in their free time, join in the gymnastic exercises of the Sokols or the Workers' Olympic Games. But it is a very sad one when we see the workers, as we do today, haunting the employment exchanges, or in the rooms of their trade union, trying to forget their anxiety in a book or a game of cards, or sometimes perhaps following some new course of technical instruction, diligently no doubt, but always with the gnawing thought of their home which they have no money to keep going. I have never forgotten a speech which Mr. Lloyd George made at the time of the first unemployment crisis in Great Britain. The British statesman asked himself sorrowfully what must be the feelings of an unemployed man who, after having gone round all day long offering his strength and skill in vain, comes back on Christmas Eve to his desolate home.

Even before the war economists and statesmen spoke of the disastrous consequences of unemployment. Pre-war statistics show that the incidence of disease among the working classes rose in the same proportion as unemployment. In Great Britain they have shown that criminality also increased. Is it necessary to mention the political anxiety to which unemployment gives rise when at this very time in that great industrial country across the frontier — I mean Germany — all economists and statesmen agree that the unemployment crisis is at the bottom of certain forms of political agitation, and that the Hitler party includes numbers of young men who ever since they left school have been more familiar with the unemployment relief office than with the pay-room of the factory?

That is an only too familiar state of affairs. Yet never before, perhaps, has unemployment been so general or so intense as it is now ...

(Lecture at the French Institute, Prague, 12 January 1931)

. . . Once again thousands of our fellow-creatures are suffering the material and mental torments of unemployment ; the sudden loss of their livelihood, sometimes foreshadowed by a brief period of work on short time, but depending on mysterious and inevitable causes which are beyond their comprehension. First they wait — and soon wait without hope — to get their jobs back again ; then there are endless journeys from factory to factory and from workshop to workshop, and fruitless visits to the employment exchange ; then they resign themselves to taking unskilled work which spoils their skill for their own trade, but which only a fortunate few are able to obtain. If not, the savings painfully amassed, perhaps over many years, are soon swallowed up ; small insurance policies recently taken out have to be surrendered ; possessions have to be pawned ; the mother of the family has to leave home and do casual work to earn some miserable pittance which will partly make up for the loss of the husband's earnings ; the children have to go to work too soon, and before long they too become competitors on the labour market ; and sometimes, finally, after many privations and under-feeding, comes the ultimate downfall — they have to go on relief, to be dependent on public charity. And all this long decadence, all these falls from circle to circle in the inferno of poverty, are accompanied not only by the destruction of their plans for the future, not only by discouragement and loss of self-confidence, but by inner conflicts, by family quarrels, by moral degradation. . . .

(Report to the International Labour Conference, 1931)

To seek remedies for unemployment must clearly be one of the main tasks of the International Labour Organisation. This is not the place to describe the research work on the subject which the Office carried out under the impulse given by Albert Thomas, or the discussions of the International Labour Conference, which had already embarked on the problem at its First Session at Washington. It is however possible to indicate in broad outline the way in which the first Director of the Office conceived this task.

The first and most urgent step was the provision of unemployment benefit!

. . . Unemployment insurance is an excellent palliative which partially indemnifies the worker for the loss of his livelihood through unemployment ; but it would be still better to

prevent the evil itself. Although the present crisis has shown that insurance institutions properly so called may suffice to provide compensation in normal times, that is to say, when the unemployed are relatively few and unemployment is of short duration, as is the case when it is due simply to the slackness of business in a particular undertaking or a particular industry, it has also shown that they cannot suffice when the depression is general and prolonged. In that case, even if the cost of insurance is borne not only by the workers but also by the employers, the normal subsidies from public funds to unemployment insurance institutions are not sufficient for the payment of adequate compensation for the losses suffered by the unemployed, and extraordinary grants are necessary if the latter are to receive even a partial compensation. . . .

(Report to the International Labour Conference, 1921)

The above passage was written at the time when the post-war boom was ending and the first depression beginning. Ten years later, in the last of his annual Reports, Albert Thomas wrote :

. . . Since unemployment is an unfortunate reality, and since no means of preventing it has yet been devised, the victims must at least receive some compensation in the shape of insurance benefit or unemployment relief in one form or another. It is now universally recognised that the involuntarily unemployed person has a right to a livelihood and that the community cannot simply leave him to his fate.

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. . . Thus, in spite of the aggravation of the depression, the institution of unemployment insurance retains its vigour. If any justification were necessary, it would be found in what is happening in the United States of America. Unemployment in that country has been steadily increasing for the last thirty months; there may be eight or ten million unemployed. Although economic statistics are more highly developed in the United States than anywhere else, the absence of any insurance system means that no accurate figures of employed persons are available. If families are included, there are perhaps twenty million people affected. Unemployment insurance does not exist in the United States except in the rudimentary form of private institutions established in certain undertakings. Nearly

one-fifth of the population in the richest country in the world are reduced to living on the charity of their more fortunate neighbours.

How does that charity function ? Slighting references are sometimes made to the British "dole" ; but has not the United States too its dole system ? That humiliating term can surely be more appropriately applied to the methods at present used by the Americans to maintain the unemployed than to the insurance systems in force in Europe, with their mutual guarantees for the dignity of the unemployed man who receives benefit and proper supervision by the authorities which distribute it. Mr. J. B. Andrews, Secretary of the American Association for Labour Legislation, has estimated that 250 million dollars were distributed in the form of relief to the unemployed in 1930 by public or private charitable organisations. That is a large sum in itself, but how pitifully small when it is related to the number of unemployed ! Even assuming that there were on an average not more than five million unemployed a day, each would only receive fifty dollars a year. Mr. D. H. Goldsmith, who is head of a great charitable institution at Chicago, recently told the Senate that 600 to 800 million dollars would be necessary to provide adequate relief. Compared with what certain European countries which are infinitely less wealthy than the United States are doing, such a sum would still seem far too little and would not be nearly enough to provide for the elementary needs of the unfortunate unemployed. And what an enormous discrepancy there is between action undertaken in a spirit of social solidarity, or even the action proposed by such a philanthropist as Mr. Goldsmith, and the losses actually suffered by the wage-earners, as will be seen if it is remembered that the loss of earnings as compared with 1929 is estimated at 11,000 million dollars in a single year.

Relief is not only quite inadequate in amount, but it is badly distributed for lack of an organisation which makes plans in advance. The consequence is that in wealthy America scenes of distress are to be witnessed such as are not to be found in the far poorer countries of Europe, at any rate in those which have an effective system of unemployment insurance. There are the "bread lines" in which unfortunate unemployed people queue up for a meagre pittance. Large numbers of unemployed may be seen selling apples or matches in the street. Side by

side with such disguised mendicancy, numberless unfortunates are reduced to begging the passer-by for the price of a meal. Around the great cities, a whole population of the homeless live in the "jungle" on vacant building land. It is such conditions as these that the International Labour Organisation has undertaken to abolish through the development of unemployment insurance until such time as the causes of unemployment itself have been removed.

It must not be forgotten that unemployment also causes much indirect suffering. Such a universally recognised authority as Miss Jane Addams, in an article on the social consequences of the depression, draws attention to the spread of tuberculosis — the principal disease of poverty — the reduction of the daily consumption of milk by nearly one-third in certain towns, the mental depression observed among the poorer children in schools, the growth of criminality, and in particular of minor offences against property. Mr. William Green, President of the American Federation of Labor, also speaks of the millions of men and women who are suffering from the depression; the children who are slowly starving because "they do not receive the minimum requirements for physical subsistence"; he states that "private relief funds are entirely inadequate", and asks for generous appropriations from municipal, State and national Government funds to assist "self-respecting American citizens who have exhausted their savings, mortgaged their homes, cashed in their insurance and cannot borrow from the banks". In view of such a situation, it is difficult not to feel some surprise that the great labour organisation of the United States should still cling to its apprehensions in regard to unemployment insurance. How can they fail, in their fear of seeming to resign themselves to unemployment, to see that unemployment insurance enables the workers to go on living in decent conditions even during periods when society cannot provide them with employment?

(Report to the International Labour Conference, 1932)

This passage is an indirect demonstration of the need for unemployment insurance.

Albert Thomas was particularly glad that the action of the International Labour Organisation should have been decisive in promoting the general adoption of this system, whether in a

compulsory or a voluntary form, with the result that the number of workers safeguarded against the effects of economic depressions was increased tenfold as compared with the pre-war period. He regarded the spread of unemployment insurance — and indeed of social insurance in general — as the most conspicuous feature of social progress in the post-war years. He constantly defended unemployment insurance against its detractors, and his speeches contain an abundance of material on this particular point. Among the statements which he made to the International Congress of the Association for Social Progress, the following passage, which deals with the experience of the first post-war depression, may be quoted :

... In the report of the enquiry carried out by a committee consisting of business men, statisticians and economists, and published under the title : *The Third Winter of Unemployment*, it is stated that " the worst effects of unemployment in the way of privation and physical deterioration have been prevented ", and that " the demoralisation that, according to pre-war theories, would have been expected to result from the provision of maintenance without work has not yet shown itself ".

The enquiry shows that the health of the workers has not suffered. The Medical Officer of Health for Birmingham states that " the health of the city is better than it has ever been before, although Birmingham is one of the areas worst affected by unemployment ". The reason which he gives is " that the ill-paid, irregularly employed workers who were the first to feel the effects of trade depression before the war have gained relatively most from the provision made for unemployment relief, which has ensured at least a regular supply of food ".

There is also the question whether unemployment relief has a demoralising effect. What is demoralising in unemployment, the authors of the report conclude, is " enforced idleness, the loss of occupation and the denial of the opportunity of useful work. Maintenance without employment may be demoralising, but unemployment without maintenance is much more certain in its demoralising effect ".

It is hardly necessary for me to remind experts such as you of the very important and interesting investigations which were carried out after the Washington Unemployment Conference in September 1921 by the committee set up to consider

methods of economic stabilisation and of minimising the effects of trade fluctuations : systematic centralisation of economic information, stabilisation of industrial activity by a well-conceived policy of distributing orders, by alternating different manufactures, by building up stocks, by production programmes, by making use of building work and railway construction, by the cancellation of contracts, and by financial measures intended to ensure the rational utilisation of credits. New and old measures of all kinds were examined and criticised in this enquiry. The fundamental idea, however, was clearly expressed by Mr. Wesley C. Mitchell, director of the enquiry, who said that during the year, millions of people had been unemployed although they wanted to work ; undertakings and machinery worth hundreds of millions of dollars had remained idle although the manufacturers were eagerly desirous of setting them going again, and the consumer needed the goods which the industrialist was anxious to produce. The ban which prevented them from doing what they wanted to do was dictated by the economics of money. " We are ", he said, " periodically conquered by this social mechanism which we have created and we are kept idle and needy at its behest. For, powerful as they are, money economics have one capital defect : they distort the aim of economic activity. As human beings, what we want to make is goods which can be used ; what we are compelled, as citizens subject to money economy, to make is money ". " So when, for any reason ", he concludes, " it is not profitable to make goods, we are forced to subordinate our will as human beings to our will as money-makers ". That is the essence of the paradox. . . .

Even regarded from the point of view of the charges which it imposes on the national economy, unemployment insurance proves to be not so much a means of increasing the burden as a means of distributing it better. It rationalises unemployment relief, which would otherwise continue to be in a state of anarchy and disorder.

. . . On the whole, however heavy the sacrifices and however serious the consequences of certain ill-conceived methods of application, both sacrifices and defects must be weighed in the balance against the undeniable advantages of the general system comprised under the name of insurance. The advantages

to the workers, to the employers and to the community are becoming increasingly evident.

For the workers it has meant, even in one of the most critical periods of history, the avoidance, or at least the alleviation, of distress. The official Committee on Industry and Trade in Great Britain, of which Sir Arthur Balfour was Chairman, said in 1929 : " Throughout the last few years it has been a matter of constant comment that so deep and prolonged a trade depression has produced so little actual suffering in comparison with far slighter and more transient periods of depression before the war. There has been practically no decline in the consumption of the essential necessities of life, in spite of the fact that a million or more workers have been earning no wages at their trades. For this happy result, a large part of the responsibility undoubtedly rests with the unemployment insurance scheme."

For the employers the advantages are no less clear, as the same British Committee on Industry and Trade recognised. It considered that there was nothing more harmful to the skill and morale of the workers than a lack of adequate means of subsistence combined with prolonged inactivity. By sparing the unemployed the evils of want and helping them to wait until work is again available, unemployment insurance enables industrial employers to retain their staff and to re-engage them when times improve. One proof of the advantages which unemployment insurance affords to employers is that in Great Britain certain undertakings have organised special systems to supplement the official insurance benefits by additional allowances.

Finally, it is almost unnecessary to emphasise how much unemployment insurance contributes to the good of the community as a whole. There can be no doubt that it has been the foundation of the political and social stability of the great industrial countries during the last ten years. If it had not existed, the miseries of unemployment would have found expression not merely in unexpected electoral results or in emotional and perhaps even violent manifestations ; there would have been social disturbances which would have delayed recovery and reconstruction.

From the economic point of view unemployment has done much to preserve the purchasing power of the wage-earners and

their families, and has thus prevented the depression from battenning on itself. It has also prevented catastrophic wage reductions, not so much those conceived and accepted as a means to economic readjustment, but those which would have resulted from a deplorable competition among unemployed persons not in receipt of relief. It has represented a sort of collective credit granted by the community to the workers in the expectation of improved efficiency in the future and as a means of expediting recovery. . . .

(Report to the International Labour Conference, 1931)

. . . Unemployment insurance, whatever budgetary and economic repercussions it may sometimes have had, has been a necessary condition for the stability of the great industrial communities of Great Britain, Germany and other countries during the last ten years. The men of 1848 demanded the right to work and the right to live. Perhaps we have not realised that in modern society it is the "right to live" of 1848 which has been recognised and established in practice. . . .

(Lecture at the *Ecole de la Paix*, Paris, 21 January 1932)

. . . So long as social legislation continues to exist there is the possibility of rapid recovery within the existing order and in accordance with established tradition. It is not without importance that, as a result of unemployment insurance, nominal wages have not suffered as severely as in previous depressions. The fact that social legislation has in this way been maintained and even developed further perhaps entitles us to say that here again the International Labour Organisation has achieved something in the twelve years of its existence. It is the Organisation which implanted this social legislation in the life of the nations; until then its existence was still precarious and liable to suffer from political and economic vicissitudes. It is the Organisation which has given it a vitality sufficient to survive even a fearful crisis such as that which we are now experiencing. . . .

(Speech at the International Labour Conference, 1932)

Another direct means of alleviating unemployment is the organisation of means for placing workers in employment. This had already been pointed out at the Washington Conference. Such measures were needed not only in the national sphere, but also on an international scale.

... But placing work should also be systematically extended in the international sphere. There are still many barriers, even between neighbouring countries of similar industrial complexion, preventing exchanges of apprentices, workers, and even technicians. It is natural that the suffering caused by unemployment should create resistance against any ready and regular exchange of workers. Yet general apprehensions of this kind should surely not blind people to the advantages of all kinds, both individual and social, which accrue from such exchanges. Surely it is the duty of the International Labour Organisation to work untiringly for the international placing of workers, particularly in Europe. . . .

It is recognised that a better distribution of workers in the various industries will not in itself suffice to remove the manifold forms of economic disequilibrium which lie at the root of unemployment. Yet the problem of national and international placing of workers is none the less of first-rate importance for the future of industry. . . .

(Report to the International Labour Conference, 1931)

From these considerations arose the idea of a "European employment exchange".

... This idea may be thought utopian at the present time. Most countries, it is said, so far from welcoming workers from abroad, are rather seeking to send away those foreign workers whom they already have. Nevertheless, it is certain that demand and supply in the placing of workers are not yet entirely co-ordinated, either nationally or internationally. At Vienna it was said that national placing systems should be co-ordinated. In spite of all our efforts in the last ten years, we have not yet succeeded in this. In Europe it is perhaps possible to achieve co-ordination of this kind, and I for my part can see great advantages in it, both nationally and internationally, even aside from the problem of unemployment. There cannot be a Europe in the true sense until some scheme for permitting the free movement of workers - - I mean a regulated and ordered movement - - has been established in the old world.

(Lecture at Zagreb, 27 April 1931)

Large-Scale Public Works

In the same speech, Albert Thomas linked the question of public works with that of the international placing of workers.

... There is another idea, still more far-reaching, which arises out of the experience of recent years : that of a public works policy. It has been recognised that it would be a good plan to hold over public works contracts as far as possible during boom periods, and to pursue an active public works policy in periods of economic depression. This would provide employment for the workers, and give work to such industries as can be revived and set going again by means of public works contracts given at such times. One serious objection has been raised : that of credit. States such as Germany would be only too glad to carry out more public works, but credits are refused them. Surely the distribution of credits is one of the most urgent problems of the day. . . .

The idea was not a new one ; Albert Thomas had said ten years earlier :

... In most countries the remedy most generally applied, apart from the simple but ruinously expensive palliative of distributing relief, and the one which is most frequently demanded by the trade unions, is that the public authorities should systematically organise works of public utility on a large scale. . . .

(Report to the International Labour Conference, 1921)

He took up this idea again in a greatly broadened form in connection with Aristide Briand's scheme for European union. In his view it would be at the same time an effective remedy for unemployment, a " starting-handle " to set economic activity going, and a means of promoting practical solidarity among the nations of Europe.

... To create employment — for months past that has been our obsession. That is the aim which we are ardently seeking to attain. For approximately two years there have been over twenty million unemployed in the world. In spite

of seasonal fluctuations, the number has up to the present tended to increase, and thus it is reckoned that among working-class families there are more than seventy million human beings suffering hardship and privation. True, unemployment relief represents a far from negligible alleviation. True, even in periods of depression efficient placing services and a satisfactory organisation of emigration can play their part. Yet what the great masses of the workers are demanding is work.

Work, however, depends on economic activity. Must we wait, then, until, as some put it, prosperity returns of itself, automatically, by the action of natural laws? Must we wait in patience, even though a part of mankind should die of hunger, until the sun once more comes up over the horizon and a new harvest ripens to give life to those who remain?

No, we can do more than that. A large-scale policy of public works in time of depression has not only the advantage of giving work at once to a certain number of the unemployed; it may indirectly help to revive other industries and provide employment for the workers who produce the necessary materials and equipment. The British economist Maynard Keynes has clearly shown that such a policy is not a mere palliative, but can be a remedy for depressions. Schemes for large-scale public works, by causing a certain rise in prices and by stimulating those industries which supply their material, stimulate economic activity as a whole. They also cause a psychological reaction which has a far from negligible effect on the fluctuations of economic life. In earlier depressions, the resumption of building was considered to be a sign of general recovery. There is a French proverbial saying: "When building goes well, everything goes well". Perhaps large-scale public works could represent such an automatic "starting-handle" in present-day economic depressions.

The number of workers for whom employment is provided must, however, be large if a policy of public works is to give a sense of general alleviation of the depression, make an effective contribution to social stability, and act as a stimulant for the return of prosperity. Otherwise it will not do what is expected of it, namely, to start industry going, and, what is more important, create the healthier atmosphere, the upsurge of optimism, the forward movement in men's minds, which in my view are undoubtedly the principal benefit of such a policy. In his

remarkable pamphlet on the constitution of a Federation of Europe, which was published in 1815 and which I have so often quoted, that man of genius Saint-Simon spoke of a public works policy to be undertaken by the Parliament of Europe ; and he said that the main advantage of such works would be " to lift the Federation of Europe above itself ". By this he meant that it would give all the nations which constituted the Federation a splendid opportunity to rise above current political controversies and every-day routine, and work in unanimous co-operation at a noble task. . . .

Has Europe today, he asked, all the communications which it needs ? Would not public works on a very large scale be needed to equip it fully ?

. . . People have spoken today about long-term questions : tariffs, agreements, European organisations. I am, like you, convinced that constructive work on these ideas is necessary. What I am most concerned with, though, is what can be done at once. As Mr. Loucheur finished his speech just now, I felt my indignation subside and my fundamental optimism revive. He proposed that *something* should be done at once, at least in the financial sphere. Something to be done at once -- that is what we want in all spheres ! A few days ago Mr. Franqui put forward the idea of an international bank for medium and long-term credits. I began at once to try to gather support for that idea. It contains a possible means of mobilising capital now lying idle. It would be a way of giving European economic life a new start. That is enough for me. In all former depressions there has been some point at which recovery has started. When things had become very bad indeed, when prices had fallen to rock bottom, suddenly, one day, recovery began. Generally it began in the building industry. This acted as an automatic " starting-handle ".

Mr. Theunis, speaking at the International Chamber of Commerce at Washington, recently took up this theme. " A time will come ", he said, " when quite suddenly, in the psychological sphere, things will begin to move." Can we make that time come more quickly ? Could not something be done in the financial sphere which would restore confidence ? Could we not start things moving ? Perhaps it might be a false start,

you may say. But for heaven's sake let us make up our minds. Let us try something. I will not describe everything that I have in mind in this connection. I have followed the development of the unemployment crisis very carefully. I have tried to launch an idea which had a very chilly reception in the Governing Body of the International Labour Office : the idea of international public works — an international electrical system, a European railway network and so on. All that, I was told, is mere moonshine. I replied : " Let the idea ripen. Encourage research ; support any new action taken." Mr. Lambert-Ribot recommended that public works should be considered country by country. There are objections to that method, and I have myself pointed them out. But no matter. If there is any possibility of getting something done — once again, let us do it. At that time I sent telegrams to all European Governments asking them what public works were then in contemplation in their countries. Twenty Governments out of thirty replied, some with a brief outline, others with fully worked-out schemes. The Turkish Government sent a magnificent scheme for roads, railways and canals, stating the number of days' work which the scheme would involve.

(Speech on European Union at the *Comité national d'études*, Paris, 8 July 1931)

These proposals, which he also believed would make an effective contribution to the organisation of peace, occupied his mind right up to the end of his life.

. . . Oh yes, when I spoke of a European railway system, the International Railway Union was taken by surprise and hesitated, and asked that the matter should be laid before it by some Government. When I spoke of an international electrical system of 400,000 volts, technicians told me that no one had yet found out how to transmit 400,000 volts. When I spoke of a road network, they said that the proposed motor roads were just " luxury work ", and that to construct great highways from Paris to Constantinople would need agreements between States which would be very difficult to obtain.

Yet I do not believe that we must abandon our schemes. I believe they have too much intrinsic merit and are too pregnant with the future of Europe to be given up. . . .

(Lecture at the *Ecole de la Paix*, Paris, 21 January 1932)

... I said in my Report last year that a policy of public works, practised systematically and with courage, is not a mere palliative, and that the full importance of such action has not been realised. It can become a reliable method of bringing about a controlled economic system. . . . "Moreover, as the world becomes more united and more confident it may offer a magnificent opportunity for international co-operation and a safeguard for peace." The present trend of thought and action in relation to public works confirms this view.

But that is not all. After the experience of the past year I still believe that a bold and systematic public works policy such as is now taking shape might be the "starting-handle" for renewed prosperity.

The difficulties of international life have grown to huge proportions. Economic, financial, currency and political problems act and react upon one another. The risk involved in the choice of any one solution seems enormous. Parliaments and Governments hesitate to act. Negotiations which need to be completed by a fixed date are often postponed until the last moment, and sometimes the fixed dates themselves have to be put back. Surely, at a time when a sort of universal moratorium hangs over world economic life — and world political life too — the public works policy originally rendered imperative by the unemployment crisis would have the advantage of immediately rendering international co-operation equally imperative. It must be admitted that at such a time as the present we may have to content ourselves at first with a very reserved and very limited degree of confidence between States. No matter. Work in common for the common good will break the spell of universal mistrust. . . .

(Report to the International Labour Conference, 1932)

The Question of Wages

To organise unemployment relief and to create opportunities for employment has in itself the effect of keeping up the level of the workers' consumption. Albert Thomas had long been struck by the part played by under-consumption in economic depressions. When the first post-war depression was beginning he said:

... Today, owing to the crisis of under-consumption, the evil has become still more acute. It is becoming a serious problem in the greatest industrial States such as Great Britain and the United States. It is important to note what the Washington and Genoa decisions have accomplished and to see how far they can be developed. . . .

(Report to the International Labour Conference, 1921)

As has already been shown, he strongly opposed those who claimed that a means of remedying economic difficulties could be found in depressing the living conditions of the workers.

... I could never accept the view that the industrial prosperity of an exporting country can be based only on a lowering of the standard of living of the masses of its working population. Although it may be true that labour costs form too high a proportion of the cost of certain goods in Britain, it is surely an undue simplification and a piece of lazy-mindedness to believe that the only way to reduce the cost of production is by lowering wage rates. Surely it is a sounder method not to touch wage rates, or indeed even to raise them ; but to decrease labour costs by scientific management designed to make production both cheaper and more abundant, so that it can find new markets and thus in the end give employment to more people. British industry has definitely chosen to follow this course in preference to the dangerous idea of abolishing so magnificent an institution and one so well calculated to promote order and social progress as unemployment insurance.

(*Anales de la Caja de Previsión Social del Reino de Valencia*, 1928)

Addressing the Conference in 1931, he formulated the problem in the following passage, which stresses the need for new and closer research.

On these questions of wages and of shortening the working day, what practical suggestions for action can I make ? Here they are.

On the question of wages, it must be confessed that during the last ten years our Organisation has accomplished very little. In these ten years the problem has not been dealt with as broadly or as courageously as it should. We have collected statistics.

They have been criticised. Mr. Vogel and the other German employers have not minced their words. Yet the technical experts encourage us to go on. The last Conference of Labour Statisticians said how useful and valuable this work was. But statistics are not enough ; what is needed is to define a possible wages policy for the Organisation. In other words, what is the practical significance of the definition given in the Treaty of Peace — an adequate living wage. In this connection a number of conceptions need defining ; it is also necessary to discover what methods the Organisation can devise so that the lowest wages — wages which I do not hesitate to denounce upon occasion as scandalous — can be altered and brought nearer to the highest wages. There is a Wages Committee, and a Statistical Committee which has actually studied the results of the Ford enquiry. All members of the Governing Body would no doubt agree that this is what they meant by studying the wages question. A really vigorous effort must be made on this point and we must try to get a clear view. . . .

He thought that there was in fact " at any rate a presumption against the theory of wage reductions ".

. . . We are faced with two main tendencies. Some people are in favour of the workers' demands and say, with the Americans, " High wages are the foundation of industrial prosperity ". Others maintain that there is only one way of alleviating the depression : to lower wages so as to reduce costs of production and consequently increase consumption — developments which would benefit the workers too. I have already said that I cannot at the present time conceive by what initial mechanism the wage-earners of a low-wage country can be brought to a higher standard of living, with the result that production will recover. Much to my regret I am still in doubt about this. Further reflection is necessary. I do not know whether " American high wages " were really high ; but in any case it has not been proved that high wages have been the cause of the depression in any given country. I also have the gravest doubts about the idea that wage reductions could provide a cure. The theory put forward on this subject might at most be valid for industries working for export. If, however, wages are reduced in any given country, they will be reduced in the

neighbouring countries too. Besides, if it cannot be said with certainty that high wages are the cause of the depression, I believe very strongly that on the contrary, wage reductions will still further diminish consumption. The reason why unemployment relief has been granted in many countries is that it is desired to keep up the consuming power of the working classes and thus to prevent the depression from battenning on itself. It therefore seems to me that there is at any rate a presumption against the theory of wage reductions. My conclusion is that in these circumstances, though we cannot claim to produce a scientific solution for this grave problem . . .

He reverted to this theme in his speech at the Conference in 1932, which was his last confession of faith and in some sort his social testament.

. . . There remains the question of wages ; I only refer to it for the sake of completeness. On this subject there are points of view which, if not actually contradictory, are at any rate different. I often look for guidance to the ideas of Arthur Fontaine, and I should like to understand and follow precisely his line of thought when in his country, which is also mine, he was pressing for the adoption of some piece of social legislation, the reduction of hours of work for example. He always emphasised that wage questions must be kept quite distinct from questions of legislation. How much the more must we who are dealing with international questions be prudent in this respect, even though people's ideas have evolved and certain problems are now regarded in a new light. I would add that, as I pointed out in my Report, the wages question cannot be approached with a view to international legislation at a time like the present when the real value of wages is affected by all the economic difficulties from which the world is suffering.

I quite realise that what I have said on this point is poor and inadequate enough, but I put it forward in all sincerity, and I have tried to show how important it is from the moral and social, if not always from the practical point of view, to widen the scope of our efforts ; and my conclusion is that here again I see no symptom of a crisis.

It is only too true that international work is sometimes very discouraging. One sometimes grows weary of ~~seeing~~ ~~seeing~~ so

little. Yet I cannot help thinking of the remark which a French Member of Parliament once made to me when he met me in the Chamber on my arrival as a new member. "You know", he said, "quite good work sometimes gets done in Parliament, as you will see ; but we have an odd way of setting about it. It is the kind of work in which you have to stoke up a locomotive to pull along a pin." How much more truly could I apply that comparison to international life, with its immense complications !

I am sure you will agree that it needs a deeply engrained faith to pursue such work as we are now doing untiringly and with the conviction of success. Yet if it is true that neither in the sphere of ratifications, nor in that of international labour legislation, nor in the effort to combat unemployment, need we fear a crisis in the Organisation, what is the source of that note of lassitude, uneasiness and apprehension which sounds in some of the speeches which we have heard ? Why is it that today, in spite of everything, something resembling an atmosphere of crisis hangs over this Conference ? It is simply because the life of our Organisation cannot stand apart from the life of the world as a whole, and because the world-wide economic depression weighs upon our spirits. That is the tragic situation which we all feel.

Yes, we have done our part, all of it ; but now, in whatever direction we turn — whether to take immediate steps to reduce hours of work, or to deal with wages, or emigration, or indeed labour legislation as a whole — everywhere we find our way barred, we find ourselves hindered and inhibited by the depression. It is the depression which dominates us, the depression which crushes us, the depression which seems to render all our work vain. This sense that our work is held up, hamstrung and paralysed is the cause of the spirit of disquiet which hangs over us.

It was Mr. O'Rahilly, I thought, who expressed the fundamental feeling of the Conference when he said the other day : "What is the use of protecting the children when the fathers are out of work ? What is the use of protecting the dockers when the ships are laid up and the ports deserted ?" He might have added : "What is the use of invalidity and old-age insurance when there is no money to finance the funds ?" We might go through every aspect of our work in the same way and say every time : "What is the use ? What is the use ?"

Ah yes, the time has gone by when economic life was more or less stable and seemed to develop regularly in spite of cyclical depressions ; when we could hope to go forward boldly with a social policy which aimed at ever greater justice and a periodical redistribution of the resources of an expanding production.

The depression, the atmosphere to which the depression gives rise, the thought that now it might be necessary to restrict social reform and to keep protective legislation down to the limits set by economic possibilities — a suggestion which some of the employers' representatives have made to us — all these are things of which I am fully aware. That is a point which I have always stressed. I have always noted that, according to the Governments' own statement, it has been economic conditions which have prevented them from ratifying Conventions. Always, economic and social considerations are intermingled. Always it has been necessary, in arriving at the compromise solutions which the Conventions represent, to take account of the economic possibilities. But as to concluding from this that social considerations must always bow at once to economic exigencies which may or may not be accurately known and established — that is a theory which I have constantly considered it my duty to fight against both in this Conference and outside it. . . .

(Speech at the International Labour Conference, 1932)

The Forty-Hour Week

He was deeply concerned with yet one more problem in which economic and social considerations were closely associated, and this problem too arose out of the economic depression.

The Eight-Hour Day Convention was still awaiting ratification by the majority of the Member States, and yet the unprecedented growth of unemployment brought up the question of a still greater reduction of the working day. Albert Thomas did not, however, consider that this was a reason for giving up the attempt to secure the ratification of the Washington Convention.

. . . After all, do not your own interests coincide with the interests of the working class as a whole on this point ? I quite understand that some of you think that the eight-hour day is

now out of date. I have read all the Resolutions in favour of the forty-hour week, the six-hour day and so on which appear on your agenda. Neither have I forgotten that at Stockholm the International Federation of Trade Unions demanded a forty-four-hour week. Far be it from me to wish to blame or repress the aspirations of the workers ! Yet, supposing that in the near future the British workers secure a further reduction of the working day, will not the gain be precarious and indeed almost illusory so long as the workers of other countries are still working more than forty-eight hours a week ? In order to avoid setbacks and to safeguard the security of British industry itself, I appeal to you to help us to get the eight-hour day applied everywhere. Far from preventing further progress, you will be facilitating it. Jaurès once said : " A nation which means to march forward rapidly towards social justice must take care not to isolate itself from the rest of mankind." That is an obvious truth today. . . .

(Speech at the British Trades Union Congress, Nottingham, 3 September 1930)

He nevertheless realised how insistent the trade union organisations were in putting forward this new demand.

. . . At the present time a long-standing and tenaciously pursued demand is again being put forward by the workers. At the International Trade Union Congress at Stockholm it was demanded that the forty-eight hour week should be reduced to forty-four or forty as a remedy for unemployment. At the recent Trades Union Congress at Nottingham, the same demand was formulated by British trade unionists. A few weeks ago, in the A.D.G.B., the great German Confederation of Labour, a similar resolution was presented with the backing of the Socialist Party. Because those workers who are in employment are receiving their full wage, and sometimes even working overtime — for overtime is still practised — whereas other workers are out of work, the idea has arisen quite naturally that the available employment should be diluted, so to speak — divided between a larger number of workers by a shortening of the working day.

What should be our attitude towards such a demand ? There is one problem which must not be forgotten. At the very time when this reduction of the working day is demanded, the

employers, on account of the economic and financial situation, are looking for ways of reducing costs of production. If the wages paid for the shorter working day are the same as those now paid for the existing full day, there is a danger that costs of production will increase. Will the workers consent to wage reductions, even if not proportionate to the reduction of hours, at the time when they are demanding a shorter working day? That is one of the grave problems with which the International Labour Organisation will be faced before long. A reduction of working hours tends in the direction which we favour; it means a possibility of more leisure in good times, in periods of prosperity. But can it be established in a time of depression? And if so, how? That is the great problem which the International Labour Organisation and the Member States will have to solve. Possibly the decision may be dictated by political and moral considerations. In Prussia a few days ago I was talking with members of the Government about a problem of this kind. Although they had no illusions about the reduction of unemployment through the shortening of working hours, they thought it was better to give employment to a larger number of workers rather than to have to pay them unemployment benefit. . . .

(Lecture at Prague, 1931)

For a year past the appeals of the workers' organisations have made themselves heard. All the trade union congresses which have met have demanded the forty-hour week, instinctively, in the hope of reducing the strain on the worker and thus allowing a new civilisation to come into being. There are a certain number of manufacturers who share this view and consider that the forty-hour week might be the standard for industry at the present time. I have been much struck to see such ideas expressed in articles, sometimes unsigned ones, in a number of different journals. I could not let them pass unnoticed. I wrote to ask who had written them, and I found that it might be sometimes a manufacturer of heavy lorries, sometimes a Lyons silk merchant. Encouraged by this, I made the rounds of industry and I found that for once (of course one swallow does not make a summer) Renault and Citroën were agreed upon a question of this kind. . . .

(Lecture at the *Ecole de la Paix*, Paris, 21 January 1932)

He saw the time rapidly approaching when this question would be brought officially before the International Labour Organisation.

... I have said that one of the urgent tasks which fall within our competence was the reduction of hours of work during the depression and later when normal times return. Last year there was still some hesitation about the formula to be adopted : should it be forty-four or forty hours ? This year almost everyone is unanimous in speaking of the forty-hour week. The Governing Body and its Unemployment Committee, making all the necessary reservations and speaking only of the research side, have said that there is a possibility of investigating the reduction of the working week to forty hours in certain industries. When will you place this question on the agenda of the Conference ? That is another question. What is needed in the present state of affairs is that people's minds should be familiarised with solutions of this kind, and that they should be thought of as possible and effective remedies for the depression. What is so noteworthy at the present time is that economists, statesmen, even industrialists, should be moving towards this idea of a forty-hour week. As the resolution of the Governing Body said, the forty-hour week can be regarded as the formula best calculated in present circumstances to reconcile the interests of the individual worker in employment, who must be assured of an adequate livelihood, with the satisfactory working of undertakings and the employment of the greatest possible number of workers. . . .

(Speech at the International Labour Conference, 1932)

That time came, and very quickly, as he had foreseen. Death, which overlooked him a few days after he had said these words, can have left him no time to reflect on his action and the point at which he was leaving it. Terrible as death always is, it was merciful to him because it spared him the thought that he was leaving the world at a time when so many new problems were arising, when there was so much to be done, and when the future developments which he foresaw were already on the way.

Nevertheless his work lives after him. In the task which his successors are continuing, his thought remains their inspiration, and his example can never be forgotten.

IV

Economic Reorganisation

PROBLEMS of workers' protection pure and simple are increasingly seen to be bound up with political and moral problems which the International Labour Organisation cannot overlook : technical problems and problems of labour psychology. At a time when it is calling for the co-operation of the workers themselves to help it to bring its work to success and establish the new international regulations in their full force, the Office cannot fail to be struck by the tragic dilemma in which they are placed by the development of modern industry and democracy. On the one hand, precisely because after his eight hours' work he has more spare time, the worker feels called upon, and more and more desires, to take part in every aspect of the life of the community. He feels the need to develop all his physical, mental and moral faculties. It is a moving sight to see all the modest, persevering and sometimes already successful efforts made in this direction by individuals and groups in all countries. A better and more worthy life — in short, a truly human life — such is the aspiration which lifts up all hearts. Yet modern conditions, the more intensive methods of production and some of the implications of Taylorism threaten to some extent to repress and deform the intelligence of the workers. Such wide-ranging considerations may seem to exceed the scope of our daily task. In fact, they dominate it. The earliest measures of labour protection, the laws for the protection of women and children of a century ago, may have been the result of a few outbursts of public feeling. But international labour legislation, with its political obligations between States and its important consequences for international peace, can only be carried out by enlightened and organised effort.

(Report to the International Labour Conference, 1928)

All the complexity of the task which the International Labour Organisation is pursuing is summed up in these few lines.

To sum up the essential character of Albert Thomas' thought, it might be said that, while it naturally proceeded from a determination to promote social progress in spite of all the constantly recurring difficulties, it was equally conditioned by his conviction that there is no such thing as unavoidable economic necessity.

... It was the President of the United States himself who made the following striking statement to the Association of American Bankers on 2 October 1930 :

“ The economic fatalist believes that these crises are inevitable and bound to be recurrent. I would remind these pessimists that exactly the same thing was once said of typhoid, cholera and smallpox. If medical science had sat down in a spirit of weak-kneed resignation and accepted these scourges as uncontrollable visitations of Providence, we should still have them with us. This is not the spirit of modern science. Science girds itself with painstaking research to find the nature and origin of disease and to devise methods for its prevention. That should be our attitude towards these economic pestilences. They are not dispensations of Providence. I am confident in the faith that their control, so far as the causes lie within our own boundaries, is within the genius of modern business.”

The religious conscience too has taken a stand against the idea that unemployment is inevitable. The Anglican, Orthodox and Reformed Churches, at the Stockholm Conference in 1925, declared that the evils of unemployment are intolerable to the moral sense, that its causes must be found out and eliminated, that the Church is deeply concerned in the investigations which are being made with a view to removing this evil, and that it is its duty to emphasise its importance to all Christian peoples, since the problem is not insoluble.

(Report to the International Labour Conference, 1931)

He attributed a capital role to the International Labour Organisation in this connection.

... As I listened to you, I thought that our task is not so much to act as conciliators and arbitrators, but rather as constructors. There is a great work to be done in the world : it

is not merely to try to preserve an insecure peace ; it is a work of construction, of restoration, of the uplifting of mankind — in short, a civilising task.

(Speech at Cettinje, 3 May 1931)

Albert Thomas used sometimes to say that he was no economist. In that remark there was a tinge of irony. What he really meant was that he was not a doctrinaire economist. As a matter of fact, his previous training had fitted him to deal with economic problems. He fully realised the complexities of practical life ; he could grasp the rapid transformations of the economic situation, and sum them up in a vivid picture.

... In thirty years mankind has completed the revolution inaugurated by the invention of the steam engine and the railway ; it is achieving the conquest of space and has, so to speak, almost acquired ubiquity. A car can go to Orleans or Blois today in no more time than the rattling old cab took to carry me from my school to my home in the village of Champigny when I was sent away because of a measles epidemic. Pekin is as near Paris today as Limoges was fifty years ago.

Round about 1890 we used to run as hard as we could to catch a glimpse of one of those panting, rattling early motor cars which you always felt ought to have a horse although it was supposed not to need one. Nowadays I do not know that you would so much as spare a glance for a forty-horse-power car, or that you even notice the stream of cars that pass along the street — they are just an insignificant fraction of the twenty-five million cars which are today carrying humanity along in a perpetual rush.

But that is not all. Man has conquered gravity. He has taken to the air. I had already left this school a long time when Blériot flew the Channel. Twenty-two years, from 1816 to 1838, elapsed between the first crossing of the Channel and the first crossing of the Atlantic by a steamship ; in eighteen years the great man-made birds learned to make their marvellous flight not only over the narrow Channel, but over the broad ocean. Once again the Atlantic has, as it were, shrunk, and so the face of the earth has been changed.

There have been yet more miracles. About 1896 it was discovered that “ Hertzian waves ” could be transmitted over

long distances ; today there is not a corner of the globe in which a man need feel alone. On the wide spaces of the sea, far away in the desert, among the clouds, by day or by night, man is linked to his fellows by wireless.

New arts are being born ; they are still groping their way and discovering their own laws, but they are already enriching and transforming the other arts. It was appropriate that this age of incessant movement should be the first to discover the arts of movement ; owing to the wonderful invention of the cinematograph, men no longer need to search for means of meeting and communicating with one another through the multitudinous languages which divide them as they did at the time of the great confusion of Babel. The play of light moves all hearts throughout the world to the same silent rhythm, and the dreams to which it gives birth are the same for all men.

Not long ago I was in the heart of Brazil, that immense country still full of virgin land, in a little town more than 600 miles from Rio — a town in which almost the only large buildings besides the church are cinemas. There I saw the Polish, German, Russian and Italian immigrants thrill at the same time to the very same emotions that the audiences in the cinemas of the Paris boulevards were feeling.

Is it the effect of these marvellous discoveries and the amazing speed of their progress which give our social life its febrile character ? Sometimes it seems as if man's inventions had outstripped his mind ; like the sorcerer's apprentice in the story, he seems to be frightened by the forces which he has let loose. At any rate he fails to realise how great a change has been accomplished ; he hesitates before the infinite possibilities which these discoveries have opened up to him ; he stands still. Many people go on thinking morally and socially as if nothing had happened ; or the more thoughtful wonder whether it will ever be possible to solve the new problems to which this unbelievable widening of the scope of human activity and of our social horizon has given rise. . . .

(Speech at the prize distribution at the Lycée Michelet, Vanves, July 1927)

In each of his successive annual Reports to the International Labour Conference he gave a broad picture of the development of the economic situation, rich in facts and in conclusions drawn from them. In his work at the International Labour Office he necessarily devoted the greater part of his attention to industrial problems ;

but these were not his exclusive concern. Thus, for instance, he emphasised the part played by agriculture in economic life.

. . . The peasants of today have lifted up their heads. They now stand upright in their fields and turn their eyes towards the mysterious horizon, where they sense the tumult of an immense social movement which disturbs and attracts them by turns — towards the horizon whence come not only dark clouds heavy with hail, but also economic and financial tidings which can do even more to destroy the fruits of a whole year's work.

The peasant reflects. He becomes aware of the modern world with its bold speculations and its commercial solidarity. He knows that the harvest in Canada, the United States and Argentina affects the price at which he can sell his wheat. He knows that already one-fifth of the total wheat harvest of the world goes from country to country in international trade. He knows that Canada sells 70 per cent. of its crop. He knows that great co-operative combines can conquer markets on which isolated individuals can no longer hold their footing. He is determined that in future his daily toil shall not be left out of account in the solution of these international problems. In resolutions such as the one which you put forward this morning, he demands his voice in the counsels of Governments.

Even before the war such movements were making themselves felt and such ideas being affirmed. The war accelerated their progress. It caused cruel damage to agriculture. It tore up and ravaged the soil. Shells scattered the fertile humus to the four winds. Barbed wire barred the path of the plough. The war mowed down men and devastated homes; yet in the troubled world which it had made the splendid virtue of agricultural work shone out more clearly than ever before.

It is nearly two hundred years since the great English economist, Adam Smith, in an unforgettable passage, pointed out that agricultural countries recover from a war far more rapidly than industrial ones, and soon restore their prosperity. Just as even in a devastated area you may see the living green growth cover and hide the ruins, so in the distracted and troubled world of today a general belief is emerging that society will recover its stability and prosperity through agriculture, and that the peasant will be the saviour of the world. . . .

(Address to the Congress of the Agricultural Federation of the Centre, Blois,
29 November 1926)

Raw Materials and Migration

In this sphere too the idea of the interpenetration of the economic and the social imposed itself on the Organisation from the very first.

The idea of a general economic reorganisation of the world had been launched at the Washington Conference by an Italian Resolution on the distribution of raw materials. Albert Thomas took it up again later. He was drawn to it by his political conceptions, by his personal experience in the co-operative movement, and still more directly by the part which he had played in the economic organisation which the war had compelled the belligerent countries to undertake. He often repeated that what the countries had done for the sake of conducting the war they should also be able to do for the sake of organising peace.

. . . I have always been amazed at how easily — indeed how lightheartedly — the statesmen, at the behest of President Wilson and American opinion, abolished by a stroke of the pen the very international organisations which had enabled the nations to carry on their economic life during the war, and which, suitably adapted, could perhaps have facilitated the transition to the organisation of peace. But what I want to emphasise is that, whatever people's preconceived ideas may be, I hope that French public opinion will understand the realities of the situation and not remain indifferent to what the League of Nations is trying to do. . . .

(Lecture on economic recovery, Lyons, 1926)

: . . Is a planned economy utopian ? Surely it existed in France, in Germany and in other countries during the war. A planned economy was to some extent realised at that time, and I myself was for a time at its head. There was a permanent grouping of French manufacturers working to supply the requirements of G.H.Q. under the orders of the Ministry of Munitions and of the Government ; they distributed the work, disciplined their efforts, and regulated all the stages of manufacture at their monthly meetings. What was that if not planned economy ?

During the French Revolution, when the earliest social demands were being formulated at the time of the Directory,

the men of 1796 used often to say that what had been done for war could also be done for the common good. Can we not take up that formula again today? What the countries did in order to defend their national existence, they can surely do again at a time of crisis to maintain the living and working conditions of the masses of their population. . . .

(Speech at the International Association for Social Progress,
Paris, 14 October 1931)

On the idea of the distribution of raw materials he said:

. . . For my part I am glad that the International Miners' Congress should have realised the gravity of the problem with which the world is faced. There is no more serious problem at the present time, and it is urgent in every respect.

It is not the first time that the International Labour Office, or rather the then newly founded International Labour Organisation, has had this problem before it. At the First Session of the International Labour Conference at Washington the Italian Workers' delegate, Baldesi, submitted a Resolution asking that raw materials should be distributed among the countries of the world in such a way as to ensure the regularity of industrial production and to prevent unemployment crises. Members of the Governing Body repeatedly reverted to this proposal in the course of discussion.

In a different sphere, the Inter-Allied and Neutral Conferences and the Executive Committee of the International Co-operative Alliance also decided to request all Governments, or alternatively the League of Nations, to arrange for a fair and rational distribution of foodstuffs. Thus an important movement has taken shape, and its repercussions are constantly felt by the International Labour Office. It is a movement which reveals the anxiety felt by many nations concerning the distribution of all those commodities and forms of wealth which civilised life requires.

That is the background in relation to which I view the request which you are today addressing to the International Labour Office, and it is in that spirit that we shall undertake the study of the question.

During those five terrible years in which the frightful catastrophe of war hung over the world, nations and groups

of nations found ways and means of disciplining labour, controlling resources, increasing the output of goods and distributing them so as to meet the exigencies of the war. All this they did for the sake of war — of hostilities between nations. What those nations and groups of nations could do at that time for war, surely the world should be able to do today for the common good and for the advancement of civilisation. Surely, too, this is one of the functions which naturally fall to the International Labour Office and the League of Nations if they wish to fulfil the hopes which the workers and all progressively minded men have reposed in them. . . .

(Speech to the International Miners' Congress, Geneva, 6 August, 1920)

Another problem to which he devoted much attention was that of migration. He regarded it not only from the point of view of the protection of migrant workers, a matter which falls directly within the scope of the International Labour Office, but also as a means for the rational development of world economic life. It would, he believed, contribute towards economic equilibrium if new countries and their potential wealth could be developed with the help of the surplus labour power available elsewhere.

. . . It is surely in the interest of your own country that such a policy should be applied. Yours is a great country which needs workers. You call to the workers of all countries, and some say that this very call for immigrants is a new difficulty for labour legislation. They say that the immigrant comes to Brazil to make his fortune, and to rise out of the social class in which he was before; and people talk of pig butchers who have become millionaires. Quite so. But who can say that modern industrial organisation justifies hopes like these? Illusions of this kind are often disastrous to the immigrant from across the Atlantic. Is it not true that in many countries large numbers of men have to remain wage-earners all their lives? Is it not the true aim of social progress to develop, widen and ennoble the condition of the wage-earner?

Yet if this is so, the immigrant who comes to Brazil naturally wishes to find there the same labour legislation as exists in the most advanced industrial countries, and he will surely be more likely to turn his eyes towards Brazil if he sees that it can offer him conditions equal to those which he enjoyed in Europe. Thus

it is in the interest of Brazil itself, with all the necessary adaptations and with the elasticity of method for which the Treaty of Peace provides, to work for the standardisation of labour conditions throughout the world. It is not for me to tell you what advantages your country would gain from acting in this way, and I shall not presume to go into this question in detail; you know better than I do how much your country would benefit from the point of view of its moral unity.

(Lecture to municipal employees, Rio de Janeiro, 17 July 1925)

... How is a clash between the interests of different countries to be avoided? How can their competing claims be prevented from causing serious rivalries? How indeed is it possible to further the interests of international economic life by adjusting natural resources and the populations capable of developing them, as Mr. Zumeta, Government delegate of Venezuela, suggested in a Resolution submitted at the Third Session of the Conference? Such problems are not exclusively the affair of the International Labour Office, but are already prominent in all departments of international life. The organisers of the International Economic Conference may declare in advance, out of a desire to avoid complications, that emigration problems are not to be dealt with, but it is possible that, as has already happened before, the keen interest which they arouse will unexpectedly draw the attention of all nations to them. . . .

(Report to the International Labour Conference, 1926)

In fact, the problem did not come up at the International Economic Conference of 1927. Albert Thomas was not wrong in his estimate of the reasons which caused it to be excluded, but he stressed the permanent importance of the question.

... I shall no doubt be accused of rashly piling up in the rooms of the League of Nations all the powder barrels which are to be found scattered all over the world. It will no doubt be thought the height of imprudence to encourage all the suffering, ambitious or jealous peoples to put forward their claims to those who bar their way.

Not long ago, in private conversation, some of my Italian friends spoke to me outright of the principle of freedom of emigration, that is, of the right which should be allowed to individuals of over-populated countries to enter other countries which are more thinly populated, unhindered by quotas or any other restrictive rules. What a to-do, what an outcry there would be if the problem were ventilated in its full scope at an international conference ! Everyone will remember the shudder which passed through the last Assembly when the American-Japanese question appeared on the horizon, even though it was wrapped in all the cloudy formulas of diplomacy. Everyone will remember, too, the uneasiness which was caused in the decorous debates of the wise old statesmen of whom the early Councils consisted when the problem of raw materials was touched on for the first time.

Yet whatever may be the dangers, I believe that the proposed Economic Conference can have no true utility, or exercise any genuine educative and moral effect, unless it has the courage to make a real attempt to find out how, in Edgard Milhaud's phrase, a world economy can be developed out of the interdependence of national economies, and how such a world economy can be given formal status. . . .

(" How can the International Economic Conference be made a Success ? "
Europe Nouvelle, Paris, 26 September 1925)

. . . In short, we have on the one hand an emigration policy and on the other an immigration policy. Around these two policies there develop a number of particular conceptions, purely national in character, which are liable to clash. There may then arise the situation which our President mentioned just now — the possibility of disputes and even of war between nations — if these two sets of national policies oppose one another without the intervention of a higher policy conceived in the interest of mankind as a whole.

I need not tell you how much anxiety this question is arousing everywhere ; it is common knowledge. It crops up in the newspapers, in books, even sometimes in ordinary conversation. A dispute might arise out of the question of Italian emigration. If some solution is not reached, the explosion to which the leader of the Italian nation referred the other day might happen. In the Pacific area there is the big question

of Japanese emigration, which the Institute of Pacific Relations has just been discussing at the Honolulu Conference.

A clash is possible. Well, it is a strange thing, but though there is such a possibility, no one — I mean no one in a responsible position — will take the responsibility of mentioning it !

... Is it possible — this is my second point — to define certain general principles ? I am quite aware that anyone who enters upon such a subject as this without the necessary scientific preparation tends to look rather like one of those fanatical pacifists who entirely ignore the circumstances and the difficulties which countries have to face, and go about the world proclaiming a few isolated principles with a *naïveté* which is, one must admit, rather disconcerting. Yet, since nothing else will serve, I can only try, speaking with all the necessary caution, to see whether there are not some principles which can be postulated. First of all, there is the sacrosanct principle of freedom of migration. I was speaking a few moments ago of the long historic struggles for the right of peoples or of individuals to move from one place to another. Today there are so many regulations and restrictions that freedom of migration would appear to be very greatly limited. Let us look the facts squarely in the face.

To proclaim the freedom of emigration in the modern world would perhaps be to go back to an age which is past and gone. Can we say that the emigrant should, in the higher interest of his nation or of mankind, submit himself to certain regulations ? That is one point which can usefully be discussed, and one principle which can be laid down. There is a second principle which has already been formulated here, in communications received by this Conference : it concerns the right of superfluous populations to occupy territories which are not overpopulated. That raises a very large problem. The principle is one which it is possibly — nay, probably — necessary to affirm ; but it needs, if not restrictions, at any rate qualification. People speak of the right of superfluous populations to occupy certain territories. . . . Well and good ; but only provided that, before these populations cross national frontiers and raise international problems, they should have made some attempt to grapple with their population problems themselves. Can a better organisation of production, or more intensive industrial development, or credit operations, or a redistribution of the

population within the country itself, or internal colonisation, automatically solve the population problem without recourse to emigration? Some nations are at present thinking along these lines.

If there were one day to come into existence a higher international organisation, a sort of Supreme Council of Migration, empowered to judge between the right of superfluous populations to populate other countries and the right of those who already live in those countries to defend themselves, it would no doubt have to take all these considerations into account. Furthermore, in opposition to the right to emigrate and settle in another country, there is the position of those who want to defend an established standard of living, or a conception of culture, or a view of the ideological, moral and political development of a given community. In other words, can one unconditionally oblige any nation to receive national minorities on its soil, in view of all the disadvantages which the existence of such minorities presents?

Thus, there are a certain number of principles to be formulated: freedom of migration within certain limits, the right of nations to occupy territories which are incompletely or insufficiently populated, and the right of other communities to defend themselves. But who is to decide between these different rights and principles, and what methods can be devised for formulating an international migration policy? It is this third question which should be explored — the question of method. How is it possible to create an international organisation which could reconcile and harmonise these contradictory principles and arrive at a distribution of population corresponding to the higher interest of mankind as a whole?

On this point, though I realise the objections to an argument by analogy, I should like to draw the attention of the Conference to what has happened in the economic sphere as regards the circulation, not of individuals, but of goods. There can be no doubt that conceptions of economic organisation have evolved very considerably since the eighteenth century. In the eighteenth century the battle for free trade was fought and won. Free trade flourished in many countries during the nineteenth century and prevailed over the earlier system. Then a contrary tendency set in, and the protectionist system developed. It was rampant in Europe during the early years of the twentieth

century, and perhaps still more since the war. The two systems have been set up as alternatives to one another. In fact, however, people in almost all countries are beginning to see that neither free trade nor protection affords a final solution, and to arrive at the idea of organised co-operation between nations. . . .

(Speech at the Population Congress, Geneva, September 1927)

. . . What the world needs more than ever today, in all spheres, is a consciously thought-out policy, a policy founded on ideas, and pursued with determination and tenacity. Things do not happen of themselves in matters of emigration any more than in matters of financial reconstruction. Only those peoples will be strong in the future who know how to think and how to will. . . .

(Preface to Marcel Paon's book : *L'Immigration en France*)

The Need for International Action

The next question which arises is how to set about the reorganisation of economic life.

. . . The problem is not merely a national one ; it is also, and indeed primarily, international. The world economic system which existed before the war has broken down ; the instability of relations between the different national economic systems hinders the exchange of goods between country and country, and consequently checks production. This is the essential fact to which every investigation of the cause of the depression leads back.

Nothing except the international organisation of economic life is capable of remedying this international disorganisation. In that connection I would recall the tentative efforts which the League of Nations is continuing to pursue for the establishment of an international organisation for assisting such States as need credits in order to pay for their essential imports. . . .

(Report to the International Labour Conference, 1921)

He pointed out that the International Labour Office had from the first found it necessary, precisely because of what it was doing

to promote international labour legislation, to concern itself with economic problems.

. . . That is why we make it our daily task to study the possibilities of improving the international situation and restoring industrial prosperity ; for if that were accomplished we could continue our progressive work far more easily. You can imagine how carefully we follow all these possibilities from our observatory at Geneva, as you have called it. We never cease to study them. We have gone forward with our work whatever the difficulties. We foresaw all these difficulties in 1920, and at the suggestion of Mr. Pirelli, a particularly clear-sighted member of the Governing Body, we began our Enquiry into Production. At that time we were told : " You have no right to concern yourselves with production." When we asked the French employers to reply to our questionnaires on production, they were apprehensive, and thought that the International Labour Office was interfering, imperialistic and ambitious ; and I believe circulars were sent out advising employers not to reply.

Since that time we have made some progress. I went to The Hague. The Permanent Court of International Justice recognised that, although it was not the function of the International Labour Office to try to regulate production, it was nevertheless its duty to keep itself informed about it, and that social questions could not be settled without allowance being made for economic circumstances. Thus agreement having been reached on that point at least, we can, like meteorologists studying the economic weather, make a careful study of the fluctuations of economic activity ; we can see, from the vantage-point of our Office in Geneva, which way the wind is blowing, whether the storm shows signs of dropping and whether there is a gleam of light on the horizon. . . .

(Lecture on Economic Recovery, Lyons, 1926)

He stressed the role of the International Labour Organisation in the endeavour to promote economic reconstruction.

. . . Once more, what I want to define is the method. From our point of view there can be no doubt about what the method should be. The International Labour Organisation, as its name implies, exists to bring about better living and working

conditions, and to achieve a greater degree of social justice, as laid down in the Treaty of Peace. Our function must be defined in relation to that idea, and by carrying it out to its logical conclusion.

I quite agree that we should discuss economic questions, and calculate how far this or that social reform is compatible with given economic conditions ; but such considerations must not be allowed to place an insuperable barrier in the way of social progress. Let us inform ourselves about economic conditions, let us study them thoroughly, but let our object in doing so be to dominate them and rise above them.

That is the idea which I for my part should wish to inspire the Organisation. Nay rather, it is the idea which has inspired it, even if unconsciously, for the past ten years. In 1919, at Washington, the Italian Workers' delegate, realising the need for economic justice as the counterpart to the social justice between individuals of which Mr. de Michelis has spoken, raised the question of the distribution of raw materials ; it was a Resolution of this Conference in 1921 which led to the convening of the Economic Conference at Genoa in 1922 ; in 1925, it was the representatives of the International Labour Organisation at the League of Nations who first suggested the idea of an international economic conference and made a proposal to that effect ; in 1927 the Economic Conference met and they attended it ; and today, when Mr. de Michelis and some other speakers have given an account of the difficulties encountered in applying the decisions of the 1927 Conference, and when people are talking of the qualified success or even of the failure of the Conference on a customs truce, it is a striking thing to see the same idea coming up again in the International Labour Organisation. There have been suggestions for another Conference on unemployment -- such a Conference as Mr. Macdonald was recently discussing in the House of Commons ; suggestions for a meeting of the Advisory Committee of the League of Nations and, coming to our own Organisation, the suggestion that the Unemployment Committee might be enlarged and its work developed.

I think, gentlemen, that we are on the right road to achieve the measures of social justice for which we are working, to promote energetic and sustained action in the economic sphere, and to lay down general guiding lines valid for ourselves and perhaps for the League of Nations too.

What a strange idea it was of yours, Mr. Lambert-Ribot, to find a contradiction between the "labour protectionism" of the International Labour Office and the theory of free or freer trade for which the League stands! You talk of labour protectionism. Yet surely the attempt at nationalistic labour protectionism is in contradiction with the attempt to secure common labour standards which we are pursuing here. And can one speak of a free trade theory of the League of Nations in connection with the Convention for the prohibition of import and export restrictions or even with the Conference on a customs truce? What are these but the first stammerings, the first attempts at a new economic organisation? Oh yes, I know that when we talk of economic co-operation, or a high wages policy, or a customs truce, or of the organisation of trade, all these sound very vague formulas, rather unreal, almost utopian. Quite so. Yet why is it that everywhere, in all the negotiations, in conferences and committees, whether national or international, whatever contrary views may be put forward, it is always towards these formulas that people turn — it is always in that direction that they look for a remedy for the crisis of privation and injustice which still hangs over the world? . . .

(Speech at the International Labour Conference, 1930)

He called for concerted action by Governments.

. . . You may perhaps say: What, another conference? Quite so; but no one has yet devised any other method for exchanging ideas and finding generally acceptable solutions except to meet together in a conference. The thing that matters is that an international conference should be of practical use and lead to results.

What results can be expected from it? It would be an illusion to imagine that it could arrive at formal Conventions. Even in the commercial sphere, where there is a fairly long tradition of international negotiation, States find it difficult enough to conclude bilateral commercial treaties or to adjust their tariff systems. How could they be expected to arrive straight away at general economic agreements? Accordingly, a conference cannot be expected to be anything more than a meeting for the exchange of ideas, a theoretical conference, an academic one if you like; but all the same, it might produce a

few definite recommendations, bring about a heightened awareness of common interests, and create the atmosphere for economic pacification. The history of the League of Nations, short as it is, can already provide examples. The Brussels Conference, to mention only one, did nothing more than formulate recommendations. Yet everyone agrees that those recommendations proved fruitful, and that they contributed in no small measure to the positive work of currency stabilisation which has been achieved in piecemeal and successive stages.

If, however, the proposed International Economic Conference is to succeed in this attempt, people must have the courage to bring before it the problems which are really troubling the nations and arousing their passionate concern — those which lie at the root of their sense of insecurity. . . .

(“ How can the International Economic Conference be made a Success ? ”
Europe Nouvelle, Paris, 26 September 1925)

Above all, Albert Thomas never ceased to demonstrate the immense scope of the problems to be solved and the imperative need for action.

. . . The entire pre-war economic system has been thrown into confusion. Do you remember the time immediately after the war when all the manufacturers, all the statesmen, all the workers in every country, seeking to repair the losses caused by the war, said with one accord : “ We must produce, we must produce all we can, we must develop all our means of production and reconstruct the world.” And then, at the very time when everyone recognised the need for production, when everyone was setting to work with that aim — suddenly, in 1920, the depression set in. Instead of increased production, there was a collapse of prices which led to a world-wide crisis of under-consumption, a catastrophic check to production, and an unemployment crisis. At that moment Britain fell into a depression from which, in spite of some alleviation, it has not yet emerged. In France too, simultaneously, there was a serious falling off in industrial activity, and a similar but much more complete one in the United States of America. Yet that was the time when we were called upon to establish rules for social justice ; that was the time when we were asked to reduce hours of work, and to undertake the radical reorganisation which would

make it possible, when prosperity returned, to maintain and even increase production while at the same time increasing social charges. . . .

. . . Perhaps what I have said may seem to you rather utopian ; you may think it an error to believe that economic life can be organised internationally ; you may accuse me once again of putting forward impracticable schemes. Well, I put it to you : although you have asked that there should be no replies to my speech, I ask you all the same to reply to me in the privacy of your own consciences. Is any other method possible ? Is there any other way out of the present economic depression ? Some of you will no doubt answer that there is not. Is it true, then, as Albert Thierry wrote from the trenches at Aix-Noulette, that the problems of international peace to which the war has given rise are beyond the power of the human mind to solve ? For my part, I will not believe that the human mind, which on the one hand has created men's aspiration towards peace and justice, and on the other has aroused in them so many new needs, is, like the sorcerer in the story, powerless in the face of the forces which he has conjured up. I would rather think that men who live in an ordered society and who mean that society to survive can overcome the obstacles which practical life places in the way of their will and intelligence, and that the spirit of civilisation can once again be made to triumph.

(Lecture on economic recovery, Lyons, 1926)

What is henceforward required by the new economic policy in the United States of America, in Germany, and indeed everywhere, is not that unemployment should be alleviated, compensated and cured, but rather that it should be foreseen, forestalled and prevented. It demands that we should escape from these alternate booms and slumps which are so disastrous to industry. If the main cause of the present depression is the transition from an unstable to a sound currency, surely it would have been possible in a country like France, with its varied forms of activity, so well fitted to balance and harmonise with one another — its manufacturing industries, its agriculture, its tourist industry — to accomplish the transition more smoothly ? Even now, could not a systematic policy quickly put an end to the crisis of adaptation ? . . .

(“ Production First and Foremost ”, 1927)

Planned Economy

Albert Thomas had asserted the necessity of stabilising economic life and avoiding the constant recurrence of depressions and unemployment even before the onset of the great depression in 1929 ; and that depression could not fail to reinforce his conviction. He pointed out the disastrous effects of world economic disorganisation.

... What strikes me in international discussions, in the Economic and Financial Committees of the League of Nations and in meetings at the International Labour Office, is that certain problems have now been so clearly formulated that their solution begins to appear possible. Certain ideas are beginning to impose themselves on reasonable and enlightened men who discuss these questions. In most spheres, reliable guiding lines are emerging. It is already seen to be absolutely necessary for those in charge of affairs in the great countries to meet again and settle the question of debts and reparations. A few months ago the bankers met at Basle, studied the position of Germany, and tried to find means of converting the frozen short-term credits into long-term credits. At that time some of them said : " What is needed is another Peace Conference. Economic life cannot be set going again without a new settlement of debts and reparations." What are we waiting for ? Surely people must realise that sooner or later it is absolutely necessary to reach such a settlement as a basis for economic reconstruction.

Then again, some Governments have now abandoned the gold standard. There is a strange contradiction in people's way of thinking and acting. Everybody says today that financial and currency questions can only be solved internationally ; and yet each country takes its decision by itself without informing the others beforehand. After everyone agreed at Brussels in 1920 and at Genoa in 1922 that something must be done with a view to the universal stabilisation of currencies by means of agreements between the banks of issue, after the establishment of the Bank of International Settlements, do people believe that it would be possible to go back to total anarchy in currency matters ? Here again, the idea that an international settlement is necessary and the idea of a currency federation are beginning to make their way. Why not go forward frankly and boldly on the road which everyone

knows must be taken sooner or later ? Although there have been discussions about the play of natural forces in connection with the trade depression, can anyone doubt the need for considered action to bring about economic and financial re-organisation ?

. . . Then too, people are beginning to see the necessity for an organised economy, a controlled economy, a planned economy, whichever you like to call it. The public conscience can no longer endure the paradoxes in the toils of which modern economic life is struggling. When we see — to quote only one example — that the boot and shoe factories of the United States alone, provided as they are with all the resources of modern mechanisation and organisation, could, if fully occupied, produce three pairs of shoes a year for all the inhabitants of the globe, and yet that in a number of countries most of the people have to go barefoot, while the American workers are unemployed — are we not forced to admit that the most extreme rationalisation has led to the most irrational situation ? When we hear that, in order to keep up prices, thousands of sacks of Brazilian coffee are dumped in the sea, and that wheat or cotton crops are destroyed at a time when enormous numbers of people are living in a state of under-consumption, we cannot help asking whether the economic harmonies so dear to the adherents of the liberal economic theory are not simply a snare and a delusion.

The men of the eighteenth century used to say that the purpose of society was to promote the general happiness, and that the object of human labour and of productive organisation was to improve living conditions and to increase the resources of communities. How could it not be clear even to the meanest intelligence that the situations which I have just described are absurd and indeed scandalous ? Yesterday I was among my old friends, my one-time constituents at Champigny. That was the one question which they all kept on asking me. "Wheat destroyed ? Cotton destroyed ? Coffee destroyed ? What does it all mean ?" And, remembering their words, I say to all of you here : "Take care ! There are certain kinds of instinctively subversive propaganda which will not fail to spread if you do not make up your minds to organise economic life and to regulate production in accordance with the needs of society."

In any case, the more thoughtful among the industrialists have themselves already set an example. International cartels and industrial agreements have been established in the last few years. It is true that there are still differences of opinion. Can cartels be subjected to Government control? Will cartels serve the interest of the consumer? The discussions may go on for a long time, but there can be no doubt that such methods alone can introduce order into production, direct it towards the satisfaction of general needs, and make an immediate start, industry by industry, in eliminating disorder, waste and depressions. In fifteen successive declarations, the various Committees of the League of Nations have recognised the value of such methods. Our British friends stood out for a long time, but they too were converted in the end. Agreement has been reached between the experts. So why wait any longer? The French Government suggested in the memorandum which it submitted to the Commission of Enquiry for European Union that this policy might be generally adopted, that existing cartels might be developed and others formed. It suggested that the international sugar agreement and the numerous attempts to do something similar for wheat should be followed by international agreements, on coal, on certain metallurgical products, and on the chemical industries. Unfortunately the suggested negotiations have not been begun. Once again, hesitation has set in on all sides. The hope that in the near future social progress could be maintained and developed on the foundation of an organised economic system has for the time being been disappointed. Yet during the war — if you will forgive me for reminding you once again of the evil past — at the end of 1916, when we were wrestling with difficulties of every kind, I received a letter from my friend Mr. Lloyd George in which he denounced the dilatoriness of the Allied Governments and their hesitation to take any risk. "What is wanted?" he said. "A little imagination, a little boldness." A little imagination! A little boldness! Perhaps that is what we need today, far more than a knowledge of the facts, far more than solutions for our problems; that is what we need to restore confidence and to get out of the depression. A little imagination! A little boldness! That is what the International Association for Social Progress should demand, and what it should, in so far as in it lies, help to create. . . .

(Speech at the Congress of the International Association for Social Progress,
Paris, 14 October 1931)

The idea of a planned economy was not a new one for him, as is shown by what he said ten years earlier.

. . . I am not one of those who say : " Capitalism is crumbling ; capitalism is at its last gasp." I realise how immensely strong capitalism is. Yet at such a time as the present, when it is passing from crisis to crisis, from the crisis of under-production to the crisis of under-consumption, when the entire world is suffering from disorder and anarchy, when the worker is feeling the terrible effects of unemployment, and when unemployment is affecting the co-operative societies too, it is necessary to define how the co-operative movement conceives a planned economy.

. . . The co-operative movement should draw the conclusions from the terrible experiences of the war and the revolutionary changes which followed it in many countries ; it should deduce new principles of action for the attainment of its ideals. It is not enough on the one hand to carry on the petty tasks of every day, and on the other to wait for the solemn moment when an organisation of solidarity will abolish the system of private profit and competition with one wave of a magic wand. Between these two things there must be a definite programme which the co-operative movement must pursue in order to start from everyday activity and progress forward from it towards an ideal. . . .

(Speech to members of the co-operative movement, 23 August 1921)

He took up this idea again and developed it further during the last year of his life.

. . . However cautious one may be, however moderate the terms one uses, it is none the less the problem of a planned economy which has to be faced. Once technical progress is an accomplished fact, the next step is how to adjust social organisation so as to provide for the satisfaction of needs at a given stage of civilisation.

In my Director's Report to the last Session of the International Labour Conference, I quoted a number of statements by American industrialists and statesmen, all of which declared that if we did not succeed in adjusting technical progress and social organisation, our society was doomed. It would have

proved its impotence, and it would be necessary to replace it with something else. . . .

(Address to the French Association for Social Progress, Paris, August 1931)

He described the trend of ideas which had led up to the conception of a planned economy.

. . . First of all, it should be placed on record with all the necessary emphasis that in the midst of the depression this conception of an organised economy has impressed itself on the public mind and has spread with great rapidity. For the idea is not a new one ; it has a long tradition behind it. From the time when the theory of economic liberalism first made itself felt — which it did with force and, it may be admitted, with exaggeration even from the outset — from the moment when it claimed that by means of the system of *laissez faire* and *laissez passer* it was certain to achieve perfect harmony between the interests of the individual and those of the community, it evoked contradiction. Sismondi, moved by the sufferings of the workers, demanded State intervention in the form of protective legislation, and Saint-Simon was already setting against the current theory the idea of systematic organisation, guided by fixed principles, to improve the physical and mental conditions of the masses. Could it not be said that the whole history of social theory throughout the nineteenth century is, at bottom, summed up in this idea ?

It would be interesting to make a fresh critical study of these theories from this point of view, in order to gain a better understanding of the direction in which the idea of a planned economy leads. Some theorists have claimed that economic liberalism, so powerful in theory, was never able to establish itself in practice ; that from the first the new system constantly felt the urge to organise, as shown in the formation of cartels, trusts, trade unions, co-operative societies and so on, and that the whole of our time has been, fundamentally, nothing else than a transition period between one system of controlled economy — that of the Middle Ages — and another system, equally though differently controlled. . . .

(Report to the International Labour Conference, 1932)

In his last speech he put the question: What is a planned economy? Defending his point of view in a theoretical discussion, he replied by showing its inevitable necessity.

. . . Mr. Vogel said : " This is not the time for experiments." Yet perhaps it is the time to make one supreme effort and to try a new method, since all the traditional ones have proved vain.

Some speakers have defended the principle of profit, and have said that it produced better results than an attempt to organise production in direct relation to the satisfaction of the consumer's needs. Yet apart from the fact that the hope that " economic harmony " would realise itself spontaneously has not been fulfilled, and that the profit motive has not proved capable of giving the great masses of consumers and workers stability of employment or a decent life, can it really be maintained that the profit principle is still the only rule in the most modern industrial undertakings; have not the principles of economic planning already found their way into them?

Others have said : " You speak of planned economy, but what is to be its aim? What principles is it to follow?" My answer is : " Its first aim is to apply the provisions of Part XIII of the Treaty of Peace, and to realise social justice — a conception which does not, as some have said, vary from country to country, but which has been defined, for our own day at least, in the principles of the Treaty."

Some have asked : " Who is to do the planning?" I know what strong opposition there is in certain quarters to the intervention of the State, and indeed even of the community. In a period of depression such as the present I do not think there will be much support for Mr. Mircea's idea of an understanding between employers and workers apart from the State, and even if necessary in opposition to it. It is the work of the national economic councils which points the way to be followed.

One objection which has been raised is that the calculations of prices and stocks which would be necessary in a directed and planned economy are an extremely complex matter. Yet surely the great modern industrial combines have already attempted such calculations. Surely they have tried so far as possible to regulate their activity in accordance with the ascertained facts. When we speak of an organised economy, we do not mean that a complete commercial and industrial system is to be created

de novo. We mean consistent action towards a fixed aim and in accordance with a clearly defined method.

When the nations were at war, some fifteen years ago, the whole of production was disciplined and directed towards a single aim — that of defending the country and saving it from defeat. Similarly today, the aim towards which the forces of production should be directed and co-ordinated is the general good, that is to say, once again, the application of the principles of social justice laid down in the Treaty of Peace. There can be no salvation for the world except by those principles ; that, I believe, should be the watchword of this Organisation.

What immediate action could be taken ? What new industrial agreements should be concluded ? To what scheme or concerted plan should the nations apply their energies ? Should it be a customs truce, preferential agreements, international industrial agreements ? All that the Conference can do is to indicate which of these proposals seems to it best calculated to give the workers stability of employment and to restore the purchasing power of the masses. Once again, it is not its function to convene the governmental conferences which will have to take the decisions. It should publicly proclaim the need for such conferences and express the impatience and anxiety of the labour world.

There is also the question whether we should go further and try to associate the International Labour Organisation more directly with the actual work of financial and economic conferences. Mr. de Macedo Soares, in a suggestive speech, formulated this question clearly. Mr. Bottai, in the concluding passage of his speech, put forward the idea of continuous and organic liaison with a view to ensuring unity of direction. I took this to mean not mixed committees for study but a body in which the representatives of the responsible Governments would meet together with employers' and workers' representatives empowered to discuss matters. All that is for the future, though perhaps not a distant future. For the moment, let us confine ourselves to the immediate tasks.

Throughout the past year I have, following a tradition sanctioned by the Governing Body, continued untiringly and undiscouraged to take every opportunity, at all degrees of the international hierarchy, in all Commissions and Committees, to support all ideas and suggestions which seemed likely to renew

courage, to stimulate hope, to win over public opinion and to spur Governments to action. My staff and I are ready to continue that work with faith and courage. In our task we need the unanimous help of the International Labour Conference — help given from the heart, and with the resolve to render unconditional service to the cause of social justice. Such an attitude of faith and confidence will prevent the spirit of crisis and of panic from gaining a foothold in the International Labour Organisation and paralysing it. We shall have no internal crisis so long as our own courage does not falter.

It was that great German whose centenary the whole world was celebrating a few days ago — it was Goethe who gave the advice which we should follow, and which perhaps the Governments too would do well to take to heart : “ Saddle your horse well and ride forward boldly.”

(Speech at the International Labour Conference, 1932)

In the same speech which, as has already been said, may be regarded as his social testament, Albert Thomas declared :

. . . Yet are there not economic impossibilities ? Are there not geographical, physical and historical conditions which impede the realisation of the postulates of social policy ? Of course there are, and our declaration of faith would be a mere expression of sentiment without real effect if we did not base our whole practical effort on what is possible. That was what I had in mind when I spoke in this connection of the importance of what I called a conscious economy, that is to say, one in which all sections of the community are aware of its real resources and its latent possibilities. My idea was that if there is to be a lowering of the general standard of life — what people have sometimes called the “ great penances ” (although the people who do penance are not always the guilty ones and those who have the most to bear are sometimes the least responsible) — it must be unanimously realised that it is economically impossible to do otherwise. And it is there that the cause of the terrible moral disquiet of the present time lies. There lies the paradox which torments the consciences of men. There lies the tragic element. That is why one can hardly speak of economic obstacles or impossibilities.

The tragedy lies in a fact which has everywhere struck the popular imagination, which is the theme of all speakers in the electoral campaigns now in progress in a number of countries, and which is a matter of deep concern to the trade unions. People speak of the impossibility of social charges ; they speak of economic impossibilities ; and yet at this very time the world seems to be bursting with possibilities of wealth and production. The raw materials are there. Stocks of goods are not falling — they are mounting. The men — the workers — are there. Twenty-five million of them are offering their strength and skill, only asking to be employed. Even the credits which have been alleged to be unprocurable are there. Mr. Jouhaux read us the other day a striking estimate of the financial resources which are lying idle — the money which is unemployed.

Then what is lacking ? It is organisation ; it is the possibility of bringing all these elements together ; it is the will to make use of all these resources, and to make use of them in accordance with the postulates of social justice. What is lacking is the final step which will enable international decisions to be taken.

That is why there is an atmosphere of crisis and disquiet. It is not a crisis of the International Labour Organisation, but a profound moral disquiet which hangs over all its work. That disquiet is all the greater because those of us especially who work in the international institutions have believed for the last twelve years that we were doing something to break the spell and to create the effective international co-operation which the world so ardently desires.

Twelve years ! For twelve years there has been a League of Nations and an International Labour Organisation. There have been international institutions set up by the States to work out joint decisions. Yet when those joint decisions have been worked out by experts, by technicians, even by the representatives of Governments, there seems to be a recoil from them within the nation ; States shrink back into their shells, and the international decisions which have been taken by the States themselves in the institutions which they have created cannot find their way across the frontier of any one of them.

This crisis has been going on for two years, always the same but now worse than ever, and its repercussions are constantly increasing in number and scope. Is there a remedy ?

Economic liberalism — which still has adherents even among the younger generation — maintains that the trouble is due to the fact that the play of natural forces has been upset, that there has been rash and arbitrary interference, and that politics have disturbed the action of competition. That view stands condemned. There are popular aspirations — the whole history of Europe and of the world in the past twenty years bears witness to the fact — to which it is not possible to oppose economic “laws of nature”. The contingent nature of those laws, to use the language of philosophy, has in the last few years become abundantly evident. . . .

Economic Order and Social Justice

“ A planned economy, but what is to be its aim ? What principles is it to follow ? ” My answer is: “ Its first aim is to apply the provisions of Part XIII of the Treaty of Peace. . . . ” Those words give Albert Thomas’ fundamental conviction in a nutshell. He had already expressed it in some of his earlier pronouncements :

. . . The most terrible thing about the present situation is the uncertainty in men’s minds, the hesitation of public opinion, the constant external pressure resulting from the old routine habits of thought, and the so-called scientific truths which have been a drag on modern social policy throughout the thirty years of its existence.

The problem which faces such an assembly as this, and indeed the world as a whole, is to discover the definite attitude, the attitude of principle, reason and will which it is essential to adopt. Are the upholders of social policy — the employers, the industrialists, the economists, the jurists, the thinkers, the man in the street, who have felt the call to fight for this cause — to bow to so-called “natural laws” ? Can they consent to renounce what has been the common aspiration of mankind for more than half a century ? That, Mr. Chairman, is the question. What can be our answer ?

As far as I can see, there can be only one. I remain faithful to the old tradition of those men who for centuries past have

speculated about the reasons for the existence of society. The old philosophers of the eighteenth century were all agreed that the purpose of society was to promote the general good. All those who during the nineteenth century witnessed the miseries of early industrialism believed that the organisation of society and of industry should also tend towards the general good, and the improvement of living and working conditions. You may call it utopian, you may call it paradoxical, you may call it crazy — but I maintain that there can never be calm, stability or progress in the world unless we have the courage to assert that at such a time as the present social policy must be preserved, that its institutions must be maintained intact, and that, if they are not, we shall be rushing towards catastrophe and a radical upheaval of the whole social fabric. . . .

(Speech at the World Economic Congress, Amsterdam, August 1931)

This immense problem is one with which the workers were faced as early as a century ago, to which the labour movement has devoted much thought, and which calls in the highest degree for the action of the labour world.

. . . It is an obvious fact that the depression is here ; it presses on us from all sides ; and in face of it, our subject may seem to be one which belongs to the future. Yet another thought came into my mind just now ; it occurred to me that in 1831 too, at the very time when Buchez was first bringing forward the idea of workers' associations, there was a depression just as there is today. The characteristic thing about all depressions, you must remember, is that people always think that the one they are living through is the worst there has ever been. It was so in 1831. In fact, however, the cause of that depression was much more clearly defined. If what we have been going through in 1930 and 1931 were simply a crisis of rationalisation, the situation would be just the same as it was in 1831. What producers were suffering from at that time was, strictly speaking, a crisis of equipment and of the organisation of labour ; it was the crisis of mechanisation.

During 1831, at Bordeaux, at Lyons, in Paris, machinery was being introduced into more factories every month. Women, and men too, attacked the factories and wanted to destroy the machines. It may be that if the present depression were solely

a crisis of rationalisation, the attitude of the working class would be exactly the same. But rationalisation is not the sole cause of our present difficulties. However, quite apart from the financial and economic conditions which govern the situation at the present time, the important thing to note is that it was in the midst of a depression that there arose in 1831, out of the labour world itself, an idea which was to run through the whole of the twentieth century : the idea of Association.

If we cannot follow the lesson of the men of 1831 literally, we should at any rate be imbued with their spirit. As the example of Buchez shows, their spirit comprised a sense of the dignity of the citizen as it emerged from the French Revolution, the dignity of the man of the people determined at all costs to achieve his political independence and enjoy his political rights, and the dignity and nobility of the worker and the producer. These are the two ideas — the nobility of the citizen and the nobility of the producer — which should inspire us today.

If in the present disorder of the world and the anarchy of economic life there is hesitation among Governments, tergiversation among statesmen, and faltering among those who are responsible for the organisation of production, have you never asked yourselves, comrades, whether it was not because we ourselves — perhaps owing to war weariness, perhaps because we have been enervated by momentary material gains — have become slack in pressing our demands, and lost something of the spirit of aspiration which men should cherish ? I assure you that it is just as it was in 1831 — your salvation lies in yourselves. It is from the profound aspiration of the people that new solutions will arise ; and it is not the longing of a Caliban for a higher civilisation which will lead us to the reorganisation of modern economic life. . . .

(Speech at a meeting of the co-operative movement at the Trocadéro,
Paris, October 1931)

He could not conceive the reorganisation of economic life apart from the participation of the workers.

. . . There can be no economic reconstruction of the world unless a strongly established and powerful International Federation of Trade Unions constantly bears in mind that recon-

struction must be for the interests of the masses, the interests of the workers and producers, and the interests of the community as a whole. . . .

(Speech to the Congress of the International Federation of Trade Unions, July 1930)

The continuity of the ruling principle of his life brings out more clearly than anything else Aibert Thomas' devotion to the cause which he served and the potency of the contribution which he made to it. Right up to the end of his life that ruling principle remained the same as it was when he brought it with him to the International Labour Office. In those early days he expressed it as follows :

. . . Allow me to say that at the present time there is nothing that more urgently needs doing. Never before, perhaps, has the world been in such a state of upheaval. All nations in turn have had to cast into the furnace of war their resources, the energies of their people, and often, too, their social institutions.

The forces of conservatism are now engaged in a bitter and tenacious struggle to restore the traditional economic system and the order which existed before the war. Other forces — profoundly subversive and disruptive forces — are, in the confusion of the post-war world, stirring among the masses, restless and uncertain of the future. They spur them on to make extreme demands; and distant revolutions exercise a strange fascination on men's minds, a fascination which factual criticism hardly avails to remove. There is a danger that the world, torn between these two contrary forces, will continue to struggle desperately in disorder and chaos.

There is only one way out : we must turn back to the Labour Charter which the workers demanded and proclaimed at the time of the conclusion of peace, and in which, with an admirable instinct for the needs of the community, they reconciled the concern for production with the concern for justice. We must turn back to the principles then accepted by the negotiators of the Versailles Treaty as best calculated to guide the policy of the League of Nations, to oblige States to respect those principles by means of the sustained and consistent action of an international organisation. We must establish everywhere the humane conditions of labour defined by the Treaty, and required by it as the surest guarantee of universal

peace. We must discover what forms of economic co-operation, what limitations of the anarchy of competition, would enable States to give one another mutual aid in this work. Thus and thus only, by a courageous and persevering effort for *organisation*, can we save the world from outbursts of destruction and violence. Only thus can we defend human freedom against arbitrary action and, in face of dictatorship of whatever tendency, restore confidence in democracy.

I hope, Mr. President, that all Governments may unite their efforts in such a programme. I hope they may understand how the immediate results of our positive work are today preparing, in tranquillity and order, the great transformations of tomorrow.

In a fine passage of *La Montagne*, the French author Michelet described the work of pacification accomplished by the beautiful lake on which our windows look out. "The waters which it receives are *wild* waters. It makes them into *living* water." "For men too", Michelet continues, "as well as for waters, it seems to be a lofty and beautiful image of peace. What struggles it has witnessed in times past — what battles between stern Switzerland and turbulent Savoy! In the end it has brought all to peace. . . ."

We too will transform wild waters into living water. We too, by persevering and unswerving determination, will in the long run bring about peace through our unshakeable attachment to the principles which workers, employers and Governments, in unison, have embodied in the Treaty of Peace. . . .

(Speech at the reception of Mr. Millerand at the International Labour Office,
15 September 1920)

V

The Organisation of Peace

ONE can truly say of Albert Thomas what he himself said of Arthur Fontaine :

. . . His second persistent idea, which obsessed him for ten years, was peace. More and more he came to be attached to the International Labour Office because it could help in the organisation of peace. No peace without social justice ! It can be said with equal truth : no social justice without peace ! We must therefore serve peace with all our strength.

(Speech at the funeral of Arthur Fontaine)

In his eyes too, his work in the International Labour Organisation was a means of making an effective contribution to the defence and organisation of peace. He believed that there were two ideas which were inseparable :

. . . When I was very young I worked in the little office of my father, that old republican of France ; and I worked in the shadow of a little statue, a " Marianne " of 1848, a small Republic in bronze. On the marble pedestal two words were inscribed : two inseparable words, two words whose harmony I now proclaim. On one side was " Peace ", and on the other " Labour ".

. . . A few moments ago I recalled the old ideal of the Republicans of '48 — " Peace and Labour ". Yet who would venture to say that in every case, in all circumstances, labour generates peace ? The authors of the Treaty of Versailles said that if labour is not free, if it is exploited, if conditions of labour

exist involving injustice, hardship and privation, the peace of the world may be imperilled. Need I tell you that when labour in a particular country or a given industrial community is harshly exploited, there is often a danger of war, owing to unfair competition and consequent clashes of interest between nations? Need I remind you that before the war, threats of conflict between great nations which were capable of harshly exploiting the labour of their workers frequently resulted from economic conditions themselves? The opposition between the great industrial communities of Britain and Germany was a threat to the peace of Europe as a whole. So long as labour is exposed to ruthless exploitation, so long will the danger of war remain. Nay more : when these conditions lead to unrest, as the Treaty puts it, within a given community; when within the community there are classes which demand better conditions and other dominant classes which refuse to listen to their demands, it very often happens that a solution of the problem is sought in an external diversion. . . .

(Lecture at Warsaw, February 1924)

He was keenly sensible of the absolute necessity of finally establishing peace on a secure foundation so that it might be immune to attack.

. . . Peace was concluded on paper, with fine golden pens which have been preserved as precious relics, at Versailles, at Saint-Germain, at Neuilly, and at Trianon. Peace was proclaimed. But for the last four years it has been necessary, as the French Premier put it, to continue the creation of peace. Peace has to be built up painstakingly by a series of new agreements, new Conventions, new arrangements between nations. Peace is still precarious. It was only at the beginning of the present year that the head of our State could hail even the dawn of final reconciliation and peace. We can only just begin to catch a glimpse of the spirit of negotiation and conciliation which is needed for the settlement of the great problems of the day. For the last four years the nations have been crying out for peace and trying to achieve it. "Give us universal peace, O Lord, that the peoples may be free!" said your Polish Mickiewicz. I should be inclined to add something to the prayer of the Polish pilgrim and make it run : "Give us universal

peace, O Lord, to consolidate the freedom which we have achieved ! ”

(Lecture at Warsaw, February 1924.)

He believed that one of the prime conditions for the stability of peace was strengthened unity in the labour world.

... Let us proclaim it aloud : international peace will never be secure or finally established unless there is in the world a living centre of working-class unity which spreads its influence abroad. If the League of Nations has not as yet developed all its potentialities, if it sometimes seems to hesitate and grope its way, it is because the unity of the labour world — unity of spirit and unity of action — is not yet sufficiently strong. This is partly because the “ disorganisers ” have broken the irresistible enthusiasm and hope which ten years ago inspired the working classes of many countries, but perhaps also because some great proletariats — such as, for example, the American proletariat — are not yet conscious of the solidarity which exists in fact between the workers in all continents, and have not yet realised the absolute necessity of permanent agreement expressed in the form of organisation.

It is in that spirit, comrades, it is because it is already a great body virtually capable of inspiring and guiding economic reconstruction, because it is the champion and the symbol of the unity of the workers of the world, and the rallying point to which the still scattered and isolated working classes of Asia, Australia and Latin America spontaneously turn their eyes, that I take pleasure in paying a tribute to the strength of your Federation. . . .

(Speech at the Congress of the International Federation of Trade Unions, July 1930)

“ The problem of peace ”, he once said at Montevideo, “ must be tackled from all angles.” To do this it is first necessary to believe in peace.

... The first condition is to believe in the possibility of building up peace. The first condition is to believe in peace and to intend to have it.

To believe in peace ! Do not all men desire it ? Is not the aspiration towards it practically the same in all com-

munities ? I should not venture to maintain that it exists in equal force everywhere and that it rules all hearts. The controversies which still rage round the League of Nations are a proof. When, for example, I travel through France to speak to popular audiences in support of the work which we are doing, I come across men either of the extreme Right or the extreme Left who say that peace is an idle dream, and that men will always go on killing one another to settle disputes between nations. Sometimes in my own country I even hear people mock at the idea which, I assure you, sustained the immense majority of French soldiers through the war, and all the republicans and socialists who put their whole heart into national defence and gave of their best in the war : the idea that it was to be a war to end war. People say today that that was an illusion. They go farther — they say that it was a lie put about by Governments. It is an insult to the memory of those who sacrificed themselves in the war to maintain that that thought was not a strong, sincere and living reality for all of them. . . .

(Lecture at the University of Warsaw. 21 January 1928)

The idea of the United States of Europe, launched by Briand, greatly attracted him. He knew, of course, that it would be a long and complex matter to make it a reality ; but in this sphere too, despite all the difficulties which he foresaw, he believed that something should be done, and done at once. . . . " I am in a hurry . . . "

. . . In these questions, you see, there is one attitude which I for my part cannot understand : the attitude of excessive caution, the attitude of inertia, the waiting attitude. Mr. Asquith used the phrase during the war : " Wait and see ". As for me, I cannot resign myself to such a policy. To wait and see — no, that is not possible in international affairs, in these problems of war and peace with which we are still at grips. The world is in danger of drifting into new catastrophes if the present generation, which knows by experience what war means, does not take on the responsibility of creating the necessary institutions. Europe may be once more in danger if the present generation does not set to work before it is succeeded by others which do not know what suffering and misery war involves.

Instead of " wait and see ", I say : " I am in a hurry ". That is the idea which should constantly spur us on. . . .

One great reason why he was in a hurry in that year of 1930 was that he could see a terrible danger mounting on the horizon. He often used to speak of this matter to the friend who shared his daily work, who accompanied him on all his travels, and who, as an act of piety, has collected the extracts printed in this volume.

. . . If we let the years slip by, I have told you before and I tell you again that the danger of a conflagration will arise; the nations, misled by evil counsels, may again fall a prey to the psychosis of war. Public opinion must therefore tell the great countries and their responsible statesmen not to delay. When such a conception as this has been launched, it cannot wait. Haste is necessary. . . .

(Speech to the French Alliance at Sofia, February 1930)

Peace and Social Justice

. . . The men of our day have a sacred duty : to make peace, and to work unremittingly in order to build it up. Either we shall, in fifty years' time, have achieved peace, or new generations which have never known war will again plunge into the abyss.

Even before 1914 this idea was constantly in the mind of Jaurès. It was the idea which we vowed to serve when once on 2 December the new Socialist municipal council for the first time ascended the Monument of 1870 ; it was in that sense that we meant to remain faithful to the tradition of the old defenders of Paris. . . .

(Speech at Champigny, 1920)

He never ceased to stress the need to build up the structure of peace without delay; and he did so in prophetic terms. " If in ten years' time, if in twenty years' time. . . ."

. . . We in Geneva have but one concern : the organisation and the building up of peace. Perhaps in the struggles of everyday life you may sometimes lose sight of that essential concern ; but I am sure that when you stop to think, when you go over in your minds the memory of past years, you too must feel that the essential, the sole concern of your generation is the organisa-

tion of peace. Perhaps we too are what Châteaubriand called the generation which grew up after the wars of the Empire — a sacrificed generation, a generation which is called upon to put the repair of the evils of the past years before the pursuit of public or private happiness; perhaps we too are compelled, as he said, to draw along an interminable tow-path the heavy barge laden with all the sorrows, all the misfortunes of the past. It is the essential duty of the generation to which we belong to sacrifice itself for the task of building up peace. We should be unworthy of the destiny to which we are called if we did not always keep before our minds the need for the organisation and construction of peace.

The necessity is real, comrades; it is urgent; let us have no illusions on that point. The years are slipping by; if in ten years' time, if in twenty years' time, if in thirty years' time at the utmost — for it has often been noticed that wars tend to recur in the European community at intervals of fifty years — if in some thirty years' time we have not built up the institutions of peace, the world may once again be ravaged by war; if in a few years' time the Geneva institutions have not produced their full effect, then we may be in danger of seeing the recurrence of events similar to those of 1914.

(Lecture at Bordeaux, January 1928)

Like his teacher and friend Jean Jaurès, whom a tragic fate was to make the first victim of the First World War, he cared passionately for peace.

It was from Jaurès too that he learned what were the economic conditions necessary for lasting peace.

. . . Jaurès, with that far-sightedness which he showed in all things, was the first to proclaim that the near future would bring an intensification of international life. Well — in spite of adverse winds and tides, what only yesterday seemed the idle dream of international co-operation has become the living reality of today. National egoism is no longer enough. The close interdependence of States in matters of economics and finance, in transport and communications, in national security and limitation of armaments, even in social legislation and reform, is no longer questioned by any informed politician. The work of international co-ordination, though dating from

barely three years back, is being pursued and developed with increasing success. The League of Nations and its associated International Labour Office — still capable of indefinite improvement, but nevertheless exponents of the new international life which Jaurès so ardently desired — are firmly established. They are imbued with practical idealism and have already set to work on the noblest task which men have ever attempted. . . .

. . . The war which he so much dreaded came. The material destruction and the colossal expenditure which it brought in its train destroyed an immense part of the capital of mankind. It is impossible even to estimate how much disappeared without leaving any equivalent : whole regions devastated, millions of human lives lost, stocks exhausted, total consumption exceeding production. The world probably lost a billion francs for good and all, and nothing remains of them except miles of paper money. Everyone alike has suffered ruin — victors and vanquished, belligerents and neutrals. It is the ruin of civilisation in the moment of victory. . . .

(Speech at the unveiling of a memorial to Jean Jaurès at Alb4, 1923)

The measures taken to reconstruct economic life should also be made to serve the cause of peace. Thus, as has already been shown, he thought of his great scheme for international public works as a contribution to Aristide Briand's conception of European Union.

. . . In ancient times, when a war had come to an end, when the troops had come home, when the heads of States had negotiated, when mothers and promised brides had no more cause for anxiety, the Athenians could "enjoy to the full the sweets of peace".

Today the Treaties have been signed. Peace has in appearance been restored. Yet in reality, does not the state of war persist, with all its consequences ?

War has shaken all national economies to their foundations. At the same time it has ruined the international economic system on which modern civilisation was based. Can it be that the world is menaced by a formidable movement of regression, and that it may be condemned, as it was after the splendours of the civilisation of Rome, to a second Dark Age ?

That is the question which haunts the minds of all men who care about human progress. Just as during the war all the men of the same nation united to defend their national liberty or the heritage of their people, so today it is the duty of men of all classes to achieve a new degree of co-operation for more intensive production and a higher civilisation. In any case I can assure you that it is in this spirit, and with these considerations in all our minds, that we are met here together today : you, the shipowners of Britain and of other great countries, and we, the representatives of the International Labour Office.

You shipowners have realised more clearly than others that reconstruction and economic restoration are our first duty. What is more, you have realised that it is not merely a national task, but an international and generally human one. Any State which tries to free itself alone and to rise alone above the ruins will sooner or later find itself hampered in its effort and suddenly paralysed. You know this better than anyone — you the shipowners, you the mariners, you the men of the sea, whose work depends upon the work of all the rest. . . .

(Speech to the International Shipping Federation, London, 14 December 1920)

In this connection too he urged the need for social justice.

Finally, there is a third idea. And here I appeal, in the name of the tradition of Saint-Simonism, not only to the workers, but also to those employers who are conscious of their duties. In a passage written in 1815, Saint-Simon contrasted the spirit of peace and the spirit of industry with the feudal and military spirit. He believed that industry would gradually penetrate the world more and more completely. In a curious phrase he said : “ Industry is already making itself master of war.” True ; but has not war in its turn made itself master of industry ? Is it not a tragic thing to see European industry reviving, German industry reconstituted under the Dawes Plan, British industry developing as unemployment diminishes, French industry growing — and not to be able to discern in that revival any idea of justice, or any desire to make the new activity serve the establishment of peace among men or the reorganisation of Europe ?

(Lecture at the University of Geneva, 23 February 1925)

. . . The war stirred the nations to their very depths. All classes of the population in the belligerent countries were cast into the furnace. All in their different ways gave their whole energy without stint. The outcome of the war seemed to the masses of the people to guarantee them the rights which they had earned by what they had done during the war. "They have a claim on us . . ." That appeared to be true, absolutely true, of the soldiers and the workers.

In the defeated countries, revolutions broke out. In the victorious ones, measures of greater justice were regarded as the natural consequence of the contribution which all had made to victory. Everywhere there was a new democratic urge. It was thought that Germany had been precipitated into war by its autocratic Government. President Wilson proclaimed that the fall of the Hohenzollerns was a necessary condition for peace. Everyone agreed with him that peace could only be founded on democracy.

Yet political democracy, which should be one of the safeguards against nations being drawn into war, is neither effective nor genuine unless it is supported and buttressed by the practices of social democracy. A working class which is exploited and over-driven is not capable of taking a fully conscious and enlightened part in the conduct of public affairs. It is liable to be carried away by waves of emotion. It can become the prey of ambitious or misguided Governments. If democracy is a necessary condition for peace, social justice is a necessary condition for democracy. Peace can therefore only be based on social justice. The opening words of Part XIII of the Treaty of Peace are simply a summing up of the general philosophy of the negotiators of Versailles. That philosophy has historical sanction behind it. It has the warrant of the long-standing tradition of the United States of America. It can claim the sanction of their age-long tradition. In Europe, it cannot be disputed that the Socialist movements of all tendencies all through the nineteenth century have been international and pacific movements.

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At a time when there is still so much hesitation about the principles on which the reconstruction of the world should be based, and when there are so many misunderstandings between States because they lack a common will to subordinate

their national interests to the higher interest of peace — in this period of confusion, is it not our one hope to turn back in all sincerity to the common faith in justice which united all nations at the time of the Armistice ?

It is because the International Labour Organisation is conscious that in its current work, humble and limited though that may be, it is maintaining and safeguarding that faith ; it is because it is conscious that in a distracted world it can still offer a firm common basis of action, that it also has the assurance that it is making an effective contribution to the work which the League of Nations is doing for peace. Not only by its work, but by its very existence, it constantly keeps before the public mind the duty of establishing just conditions of labour ; and thus it requires from industry a constant effort of organisation, both within each country and internationally. It is a creator of order and harmony. That above all else is the way in which the practice of social justice helps towards the creation of universal peace. . . .

(“ Social Justice and Universal Peace. ” *Revue de Paris*, 15 March 1924)

He knew how dangerous economic strife between nations can be ; and to him this was just what proved the need for international labour legislation.

. . . This happened at the other end of the world. For some two years past we have seen the battle for the textile industry between India and Japan come into the open at the International Labour Conference. India points out that it observes the Washington Convention, and complains that Japan does not. Thus inequality in labour conditions seems in itself to mean a possibility of international discord, and it is our duty to try to find some solution. Both our Constitution and the nature of our work therefore require us to try to introduce into the world certain of the conditions necessary for peace. . . .

(Lecture at the *Maison du Peuple*, Brussels, 22 April 1922)

. . . The years pass quickly. For some of us they have passed very differently than for others. Possibly the mentality of 1919 has faded from many minds — and from many hearts

too. I do not know whether the memory of those times has remained with you more vividly than it has with some of those who helped us round about 1919, but who now take up an attitude of resistance to the work of the International Labour Organisation. Yet I ask you, whether directly or through the experience which you have acquired since, to go back in mind with me and to try to place yourselves once more in the mental attitude of 1919, when the Armistice had just been concluded, and through the whole period of the peace negotiations.

Is it not true that at that time, under the influence of strong popular movements, not only in the defeated countries where revolutions broke out, but even in the victorious ones where the full distress and misery of war fell most heavily on the working classes — is it not true that men of all classes were agreed in proclaiming that the post-war world must not be the same old world of injustice, hardship and privation which existed before the war? Is it not true that at that time, when all nations could still feel the pain of their scarcely healed wounds, there was an uprush of human solidarity, a spirit of social justice, and a spirit of brotherhood among men?

It was out of that urge in the victorious nations to achieve genuine solidarity, together with the revolutionary attitude among the defeated — from that general feeling that the old world must be regenerated, and that a complete system of new social measures was necessary, that the International Labour Organisation was born.

The difficult task which now lies before us is to try to keep alive that spirit of social justice and human solidarity which was embodied in the Treaty of Peace.

There comes to my mind a phrase of your English poet Shelley. He said: "Poetry redeems from decay the visitations of the divinity in man." Just so there are moments in history when the human spirit seems to rise for an instant above all the controversies of the day, above traditional resentments, and above all the clashes of interest which have set men of different classes against one another, and the idea of social justice is born. It is a rare moment such as all peoples have known at some period of their history.

The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen was proclaimed in my country in 1789, at a time when a common conception of liberty and equality was emerging among all

sections of the people of France. You lived through a similar moment in 1919, although the new conception did not find such solemn expression, and although — perhaps because it happened internationally — it was not so clear-cut. Yet, just as it needed a whole century of effort, innumerable political struggles, and some revolutions too before the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen could be made a reality, even so we shall need years of humdrum everyday work and of modest and humble effort — Conventions not ratified, hostility from the employers, misunderstanding from the workers, antipathies from both sides — before we succeed, through faith and energy supported by the public opinion of all countries, in making the Labour Charter the reality which it ought to be. . . .

. . . As the Treaty of Peace itself says, the idea of universal peace is inseparable from that of social justice. The Preamble to Part XIII of the Treaty — a document which I should like to feel is indelibly engraved in the memory of all peoples — says : “Whereas the League of Nations has for its object the establishment of universal peace, and such a peace can be established only if it is based upon social justice. . .” the nations have decided to set up a permanent labour Organisation. The authors of the Treaty thus linked together the two ideas of universal peace and social justice. Need I emphasise how right they were ? There can be no social justice, no social progress if we do not strive for universal peace. . . .

(Lecture at the Arts School, Cambridge, 27 October 1926)

The League of Nations

It is hardly necessary to emphasise the decisive role which Albert Thomas attributed to the international institutions set up after the war. His view of the part to be played by their staff is illustrated by the following passage :

. . . When I was on my travels, I remember the answer which one member of my staff used to give when he was asked what was his nationality. He would answer : “My nationality ? I am an international of Italian origin.” Well, perhaps it is not altogether an ideal thing to be an international. International life at the present time is so difficult, and it is so hard to build it up, not only in relations with other people, but even within

oneself, that to realise one's ideal in oneself is no easy matter. After all, you do not feel that you are really yourself, either in public controversy or in private life, unless you can manifest to the outside world, by your intelligence or the acts which spring from it, everything in you that is instinctive and original, all that binds you to your native soil and the traditions of the community from which you spring. To be an international in an absolute sense would, as things are now, be to live a rather artificial life and one which would be in a sense an arbitrary creation. . . .

(Speech at the inauguration of the modern languages course initiated by the Staff Committee of the International Labour Office)

He himself had the sense of being at the same time very much a Frenchman and very much an international.

. . . I have particular satisfaction in greeting my French friends today, because their presence here shows that in spite of many difficulties we can count on the ardent and effective sympathy of the great country which they represent and which is also my own. You all know — and I repeat it today with perhaps more than common emotion and solemnity — that we in this Office believe that the international work to which we have devoted ourselves does not obliterate or diminish in any one of us the intimate sense of our own nationality which continues to be our support. It is not by minimising our feelings or trying to suppress them that we have tried to make this Office great; we have always endeavoured to cultivate our own national sentiment in its most refined and enlightened form. That sentiment allows us, on occasions such as the present, when we receive a visit from representatives of our own country, to say in all sincerity how much pleased and touched we are. Today I am happy to receive our French friends. Everyone in this Office is aware — for we meet together from time to time and tell one another all our difficulties — of the discussions which we have had with France; but whatever hesitations and uncertainties French policy, throughout the course of history, may have encountered in times of difficulty, we know that France has never ceased to possess as her heritage the esteem of all the peoples of Europe and of the world, and that all of us here share that feeling of esteem. . . .

(Speech at the reception given at the International Labour Office to the French Delegation to the Assembly of the League of Nations, 29 September 1922)

He stressed the fact that the International Labour Office and the League of Nations were making a joint contribution to the cause of peace, and that their destinies were closely bound up with one another.

... All the institutions of the League depend for their success on the same trends of opinion and the same general political and economic circumstances. Whenever the utility of the International Labour Organisation is questioned, and attempts are made to restrict its activity and diminish its influence, it is not long before the Secretariat of the League of Nations and the other associated bodies suffer similar attacks. Their courses are affected by the same tides of fortune, just as those of heavy linked barges are by the eddies and currents of a great river. If those responsible for the administration of these great organisations were ever tempted to forget their common origins and interests, if they allowed themselves to be drawn into petty bureaucratic rivalries, if they neglected to unite their efforts, circumstances would soon recall them to reality and to their duty. . . .

(Report to the International Labour Conference, 1924)

... I have always held the view that it would be an error to try to dissociate the International Labour Organisation from the League of Nations. For one thing, it would be constitutionally impossible. One article of the Treaty of Peace says that the International Labour Office is part of the organisation of the League. But I would draw your attention to one fact in particular : international life is one and indivisible. Its different parts cannot be separated. When the League sails before a favouring wind, when it succeeds in establishing great protocols on security and disarmament, when its Assemblies are full of enthusiasm and are attended by the Premiers of the great countries, then the International Labour Office too marches forward. There are Conferences like that of 1924, when we succeeded, by our insistence, in inducing the great industrial countries to accept legislation on the eight-hour day. . . .

(Lecture at the University of Buenos Aires, 31 July 1925)

... The League of Nations — Lord Robert Cecil often reverted to this idea — has no secure foundation except in world public opinion. Only a public opinion which ardently believes in the need to organise peace — which means the need for a League of Nations — can oblige each sovereign State to accept the voluntary limitations of sovereignty on which the League is based.

Public opinion, however, remains ineffective unless it is organised. It remains ineffective if it has no means of expression. In an industrialised society such as ours, it is through their trade union organisations that the masses of the population find the most complete and forcible means of expression for their needs, and in the long run for their opinions too.

They are in fact constitutionally represented in the International Labour Office, even though in a limited way and by a procedure which may be open to objection. The Governments which signed the Treaties have undertaken to appoint the Employers' and Workers' delegates to the Conference in agreement with the most representative organisations of employers or workpeople as the case may be in each country. The Permanent Court of International Justice has emphasised in one of its advisory opinions that this is not simply a moral obligation but a strict undertaking. The guarantee thus afforded to them has made the industrial masses attached to the International Labour Office. They have felt themselves deeply concerned in its work. Many of them were already organised for international action, and as the work of the Office began to be effective it made them realise the value of the League of Nations.

There is one contrast to which attention has often been drawn. The members of the Assembly of the League of Nations are diplomats, direct representatives of Governments. They are not very often members of Parliament. In the International Labour Conference, on the other hand, the peoples are represented through their trade organisations. Employers and workers sit in the Conference, nation by nation, with plenary powers, and do not receive instructions from their Governments. The workers in particular have seized on this opportunity to assert their firm determination to achieve justice and peace, and their faith in the idea of a League of Nations.

It is true that the sole object of the International Labour Organisation, strictly speaking, is the protection of labour. Yet it is natural that the League of Nations should look to the International Labour Office, which forms "part of the organisation" of the League, to help it to secure the backing of public opinion and popular support which it needs for its work of promoting peace.

To look at the practical situation : when the League wanted the great industrial interests to be represented on the Advisory Committee on Disarmament, the League Council asked the Governing Body of the International Labour Office to select representatives from its own Employers' and Workers' groups. In current practice, constant relations have been established through a multiplicity of channels between the members of the International Labour Conference or the Governing Body and the principal departments of the League, and these play their part whenever it is necessary to appeal to public opinion. The labour leaders, traditionally attached as they are to the politics of their party, have, by a natural extension of their function in the International Labour Office, become the most ardent champions of the League. The direct representation of the peoples in the International Labour Organisation, however incomplete and precarious it may still be, has become a strong buttress for the diplomatic action of the League. The spirit of 1919 has survived, even though in a less visible form ; at any rate as far as personalities are concerned, the striving for social justice and the striving for peace remain indissolubly united. . . .

(" Social Justice and Universal Peace ", 15 March 1924)

. . . The League of Nations ! Those three words in themselves show how greatly the scene has changed. Now that the war is over, here we are, all of us, working tenaciously and painstakingly to build up a new world. A new world was felt to be necessary after the sufferings of the war. The late war was the most cruel, the most ruthless, the most terrible of wars. It was not only a war of opposing armies ; not only a war of armaments ; it was a war of peoples, and all, even women, old men and children, were cast into the furnace.

For that reason, when the time came for the peace negotiations, all men seemed to be united in a single idea — means must

be found to banish war from the world. Firm and lasting peace must be established at last among men. Now that so many countries are free and independent, they must, if they are to safeguard that independence, learn to live side by side in brotherhood and peace.

He defended the newly instituted League of Nations against its critics.

. . . We must always remember how long the League has been in existence. It is four years old. A child of four has "potentialities", as the philosopher Hegel said, but it has not as yet much else. The League is four years old, and it has taken as its programme a new conception of world organisation. It is four years old; and institutions which are four years old, even when they are destined for the most brilliant future, have some difficulty in establishing themselves. When I was thinking over the development of the League of Nations, I could not help remembering the early days of the French monarchy under the Capets. That monarchy, which was one day to unite the whole country under its sway, which was to overcome not only the great feudal lords but also the great governors who succeeded them at the time of the League, and even the last remnants of provincial and communal liberties — that King of France whose successors were to be so mighty (*primus inter pares*) trembled before the insults of the feudal lords, for they were stronger than he, although he was the inheritor of the law of Rome in a country which was just beginning to become centralised. If the League of Nations sometimes hesitates or feels uncertain, who can blame it?

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. . . Many of the men of this University who are present here today are deeply imbued with the classical culture of Greece and Rome. They will remember that when in ancient days there was laid upon Aeneas the task of founding Rome, the Great City, he had to wander all over the Mediterranean world. He was tossed by tempests; he aroused the wrath of the gods; he had to face the animosity of men. Yet he carried his gods with him wherever he went, strong in the faith that destiny would in the end find out its way. I too am convinced that destiny will in the end find out its way. It may be that

protocols are signed and then forgotten ; it may be that Conventions encounter manifold difficulties before they can be ratified. Grave crises in the affairs of Europe may one day arise again, and the League of Nations may be shaken or even swept away ; but the spirit and ideal of the League will survive through the will of the nations which care for peace. . . .

(Lecture at the University of Belgrade, 9 February 1926)

He always maintained that the League of Nations should have the effective constitution and means of action which it still lacked.

. . . These, in my view, are the three principles, the three ideas which must never be given up. The League of Nations must make peace ; the League must become *the Federal State, the United States of Europe or of the world* — according, if you like, to the old formulas of the men of '48. And finally, the League must remain faithful to the mission laid down for it by its creators. Should we oppose all this ? Should we engage in a pitched battle within our own organisations to alter the established framework and destroy the existing rules ? No. My view is that in our daily work we should always strive to *remain faithful to these fundamental principles, to be deeply imbued with them, never to consent to any retreat from them, never to give way where they are concerned, but to go on, day after day, acting with all the necessary prudence.* . . .

(Lecture at the Athénée, Geneva, February 1924)

. . . The League of Nations must be democratic, or it will be nothing. . . .

There will be no League unless the nations first determine their respective rights and duties. Those rights and duties have been formulated in the policy of nationalities. They may be summed up in the right of self-determination for all nations, whether great or small. The methods of application of this right may vary : a negro tribe and a civilised State are not capable of exercising it to an equal degree. The first thing is, however, that the principle should be established and that a corresponding jurisprudence should give sanction to its various modes of application.

Moreover, if the League of Nations is the natural outcome of the democratic movement, its power for good will not be fully manifested unless the peoples consolidate it by their support. At the beginning, perhaps, it will be nothing more than a sort of covenant binding States by mutual obligations limited to certain political rights common to all nations, and confining its action to a body of measures designed to prevent war. Yet even in this limited form, it will have no practical effect unless it has public opinion behind it, and is supported by the masses of the population. The covenant must not be solely a covenant between Governments ; Parliament must ratify it.

President Wilson insisted strongly on this point : no League of Nations is possible unless the peoples themselves have it in their power to decide on peace or war, and unless they can control diplomacy, which must be open diplomacy ; unless, in a word, within the nation itself, they are masters of their fate through representative assemblies and universal suffrage.

Perhaps it may be thought sufficient at first to replace traditional diplomats by a few popularly elected persons or representatives of different occupational groups in the Council of the League of Nations ; but sooner or later the character of the League will have to be transformed. If it is still too soon to set up an international Parliament and Government, at least the Assembly of delegates and perhaps even the Executive Council must be seen to be a genuine emanation from the peoples.

It is thus the duty of democrats to realise that the League is really theirs, that it can only live through their political life, and that it can only develop side by side with democracy. Like democracy itself, it will perhaps start by existing in the political sphere, and later on extend to the social.

The second practical conclusion is that the old conception of national sovereignty is obsolete. I know about the reservations with which the ablest of our statesmen and the most faithful partisans of the League hedge around their statements when it comes to the question of national sovereignty. Their theory is a very attractive one. National sovereignty, they say, remains intact, but it consents to limit itself ; it is by their own sovereign act that the nations limit their sovereignty. All that is very good as far as it goes, and it is a great advance on the position of the jurists of former times who maintained bluntly

and categorically that the State was sovereign, that no consideration and no higher law could restrict its will, and that time itself could not set a limit to any of its claims.

The British have looked at facts more closely. They rightly say that between the sovereign State, the independent State and the autonomous State enjoying self-government there is in the long run very little difference. That difference will tend to diminish still more within the League of Nations.

As international life becomes more and more of a reality, the very conception of what a nation is will change. The citizen will no longer be legally, politically and socially immured within the frontiers of his nationality. As an individual he will enjoy a greater degree of freedom in the various national States, and from the very growth of national movements there will spring up a sort of universal democracy which does not yet exist except in embryo. It is owing to that state of affairs that the Peace Conference finds it so difficult to settle many of the questions with which it has to deal.

The old notions of sovereignty and of balance of power between sovereign States persist unconsciously even in minds which are trying to free themselves from them. It is not sufficiently realised what the League means, and the conditions of international life are not yet fixed enough for people to free themselves from the conception of States capable of arranging their own affairs and living in isolation. . . .

Already, however, even under the actual Covenant as now before the Peace Conference, the "High Contracting Parties" will be subject to a body of regulations and of higher laws which limit their sovereignty. . . .

The third practical conclusion is that probably the limitation of sovereignty will not be confined exclusively to relations between State and State. By an inevitable development, the League of Nations will find it necessary to seek for guarantees of peace in the internal policy of States.

Every time that President Wilson attempted to pass from theory to practice — and it is to his eternal credit that he did so — he found himself obliged to propose interventions of this kind. It was he who said, in various forms and on several occasions right up to the eve of the Armistice, that no treaty with Germany was possible until the Hohenzollerns were driven

out and militarism destroyed, and until there was a new German Constitution guaranteeing that the power to wage war would in fact rest with the German people themselves. What was that, in the last resort, but an intervention, and a very necessary intervention, in the internal affairs of a State ?

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The League of Nations — this is the fourth and last conclusion — cannot develop and assert itself unless it proceeds from purely political and legal action to economic and social action. . . .

When the time comes, as it soon will, to provide food supplies for a world in which production has greatly diminished ; when it becomes necessary to regulate the distribution of raw materials among States whose stocks are exhausted, new rules will have to be established between nations. . . .

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It will be the particular task of the workers' international movement, especially in its trade union form, to carry out the twofold task of the economic and social organisation of the League of Nations. Lasting peace will not come solely from the immediate experience of war, but also from the democratic aspirations of an entire century, and from the will to freedom of past generations. It is for the present generation, by its work, by its ardent faith and by its clear vision, to complete the work of its predecessors.

(Preface to J. TCHERNOFF's book : *Les Nations et la Société des Nations*, 1919)

Disarmament

Inseparably connected with the problem of peace is the problem of disarmament. Even when the Geneva discussions on this subject were still in the preparatory stage, Albert Thomas foresaw that the struggle would be hard.

. . . This is the battle which democracy has to fight in all countries : the battle against all those who are still living in the past, and who still seek the security of their own country in the balance of power, in alliances, and in other obsolete methods. I too want my own country to be secure ; I too believe that French security is one of the essential problems of present-day international life ; but it is in the League of Nations and its whole

policy — a policy of justice to all nations, a policy of bringing about a change of administration and a change of heart in all nations — it is in such a policy alone that I look for security. During the war I manufactured enough millions of pounds' worth of munitions to know that no security preparations can be of as much use as moral disarmament; that is the only possible guarantee of universal peace. That is a thing which needs to be said, and to be said at all times and in all places. If there are still among us any students, any of the younger generation, it is their duty to declare it before public opinion in all the democracies. It is for them too — notwithstanding certain extreme views which have been expressed in my own country, for instance — to dissipate the phantasmagoria of a return to a policy of force and violence. That is the first idea. If we give it up — well, the result is quite simple : there will no longer be a League of Nations . . .

(Lecture at the Athénée, Geneva, February 1924)

He believed that the help of all men of good will was needed to bring about disarmament and organise peace; and he knew that he could at any rate count on that of the working classes.

. . . Finally, there is a third great force making for peace : one which is hardly open to question, one which, both before and since the war, has remained true to its faith in peace, one which has never ceased to stand at all times for the development and the building up of peace. I refer to the organised workers. I need hardly spend many words in demonstrating that in war it is the working masses who suffer most severely. . . .

(Lecture at the Institute of Oceanography, Paris, 6 December 1927)

He appealed for moral support wherever it might be found; an example is the following address to the World Alliance for Promoting International Friendship through the Churches.

. . . It is comforting to feel that your fervent conviction accompanies and surrounds us. Certainly I never doubt that one day, of necessity, peace will be established among men. Mankind has now reached a point at which it realises that without peace it cannot accomplish its destiny or attain the ideal of civilisation and well-being which it has set as its aim.

Yet how slow to act, how often lacking in constancy and determination, are the spiritual forces which ought to lead human communities towards these ends ! Sometimes those of us who work in the international institutions have the satisfaction of knowing that, rising up towards us and joining in the endeavour of our Conferences, we can feel the confused yet powerful aspirations which show that all nations are animated by a common longing for peace and unity. Yet only too often, alas, and for long periods, we suffer on the contrary from the indifference, the apathy and the slackness of public opinion. When we have to send out a call from Geneva to remind States of obligations undertaken, promises given, or the urgent need for co-operation which has not been forthcoming, we cannot help fearing that our active work may shrink and shrivel into petty bureaucratic functions, meaningless procedure and empty words. But when a fresh wind blows on us from the wide ocean, swells our sails and carries us onward towards our harbour, need I tell you with what joy we draw it into our lungs ?

(August 1928)

He often said that we should never cease to talk of peace.

. . . Aristide Briand often says : " We must talk of peace." We should talk of it constantly, so that the thought of peace may be in our minds when the day comes to take our stand for peace. We must " cry out for peace ". . . Above all, since we are to talk of peace, let us talk of it in precise terms, and in such a way as to make it possible to educate people for peace. . . .

(" Education, Labour and Peace. " Lecture in the Aula of the University of Geneva, 19 April 1928)

He constantly urged the importance of education.

. . . There can never be peace, either international or social, without democracy, but there can never be democracy without education and without the life of the mind ; this has been a favourite theme of mine for many years. But the first condition for any sort of intellectual freedom is the emancipation of the workers from the shackles of poverty, and that is what we demand. . . .

(" The Duties of the Intellectual Worker in Modern Society, " 11 March 1930)

He lived to see the opening of the Disarmament Conference, from which so much was hoped. In his last Annual Report he welcomed it in the following passage :

... Is it necessary to say with what ardour and what passionate attention the International Labour Conference, realising as it does the close connection between all the efforts which are made to organise peace, will follow the work of the Disarmament Conference ?

This is certainly not because of any idea that, as some have maintained, the limitation of armaments will increase unemployment by throwing out of work the men employed in munition factories. That objection is easily answered. The rate at which armaments are reduced will — unfortunately — probably be quite slow enough to allow of all the necessary adjustments. Besides, even when the manufacture of armaments was suddenly stopped in 1919, the war industries easily adapted themselves to other kinds of manufacture. It will not be very difficult to establish a scheme for the reconversion of war industries, especially at a time when attempts are being made to develop a policy of public works and national equipment.

A still more important consideration is that if the Disarmament Conference succeeds in bringing about a substantial reduction in armaments, it will mean at the same time a reduction in the appalling annual expenditure of 25,000 million Swiss francs which weighs so heavily on tax-payers everywhere. It will alleviate the fiscal charges which hamper industrial undertakings. It will mean the return of thousands of men to productive work, and will tend to increase consumption. It will mean that there is more money available for social expenditure and what may be called the budget of civilisation. One publicist has said, with a touch of hostile irony, that the International Labour Office was already prepared to suggest to Governments how they should use the funds set free by the reduction of armaments budgets. Of course the Governing Body has not so far instructed the Office to carry out an enquiry of this kind ! Yet would it really be so absurd ? Would it be so incompatible with the task of trying to promote the humane conditions of life and labour, better standards of living and a higher civilisation which are promised in the Labour Charter ?

The International Labour Conference thus looks to the Disarmament Conference for effective help in the solution of

the economic depression. It is to be hoped that in return it will, by reaffirming its lofty ideal of justice and humanity and by providing a proof that co-operation between nations can be and has been realised, give the Disarmament Conference encouragement and effective assistance. . . .

(Report to the International Labour Conference, 1932)

The development of events did not fulfil Albert Thomas' hopes. Unfortunately it showed only too clearly the justification for his fears.

Among all his recorded utterances, none perhaps are more moving to read today than those which he devoted to a general discussion of this problem. These passages reflect his experience, his hopes, his faith — but also the apprehensions which his sense of reality aroused in his mind as early as 1921, only two years after the conclusion of peace.

. . . The International Labour Conference, which has just closed, sent President Harding and the Washington Conference a telegram which, so to speak, justifies in advance the presence here of the Director of the International Labour Office.

Disarmament and social justice are closely bound up with one another. There can be no social justice in a society which is constantly menaced by war; and if the world continues to suffer injustice, hardship and privation, universal peace will always be in danger.

It is therefore appropriate that I should come here. I came, too, out of a sense of duty, because I believe that no manifestation of public opinion in favour of the establishment of permanent peace should be passed over by any man who cares for peace. Yet I must admit that I come to your meeting, full of enthusiasm as it is, with a mind haunted by memories and an anxious heart. This is, I believe, the first time since the war that I am again engaging in propaganda for disarmament, in concert with the courageous propagandists of the World Union of Women; and I cannot help remembering what happened before and during the war, and also what has already happened since it ended.

Before the war, my Socialist friends in all countries and I myself for years carried on propaganda for peace. International Socialism foresaw the coming catastrophe. Almost the

sole topic discussed at the great pre-war international congresses was the duty of Socialists in time of war. When we returned from Stuttgart in 1907, our great Jaurès had to suffer every kind of insult and calumny because he wished at the same time to destroy the urge towards imperialism in France and to arm his country as completely as possible against aggression.

How often, at the time of the tragic armaments race, during the discussions on the three years' period of military service, and during the debates on new armaments, did we not address enthusiastic crowds in Paris? Those crowds too shouted with us, and proclaimed in every way that they did not want war. . . . How often, too, did I travel to Berlin to attend German meetings and affirm a desire for peace which the German Socialists appeared to share to an equal extent? . . . I came back in 1913 with a joint manifesto of the two parties declaring that there must be no war. Yet in spite of all those declarations, in spite of all the manifestations and manifestos, in spite of all the undertakings which had been given, all the members of both parties joined up. . . .

War came. For my part, I have no regrets for the war-time policy which we adopted. All of us in our party did our duty; and whatever interpretations may be placed today on our war policy or on war-time Socialism, I still believe that we defended justice, the freedom of our country, and the right.

All the soldiers who went to the front, and all who fell, strongly as they believed that they were fighting for justice and freedom, also had another thought in mind: all of them believed that if they sacrificed themselves, it was in order that this war should be the last war. I call to witness all those who were in the company of soldiers during the war; I call to witness the letters the soldiers wrote, their correspondence, much of which has since been published; I call to witness our own memories: that thought was in the minds of all.

I have often spoken of a scene at which I was present in one of our Socialist branches in Paris. It was in the midst of the war, at a time when some people were beginning to doubt and to hesitate. One of our comrades was back from the front on leave. He had come to the branch, just as he used to do in peacetime, and he brought his little girl of twelve with him. He sat at the back of the room, listening to the arguments, the political discussions, and the criticism of those members who

were in the Government. For a long time he kept silent ; and then he stood up and said : " Comrades, you can argue how you like ; you can criticise the attitude of the Government. As for me, I am a soldier. I am going back to the front tomorrow, and I shall go with just one idea : that this little girl here may never again see war." And, as I have said, that was what everyone thought.

Right in the middle of the war we received messages from Washington expressing this almost unanimous feeling of the peoples ; we heard the words of President Wilson, that man who not long ago was called " one of the war casualties ". I believe that at this meeting, whatever the mockery and insult to which he has been exposed, we shall be unanimous in recognising in his words the voice of the conscience of mankind.

We have campaigned for the League of Nations, and we have tried to find by what means, whether legal, political or economic, we could realise the motto with which my friend Edgar Milhaud headed his book : " Never again ! Never again ! " It was the universal cry : No more war ! That was what the Treaty of Peace was to do for us. Now the Treaty has come into being. Who would venture to say that on this point it has fully justified the hopes of mankind ?

I am not among those who scorn the Covenant of the League of Nations in the form in which it has been established. I am one of those who believe that we should try at all times and by all methods to make a reality of such fragments of a peace settlement as the Covenant makes possible. Nevertheless, as a speaker said a few moments ago, how often do we hear talk of the possibility of another war ? That shows that the danger is still present. How many of the press articles which we read about the Washington Conference try to estimate the relative strength of America and Japan ? And how many people are wondering whether the Washington discussions will entirely remove the danger of a war between America and Japan ?

The world is weary. The world is in a state of disorder, disorganisation and anarchy. Even the minds of men seem to have fallen into lethargy, and to shrink back from the immensity of the problems which press upon them.

President Harding has convened the Washington Conference. We should be very sincerely grateful to the President

and to the United States of America for having once more raised the problem of disarmament in a definite form, even though in a regional and partial one.

The League of Nations has certainly not been inactive. There have been many Committees — perhaps too many. Yet the very fact that it was the United States of America, which had so long held aloof, which was suddenly taking up the question gave it more definiteness, a wider scope and a greater impact on public opinion than the League could give it. In any case, it is to the great credit of President Harding that he has raised the problem of the reconciliation and *rapprochement* of all nations from the angle of disarmament.

I have told you of my memories ; I should now like to tell you of my anxieties — I might almost say my criticisms.

Since the war I have seen the workers meet together once more. I have been present at the adoption of resolutions similar to those of which I was speaking a moment ago. Here in Geneva I have seen an unforgettable sight. It was the day when the miners of all countries held their meeting to discuss with one another, just as they used to do before the war, what they could do to prevent war. After the French miners had spoken, and then the German miners in their turn, all of them were carried away by a great wave of fraternal feeling, and they joined hands in the old Scottish fashion, forming a “ chain of friendship ” all round the hall, and broke all together into the *Internationale*, which they sang with an almost religious fervour which was intensely moving. There was no question then of vain and sterile formulas. There was the genuine determination of all those men to achieve disarmament. The question is, by what means ?

I listened very carefully just now to the argument of our friend Lange. I am grateful to him for having simplified our task by reminding us of the definite schemes drawn up before the war. These have been taken up again by the League and brought before the public. I must confess, however, that I have certain doubts about the value of these methods of disarmament. Looking at each measure separately, I wonder how far they would guarantee the security of States.

In naval matters, a reduction in the number of large units is effective ; but there are discussions about submarines. We are bound to ask how far a well-organised submarine campaign

can make up for the absence of large naval units. How far can the use of the mercantile marine affect the inequality, the equality, or the proportion of strength fixed for the navy? If, moreover, the human mind is as ingenious as our friend Privat suggested just now; if there can be any number of new inventions which can replace one another and so make war still possible in spite of all controls, where is the guarantee for peace?

Take land armaments. There, the position is still worse. At the time when France had to be armed, I often thought over these problems. How did we wage war? With our armaments. French armament was considerably inferior to German; British armament was practically non-existent. The other day, when I was in Berlin, I met the man who had been my opposite number during the war — the man who was trying to find out what I was doing, just as I tried to find out what he was doing, by means of the almost daily reports which reached us from France and Germany respectively; I met Mr. Walther Rathenau. Some French officers were present. We exchanged our impressions about the work which we had been doing, and we discussed disarmament, in the presence of General Nollet. The technicians who were present, as well as the two civilians who had played a part in the war effort, all agreed: "Armaments prepared in advance are of course very important. But what really counted during the war was the industrial power which was thrown into the struggle. It was the total mobilisation of industry brought about by the war which finally determined which side would win." This is so true that during the war what we had in mind was the total mobilisation of industry.

The great art of any future war will be the organisation of industrial mobilisation; how can an industry be converted for war purposes in the least possible time? How can each element of the machine be prepared? How can a chemical works or a factory manufacturing fertilisers be converted, perhaps in a month — that is just about the time needed for the mobilisation and concentration of military forces — into a great war factory manufacturing explosives? That is the problem.

Armaments may be reduced; but if there are many new inventions, the nation which has made the best preparation for mobilisation, and has so organised its labour force and its factories that it can throw its whole industrial power into the

war without delay, will have gained a great advantage. If in addition there have been a number of new inventions, the danger to its adversary may be great indeed.

When we were disarming, during the negotiations for the Treaty of Peace, I said in the Chamber of Deputies : " The mobilisation of a country can be contained in a single room." During the war we were in difficulties for five months as regards the manufacture of shell-testing gauges and of artillery. Suppose the gauges were ready ; suppose that instead of having to do the slow and careful scientific work of verification in the midst of the tumult of war, you had it all ready. You would enter the war with a vigour and an impetus which might carry you on to victory.

These are the reflections — pessimistic as they may seem — which I should like to put before the men and women of Geneva who are present tonight. Do not think that it is because I am tired or lacking in faith. But I for my part do not want to keep on going to meetings — whether it be the co-operative congresses at Glasgow or Basle, or trade union congresses or political meetings — and come back with nothing more than expressions of opinion. We want to have an end of war, we shout " Down with war ! " and yet on the very day when war is declared, under the pressure of public opinion, all the declarations made in time of peace are swept away like straws before the wind. . . .

No, I am not a doubter, not a sceptic, and I regard the disarmament measures now under discussion at Washington, and the slow, methodical, but powerful endeavour of the League of Nations as pledges of peace. Yet nothing of all that will avail except in so far as it is supported by the public opinion of all countries.

What I like about the Washington proposals is that even though some of the measures proposed may be lacking in effectiveness, they do what is needed, and that is, to place the disarmament problem squarely before public opinion.

What is needed in the control of the private manufacture of armaments — whatever evasions there may be, whatever uncertainties — is that public opinion should be on the alert, and should not let itself be drugged and poisoned as it was by the campaigns carried on before the war.

Privat was alluding to this a few moments ago, and Lange

too spoke of poisonous journalism. I know the journalists to whom he was referring — I have seen and known them before the war. I need hardly remind you of the story of the Krupp lawsuit, and the publication of the telegram to the *Figaro* of Paris stating that 15,000 machine guns of a new type were being manufactured in Berlin. There was a great stir in Paris. The *Journal* published articles on the need for rearmament. Then Krupp's at once took up the campaign on the other side of the frontier. Thus on both sides there was constant pressure for the manufacture of armaments.

I can tell you another even more curious story from personal experience. One day it was learned in Paris that the Putiloff works in Petrograd were to be bought by a German financial group. It was a press sensation. There was a regular campaign in the French newspapers. Jaurès and I put down a question in Parliament about the manœuvres of the international metal industry. The question duly came up for discussion. The Putiloff works were not sold to Krupp's, and French opinion breathed again. Some years later, when war had broken out, I was in touch with French industrialists. One of them said to me : " Well, now we can speak openly. I took you in nicely, didn't I ? " — " What about ? The Putiloff affair ? " — " Why, yes, the Putiloff affair. . . . That telegram ? Well, it was we who wrote it, at ten o'clock one night in the office of the *Echo de Paris* . . . We wrote it because at that time we were in danger from that other group ; it was not a German group, it was not Krupp's, it was another French group ! "

And so, because two French industrial groups in Petrograd both wanted the Putiloff works, the whole of French public opinion was thrown into agitation ; there were quantities of newspaper articles, Paris was stirred up against Germany in the belief that it was trying to gain control of the entire Russian metal industry, speakers of all shades of opinion mounted the rostrum, and the whole country was thrown into a state of excitement because two groups of financiers were struggling for the possession of a factory !

The question is simply whether public opinion in all countries is to go on letting itself be led to the slaughter and involved in the crime of war by the hirelings of some particular firm, or by the interests of financial groups. The question is whether a public opinion can be formed which is determined

not to put up with such things. I noted this evening, as I listened to the various speakers, from Mrs. d'Arcis to my friends Lange and Privat, that while all of them supported disarmament, they all said that there was only one force — one only, the will and action of men and women, *not in empty public manifestations, but each one by himself, cultivating his intelligence and his will, each person as an individual* — which could ensure that in time of war our common duty should be done.

I have tried, following the tradition of our philosophers, to determine what is our duty and what motives should actuate us. I should like to conclude this evening simply by reading to you a few lines written by a man whose work inspires much of what is being done today, even though his name is hardly known — a man who inspired Marx and many of the greatest Socialists, and who foresaw, sometimes right down to the details, the organisation of the modern world. I refer to that modest Socialist of the old days, Constantin Pecqueur. It was Pecqueur who wrote, round about 1845 :

“The time has come to call upon those men who are in touch with realities ; to call together meetings of the nations to seek for real means of reconciling and associating the interests of all peoples, to perfect international law, to formulate an international code, a world-wide system of political economy, and the principles which should govern commercial relations. Everything that would promote unity of language, of weights and measures, of civil and criminal law between nations must also be reckoned as a powerful instrument of peace and concord. It is education for peace which will bring us peace.”

It is with those words that I will close. Let us try, each for himself and all together, to educate ourselves for peace, and then we shall give the world the strength which it needs to secure at the same time both disarmament and peace.

(Speech at the Salle de la Réformation, Geneva, 21 November 1921)

