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ORGANISATIONS TO IMMIGRATION**

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Introductory Remarks

The role played by trade union and craft organisations in the field of immigration and the influence of such organisations on public opinion in some immigration countries are today so important that it is desirable to explain precisely - in so far as the available information permits - the views and demands of workers' representatives with regard to immigration.

The keen interest of trade unions and craft associations in international migration is due to the fact that such migration has a considerable effect on the living and working conditions of the working class in emigration and immigration countries and that migrants are generally workers who - with their families - need more protection than other workers.

Workers' organisations have become increasingly active in the migration field, as in all other spheres of economic and social life, while, at the same time, public authorities have taken steps to formulate policy or adopt regulations in this field. At first, workers merely sought an opportunity of participating in the discussions of official bodies responsible for migration questions and emphasised the need

to grant immigrants living and working conditions equal to those of national workers. Later, however, after the economic crisis of the thirties came to give more careful consideration to the different aspects of the migration problem and to define clearly their attitude in regard thereto. Since then, and especially during the period following the last war, when European migration (including migration of refugees) increased considerably and again became a subject of current interest, workers' organisations have been closely associated with new trends of thought in relation to migration and with the discussions of the competent national authorities and of international organisations active in this field at the European and world levels. Moreover, in accordance with the provisions of I.L.O. Recommendation (No. 86) concerning Migration for Employment, adopted in 1949, workers' organisations are today consulted on migration questions in most of the main emigration and immigration countries.(1). Even in countries where there is no official consultation procedure, workers' organisations have an opportunity of obtaining a hearing for their views.

At the international and European levels, in addition

1) Australia, Austria, Belgium, France, Italy, Japan, New Zealand, Sweden, Switzerland and United Kingdom.

to constitutional participation in the discussions and decisions of the International Labour Organisation and the European Coal and Steel Community (1), workers' organisations are now associated, in an advisory capacity, with the work of the United Nations, O.E.E.C., I.C.E.M. and the Council of Europe. Thus, although trade union organisations do not always have a say in the decisions taken at the national and international levels, they nevertheless play an important role in the migration field.

The Attitude of Workers' Organisations

Faced with these new and important responsibilities, workers' organisations have had to give more frequent consideration to migration problems and to make a more thorough study of such problems. Special bodies responsible for following developments in the migration field have been set up within the framework of the International Federation of Christian Trade Unions and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (2).

1) And, soon the Common Market.

2) The latter carried out, in 1954, a special inquiry among its affiliated organisations. The results of this inquiry were published in its series of Study Guides (Problems of International Migration) (I.C.F.T.U., Brussels, 1954).

Moreover, the question of migration has been on the agenda of several world congresses of these two international bodies and ^a special I.C.F.T.U. conference on international migration was held in Nervi in July 1956.

It is at such congresses, in particular, that the views and the attitude of workers' representatives with regard to migration have been defined and their ~~wishes~~ expressed;(1).

With respect to doctrine, the I.F.C.T.U. and the I.C.U. F.T.U. do not always speak the same language, but in so far as basic principles are concerned, their attitudes are sufficiently similar to be considered simultaneously in general statement.

In the view of these two international trade union organisations, international migration must, in the first place, always be considered from the standpoint of a full employment policy and the raising of workers' living conditions. Furthermore, it should be organised in a manner in keeping with the interests of all parties concerned - emigration countries, immigration countries and migrant workers. Finally, while the economic and social needs of emigration countries should be taken into account, the primary aim, in organising migratory movements, should be to ensure that

1) These wishes refer mainly to workers' participation in national and international bodies concerned with migration and to the application of the principle of equality of treatment.

they are adapted to the economic situation and the state of the employment market in immigration countries.

It is therefore the attitude of workers' organisations in immigration countries which is of fundamental importance and which can influence the development of manpower movements. This attitude may find expression at the national, regional or local level through the medium of organisations representing workers in one or several trades.(1). As a general rule, its underlying factor is the fear that if immigration is not adjusted to employment opportunities and occupational needs, it may create a threat to full employment. Uneasiness on this point is all the more serious because it is often added to the fear of technological unemployment and because the surplus manpower available in some countries does not always possess the skill required. In consequence, it is considered that the admission of foreign manpower would adversely affect the living and working conditions of workers in immigration countries (including aliens who have previously immigrated), since employers would tend to use foreign manpower in a way likely to create unfair competition with national workers and thus weaken the bargaining position of the national workers' organisations.

1) Account is taken here only of craft organisation in general, since the problems connected with immigration of professional workers in particular are more complex.

These fears do not apply to migration based on political grounds, as refugees, expellees and displaced persons are accepted in a humanitarian spirit. On the other hand, in respect of immigration for economic reasons, the attitude of national workers' organisations varies according to the depth of such fears which, in turn, depends upon the economic and social conditions prevailing in the country and the nature and effectiveness of the regulations concerning admission of foreign workers. It is impossible to review in detail the position in this respect in each of the main immigration countries. It may however be said that, on the whole, the attitude of trade union and craft organisations is more favourable to immigration in overseas countries than in Europe, where it is sometimes decidedly negative.

In countries such as Canada and Australia, the economic situation is very favourable and the whole economy is developing rapidly. Foreign workers are admitted on the basis of anticipated manpower needs, i.e. in consideration of the economic development which is expected to take place in the relatively near future. Moreover, there is a wide range of manpower needs. In consequence, it is easier to correct any lack of balance caused by technical developments. At the same time, the risk of an influx of underemployed or unemployed immigrants is lessened by distance. The

attitude of the national trade union organisations (representing various trades) is favourable to immigration in so far as it meets the requirements laid down by the international organisations to which they are affiliates. The trade unions insist mainly on the need to organise migratory movements in a manner which will ensure a regular influx of immigrants over a long period and thus avoid alternations between a liberal policy (likely to cause unemployment or inflation) and sudden restrictive measures which are troublesome both for migrants and for the receiving country.

A similar attitude is adopted by trade union organisations in the United States. However, immigration from Europe to that country is not directly linked with economic development. The trade unions are concerned mainly with the question of Mexican immigrants, in respect of whom they demand strict application of the principle of equality of treatment as regard wages and other working conditions.

In the above-mentioned countries, a more reserved attitude is adopted by certain craft organisations which have more direct responsibilities in so far as ^{the} employment and living conditions of their members are concerned. In some trades, where wages and productivity are higher than elsewhere and which are particularly sought after by national workers, the organisations concerned endeavour,

on the one hand, to keep employment slightly below the level which be reached, in order to avoid subsequent adjustments and the resultant high social charges, and, on the other hand, to limit the admission of foreign workers in the lower wage categories. However, in view of the variety and permanent character of manpower needs in these countries, the attitude of a few craft organisations does not greatly influence migratory movements as a whole.

The situation is different in the European immigration countries where economic development is slower and manpower needs affect only a few branches of the economy. In these countries, immigration is more strictly regulated. In addition, there are various provisions relating to the admission of aliens to employment. The introduction of foreign manpower is thus permitted only on the basis of firm offers of employment, i.e. to fill vacancies for which no applicants have ^{been} found among national workers or foreign workers previously admitted to the country. The fear of technological unemployment is strong in these countries, all the more so because foreign manpower is generally needed only in one or a few sectors of the economy, which do not attract sufficient recruits among the national workers, or only in certain regions of the country. In consequence, the economic considerations already mentioned in connection with overseas countries result in a much

more reserved attitude on the part of workers' organisations in the European immigration countries. The shortage of housing also plays a more important role in Europe. Furthermore, the methods used to regulate the admission of foreign workers over a given period (fixing of approximate quotas either by the government, in agreement with the employers' and workers' organisations concerned, or by such organisation jointly; fixing of percentages based on the number of national workers employed) give workers' organisations, particularly those representing only one trade, the opportunity of exerting a direct influence on government policy and the volume of immigration, even more so at the local and regional levels than at the national level.

However, both in the overseas countries and, especially, in Europe, the fears of these organisations with regard to immigration do not spring solely from a desire to avoid sudden changes in the employment situation in certain branches of activity or to limit the recruitment of foreign manpower to workers with relatively high occupational qualifications. They are based ^{also} - and perhaps to a far greater extent - on considerations relating to certain social problems raised by immigration.

In the light of some experience during the early post-war years, trade union and craft organisations complain of the difficulties which have impeded the occupational and

social adjustment of foreign workers whose outlook and former environment were very different from those prevailing in the receiving country or at their place of work in that country. Psychological difficulties have been aggravated by ignorance, or insufficient knowledge, of the language and by the willingness of foreign workers to accept working and living conditions (food and housing) inferior to those of national workers. This has had a detrimental effect on relations between the two groups, especially when the immigrants have taken no interest in local trade union affairs. Often, foreign workers have joined the trade unions of the receiving country only after much difficulty and in very small numbers. This has been due, in particular, to ignorance of trade union affairs, especially on the part of workers from rural areas who have never belonged to a workers' organisation, and to suspicion of a system offering a choice between different trade unions. The strained relations which have sometimes existed between national and immigrant workers have led some workers to mistrust certain types of immigration. Although there is today a marked improvement in the situation, there remain some prejudices and mental reservations which are not calculated to facilitate negotiations between immigration and emigration countries.

Methods Which Might Overcome Certain Difficulties
Resulting from the Attitude of Workers' Organisations

Thus the attitude of workers' organisations to immigration cannot be defined in general terms applicable in all cases.

It finds expression in a range of reactions - often reflecting very fine shades of opinion - which cannot be described briefly by means of a broad classification. However, the foregoing remarks reveal certain factors which may indicate what steps can and should be taken to overcome some of the remaining reservations of these organisations with regard to immigration. For the essential problem is precisely that of determining whether, and by what means, they might be led to adopt a more favourable attitude.

It is undoubtedly difficult to dispel the economic anxiety on which the attitude of workers' organisations is based and which, moreover, is generally shared by the competent authorities of the countries concerned. Only a sufficient levelling of economic and social conditions as between immigration and emigration countries could improve or reverse the position in this respect. Such a levelling could be achieved only by many years of efforts to speed up economic development in countries suffering from unemployment and structural under-employment.

In the meantime, however, action could and should be taken by the governments and the workers' organisations of the countries concerned with regard to the occupational and human aspects of migration. The aim of such action should be to ensure that migratory movements are of the highest quality

and thus to improve the atmosphere in the receiving country and reduce progressively, to the point of disappearance, certain reservations of the workers' organisations, especially the craft associations. In the first place, government departments, in co-operation with representatives of the workers' organisations concerned, should devote particular care to the drawing up of occupational selection - and, where necessary, preselection - criteria so as to ensure that the workers recruited really possess the qualifications required for the work they are to do. The same considerations apply to vocational training. Obviously, the work involved in the manufacture of an article and the occupational skills required for this purpose differ from ^{to country} country and from industry to industry. Nevertheless, occupational adjustment difficulties would be reduced if the vocational training of prospective emigrants were to aim at least at providing them with a high degree of basic skill; subsequent specialised training could, where necessary, more easily be carried out on the spot. These measures should be accompanied by improvements in the psychological preparation of migrants and in the provision of information living and working conditions in the country to which they wish to emigrate. Wider use of psychological tests and guidance courses on the customs, way of life and occupational and social environment of the receiving country would make it possible to eliminate candidates likely to prove incapable of overcoming the difficulties inherent in adjustment to new working and living conditions. The consequent

improvement in the quality of immigration would facilitate contact between national workers and newcomers and between the families of the two groups. Similarly, as regards reception of immigrants, the necessary formalities should be carried out rapidly, and the criteria applied should aim at keeping to a minimum any period of unemployment which immigrants may experience and at avoiding dissatisfaction and disillusionment which would quickly lower their morale and consequently nullify much of the effect of the guidance and preparation they had received before leaving the emigration country.

Finally, in order to facilitate the adjustment of workers to their new social environment, it is essential that their families should be installed with them, or soon after. The housing problem, which is still an obstacle to family migration, especially in Europe, should be solved urgently.

Workers' organisations can play a very important role in the improvement of the criteria and methods applied to the various operations in the migration process and to the housing of immigrants. They should assist public authorities and voluntary organisations with advice and even with precise information on particular points.

Above all, it is essential that, in spite of difficulties arising from trade union policy and structure, joint action should be initiated and pursued systematically by the trade

unions and craft organisations of emigration and immigration countries with a view to co-ordinating their respective activities. Exchanges of current information, continuous contact and regular exchanges of views concerning the measures to be taken with regard both to general migration policy and to particular migration projects would be the most effective ways of overcoming certain fears and avoiding unfavourable reactions on the part of workers' organisations in the receiving country.

The two international trade union organisations previously mentioned already have the foundations on which to build and the staff required to put such co-operation into effect. The I.F.C.T.U. has a migration committee, composed of trade unionists from certain emigration and immigration countries, which is responsible for studying developments in the migration field. The Executive Committee of the I.C.F.T.U., following a recommendation made by the I.C.F.T.U. Migration Conference held in 1956, has just decided "To establish a committee on international migration to which interested affiliated organisations will be invited to send delegates and whose main task will be to co-ordinate the migration policies of the free trade unions of the various countries, to facilitate contacts between the free trade union centres of the countries of emigration and of immigration and to act as the organ for relations between the I.C.F.T.U. and international organisations dealing with

migration, in particular the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration". (1). However, the action of workers' representatives should, if it is to be prompt and effective, be the subject of bilateral discussions. The existence of such migration committees should facilitate co-ordination of the action of trade unions and craft organisations on a bilateral basis. Already, the I.C.F.T.U. Conference on International Migration has recommended "Affiliated organisations in countries in which particular problems of migrating or immigrating workers have arisen to establish, if necessary, joint committees with affiliates in those countries whose workers are most affected by such problems." (2). This method should be applied to migration problems as a whole and should be established on a permanent basis, both in the immigration and emigration countries, or should at least lead to a regular exchange of trade union trainees by the two countries concerned. These methods, which are not mutually exclusive, should make it possible for workers' organisations in one country to understand the precise nature of the problems which arise in the other country at each stage of the migration process and to

1) I.C.F.T.U. Executive Board (Brussels 26-30 November 1956), "International Migration" 12 December 1956.

2) Idem.

acquaint themselves with the occupational and social environment of that country, its living conditions and customs and the attitude and interests of their counterpart organisations.

Direct arrangements, parallel to those made by the competent authorities, should be concluded by the workers' organisations of the countries concerned, with a view to obviating certain difficulties which might arise in connection with the drawing up or carrying out of a particular migration project. These organisations would also be best placed to advise governments and nongovernmental organisations and to take appropriate action among the workers in order to help ensure the success of migration.

If such co-operation could be established on a regular basis, the chances of solving the problem of trade union membership of foreign workers would be improved. No satisfactory solution has yet been found to this problem, the influence of which on the adjustment of migrants to the occupational and social life of the receiving country is often underestimated. Various decisions have been taken on this subject by the two international trade union federations already mentioned and by some international craft organisations, and arrangements have been concluded between trade unions and craft organisations. In spite of this, the number of migrants who join local workers' organisations is still very small.

Only a systematic information campaign, to be carried out in emigration countries in particular, would make it possible to obtain more satisfactory results. Such a campaign must be based on wholehearted co-operation between the workers' organisations of emigration and immigration countries.

If the programme outline above could be carried out, if immigration could really meet the occupational and human needs of the countries concerned, if, in consequence, workers in the receiving countries knew, from experience, that newcomers would not prejudice their position, the relations between immigrants and national workers would be placed on a far more satisfactory footing and migration could be developed in an atmosphere of greater confidence.