

International Social Reform and the Invention of Development

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There is a great work to be done in the world . . . it is a work of construction, of restoration, of the uplifting of mankind—in short, a civilising task.

– Albert Thomas, 1931¹

1. Introduction

This paper challenges the standard narrative of the ‘birth’ or ‘invention’ of development. That narrative sees development as primarily an American invention of the decade following World War II, forged by US policy makers in the context of the Cold War and decolonization.² Modernization theory, in particular, offered a framework within which these policy makers could understand and respond to the emergence of many new independent states, and the newly-visible instability, poverty, and discontent in those states which were seen as fertile ground for Communist ideas. For many scholars of development studies and modernization theory, the key moment was US President Harry Truman’s inauguration of address of 1949, which launched the ‘Point Four’ program to make his country’s ‘imponderable resources in technical knowledge’ available to the ‘peace-loving’ and ‘free peoples of the world’.³ That speech ‘initiated a new era in the understanding and management of world affairs, particularly those concerning the less economically accomplished

¹ Albert Thomas, *International Social Policy* (1948) 100–1.

² Of a large literature, see especially Michael E Latham, *Modernization as Ideology* (U North Carolina Press 2000); Nick Cullather, ‘Development? It’s History’ (2000) 24 *Dipl Hist* 641; Nils Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future: Modernization Theory in Cold War America* (Johns Hopkins UP 2003); David C Engerman and others (eds), *Staging Growth: Modernization, Development, and the Global Cold War* (U Massachusetts Press 2003); David Ekbladh, *The Great American Mission* (Princeton UP 2009); David C Engerman and Corinna R Unger, ‘Introduction: Towards a Global History of Modernization’ (2009) 33 *Dipl Hist* 375; Michael E Latham, *The Right Kind of Revolution* (Cornell UP 2011); Joseph Morgan Hodge, ‘Writing the History of Development (Part 1: The First Wave)’ (2016) 6 *Humanity J* 429.

³ Cited in Olav Stokke, *The UN and Development* (Indiana UP 2009) 49.

countries of the world'.⁴ To critical international law scholars, too, the postwar decade saw the installation of a new 'rationality of rule', centered on the notion of development, in international institutions such as the World Bank and United Nations.⁵

The account presented in this paper focuses on the sources of development thinking in the international social reform movement of the early twentieth century. In particular, the paper focuses on the European discourses of social reform and social law that arose in the nineteenth century and were promoted vigorously after World War I by the International Labor Organization (ILO). Others have already uncovered precursors of postwar development in nineteenth-century European concerns with social problems and imperial governance; in the practices of the League of Nation Permanent Mandates Commission; and in the European reaction to colonial crises, especially in the area of labor, from the 1930s onwards.⁶ The paper is intended to complement these alternative accounts in complicating the origin-story of development by bringing to light new legal and international institutional aspects of development thinking prior to 1945. In doing so, it shows how the expansion of powers exercised by the ILO was understood as necessary to making modern states in the non-Western world, on a broadly Western model.

The ILO's role as a leading interwar site for the gestation of development discourse and practices remains unexplored to a significant extent. Antony Alcock's general history of the organization has a chapter on 'The Seeds of Technical Assistance', covering the interwar period, but relegates this a secondary position

⁴ Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development* (1995) 3–4. See also Gilbert Rist, *The History of Development* (3rd ed., 2011) ch 4 (titled 'The Invention of Development'); Amy Staples, *The Birth of Development: How the World Bank, Food and Agriculture Organization, and World Health Organization Changed the World, 1945-1965* (2005).

⁵ Sundhya Pahuja, *Decolonising International Law* (CUP 2011) 3. See also Balakrishnan Rajagopal, *International Law from Below: Development, Social Movements and Third World Resistance* (CUP 2003) 28–29.

⁶ MP Cowen and RW Shenton, *Doctrines of Development* (Routledge 1996); Antony Anghie, *Imperialism, Sovereignty and the Making of International Law* (Cambridge UP 2004) ch 3; Rajagopal, *International Law from Below*, ch 3; Frederick Cooper and Randall M. Packard (eds), *International Development and the Social Sciences* (U California Press 1997); Joseph Morgan Hodge, 'Writing the History of Development (Part 1)', 452–454.

compared to 'The Establishment of Technical Assistance, 1947-9'.⁷ Daniel Maul's excellent recent book on the ILO and development likewise focuses mainly on the postwar decolonization period and thereafter.⁸ Of course, development ideas and practices of technical assistance could be found in other international institutions before World War II, including the Permanent Mandates Commission and the technical organizations of the League of Nations.⁹ But as this paper shows, the ILO made a special contribution, stemming from its efforts to apply a European model of social government to non-European societies, in both colonial and postcolonial settings; and from its work on scientific management, rationalization, and economic and social planning, at both a national and an international level. Moreover, the ILO was at least as important as any other international body as a vehicle for transmitting these discourses and practices into the postwar United Nations system.

The paper analyzes the ILO's contribution to the invention of development in four steps. Part 2 of the paper describes the roots of international social reform and their expression in the ILO's early activities within Europe. Part 3 examines the factors that led the ILO to extend its social reform efforts beyond Europe, to Asia, Africa, and Americas; and the effects of that extension on both the ILO and the countries in which it acted. Part 4 investigates the contributions of scientific management ideas to the growing attention given by the ILO to economic matters. Part 5 shows how these disparate concerns came together in a particular vision of development that anticipated postwar modernization theory in several important respects. Part 6 concludes.

⁷ Antony Alcock, *History of the International Labour Organisation* (Macmillan 1971) 134-148, 209-219.

⁸ Daniel Maul, *Human Rights, Development and Decolonization* (Palgrave Macmillan 2012).

⁹ Anghie, *Imperialism, Sovereignty and the Making of International Law*, ch 3; Susan Pedersen, *The Guardians* (OUP 2015); A Alexander Menzies, 'Technical Assistance and the League of Nations' in United Nations Library, *The League of Nations in Retrospect* (Walter de Gruyter 1983) 295; Margherita Zanasi, 'Exporting Development: The League of Nations and Republican China' (2007) 49 *Comp Stud Soc & Hist* 143; Patricia Clavin, *Securing the World Economy* (OUP 2013).

2. The ILO and social reform in Europe

From the moment of its creation, the ILO was animated by a powerful sense of its mission and mandate to effect social reform through law. Almost immediately after it commenced operations in February 1920, the organization's activities started to expand beyond even its founders' expectations. After outlining the ideas that motivated the ILO, this part of the paper describes the forms that its initial expansion took within Europe, the opposition it encountered and overcame, and its first ventures into the provision of technical assistance.

A. The origins of international social reform

The origins of the social reform ideas that motivated the ILO can be traced back at least a century before its creation. Population growth, industrialization, and urbanization in Europe were attended by mounting anxieties regarding the 'social question', understood as a realm of disorder located 'between' the economy and the state and associated with multiple interlinked problems connected to a large, underemployed proletariat.¹⁰ The threat of communist revolution, given tangible form in the continent-wide revolutions of 1848, spurred a European response to laissez-faire liberalism that was, as Polanyi shows, the spontaneous introduction of legislation on a wide range of issues, including 'public health, factory conditions, . . . public utilities, trade associations, and so on'.¹¹ Each of these legislative measures in turn introduced a new technology of 'social' government: workmen's compensation, factory inspections, vaccination programs, and social insurance, most notably in Bismarck's Germany.¹² By the century's end, 'the social' comprised a central feature

¹⁰ George Steinmetz, *Regulating the Social* (Princeton UP 1993); Jacques Donzelot, *The Policing of Families* (Pantheon Books 1977).

¹¹ Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (Beacon Press 1957) 147. See also David Roberts, *Victorian Origins of the British Welfare State* (Archon Books 1960).

¹² Steinmetz, *Regulating the Social*; TS Dahl, 'State Intervention and Social Control in Nineteenth-Century Europe' (1977) 1 *Contemp Crises* 163.

of the 'transnational legal consciousness', taking shape in the new discipline of 'social law'.¹³

Social law was vigorously promoted by a transnational network of social reformers, mostly in western Europe, until the outbreak of World War I. That network included prominent public figures such as the Director of the French Ministry of Labor, Arthur Fontaine; the socialist member of parliament in Belgium, Emile Vandervelde; and the Belgian jurist Ernest Mahaim.¹⁴ It found early institutional form in the International Association for Labor Legislation, founded in 1900, which produced important conventions prohibiting night work for women and use of white phosphorous in matches. And it was stimulated by the Bolshevik revolution of 1917 and the wave of mass industrial and political strikes that swept through Central Europe over the following year. By November 1918, these agitations had led to revolutions in Bulgaria, Hungary, Austria, and Germany; socialist ideas and parties had gained ground in the Allied countries of France, England, and Italy; and upheavals in places as far away as China and Latin America threatened the possibility of world revolution.¹⁵ By the war's end, addressing the problem of labor seemed essential to the possibility of achieving a lasting peace in Europe.

Perhaps more than any other outcome of the Paris peace conference, the ILO reflected a renewed commitment to the liberal ideals of progressive social reform that had grown up on both sides of the Atlantic in the decades before the war.¹⁶ Part XIII of the peace treaty, which established the organization, asserted that peace was possible 'only if it is based upon social justice', and observed that existing labor conditions involved 'such injustice, hardship and privation' to so many people that 'the peace and the harmony of the world [was] imperilled'. Improvements to those

¹³ Duncan Kennedy, 'Three Globalizations of Law and Legal Thought: 1850–2000' in David M Trubek and Alvaro Santos (eds), *The New Law and Economic Development* (Cambridge UP 2006) 19 (ch 2), 37–42.

¹⁴ Jasmien Van Daele, 'Engineering Social Peace: Networks, Ideas, and the Founding of the International Labour Organization' (2005) 50 *Int'l Rev Soc Hist* 435.

¹⁵ Eric Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes* (Michael Joseph 1994) ch 2.

¹⁶ Markku Ruotsila, "'The Great Charter for the Liberty of the Workingman": Labour, Liberals and the Creation of the ILO' (2002) 67 *Lab Hist Rev* 29; Elizabeth McKillen, 'Integrating Labor into the Narrative of Wilsonian Internationalism: A Literature Review' (2010) 34 *Dipl Hist* 643.

conditions could only effectively be achieved by international action, since 'the failure of any nation to adopt humane conditions of labour [was] an obstacle in the way of other nations which desire[d] to improve the conditions in their own countries'.¹⁷ As an early champion of the organization put it, the ILO was constructed as an 'alternative to violent revolution'.¹⁸ Woodrow Wilson himself considered the ILO to be 'one of the great progressive achievements of the Peace Conference', on several occasions asserting that the 'great charter for the liberty of the workingman' was the most significant part of the treaty.¹⁹

Part XIII prescribed both general principles to guide states' social policies and established an organization and procedure to convert those principles into substantive legal obligations. Section II set out 'methods and principles for regulating labour conditions . . . of special and urgent importance', which amounted to a restatement of long-standing social reform goals, including the right of association, adequate wages, the eight-hour day, the abolition of child labor, equal remuneration for men and women, and an inspection system to ensure the enforcement of labor standards.²⁰ To achieve these ends, a General Conference, was to produce recommendations and draft conventions, supported by an International Labor Office under the control of a Governing Body. Moreover, Part XIII provided for an innovative supervision mechanism, including reporting, complaints, and enquiry procedures, backed by the threat of economic measures against defaulting governments.²¹ The principle of 'tripartism', which brought together representatives of governments, employers, and workers in both the Conference and the Governing Body, reflected a belief, contrary to the convictions of the more revolutionary workers' movements at the time, in the possibility of cooperation across class divisions.

¹⁷ Part XIII, Section I.

¹⁸ James T Shotwell, 'The International Labor Organization as an Alternative to Violent Revolution' (1933) 166 Annals 18.

¹⁹ Cited in Ruotsila, 'Great Charter', 42.

²⁰ Part XIII, Art 427.

²¹ Part XIII, Arts 408-420.

B. A 'living' institution

The first Director of the International Labor Office, Albert Thomas (1878–1932), quickly expanded the range of the ILO's activities beyond the strict, textual meaning of its constituent instrument or any expectations its founders. To be able to contribute effectively to the many interlocking problems facing postwar Europe, Thomas, believed that the Office itself first needed to be reconceived. Most observers and participants in the Paris negotiations had expected that the Office would follow a relatively simple outline: 'a central secretariat, a few technical sections, provision for translators, typists, messengers and so on'.²² Assuming the sole right of initiative in all matters relating to the Office's operations, however, Albert Thomas devised a bold scheme to make the Office 'an instrument of action'.²³ Appointing an experienced and capable staff, Thomas constructed a much more extensive administrative apparatus than anyone had expected, both at the organization's headquarters in Geneva and through a network of overseas branch offices and national correspondents.²⁴ Thomas and other senior officials also undertook frequent 'missions' to member countries, meeting with labor organizations and working through them to generate public pressure on their governments to ratify ILO conventions.²⁵

Thomas' vision of the possibilities of the ILO as subject to a natural process of evolution through reform, envisaged in organic terms, reflected a progressive, sociological view of law that resonated with broader currents in social and political legal thought at the time.²⁶ Reacting to the vast social disruptions wrought by industrialization and urbanization during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, progressives promoted a flexible, 'living' conception of law that would permit adaptation, social legislation, and reform.²⁷ In France, the idea of social

²² Phelan, *Yes and Albert Thomas*, 42.

²³ Schaper, *Albert Thomas*, 216.

²⁴ International Labour Office, *The International Labour Organisation: The First Decade* (Allen & Unwin 1931); Edward Phelan, *Yes and Albert Thomas* (Cresset Press 1949); Harold Butler, *Confident Morning* (Faber & Faber 1950).

²⁵ Thomas, *International Social Policy*, 14–15.

²⁶ Albert Thomas, 'The International Labour Organisation: Its Origins, Development, and Future' (1921) 1 *Int'l Lab Rev* 5; Alan Hunt, *The Sociological Movement in Law* (Macmillan 1978).

²⁷ Kennedy, 'Three Globalizations', 37–42.

solidarity, with origins in the utopian socialist thought of Saint-Simon and Comte,²⁸ had already become dominant in philosophy.²⁹ Émile Durkheim had described the emergence of a restitutive form of law reflecting a morality rooted in the *conscience collective*, which in turn reflected an ‘organic’ solidarity that had emerged through the economic division of labor and increasing functional differentiation in society.³⁰ Influenced by Durkheim, Léon Duguit had developed a jurisprudence that grounded the legitimacy of the state in its contributions to social solidarity through laws and other measures that guaranteed social security, public health, employment, and individual development.³¹ In politics, too, the publication of Léon Bourgeois’ *Solidarité* (1895) provided a lucid summation of solidarism as the ‘official social philosophy’ of the Third Republic, steering a middle path between individualist, laissez-faire liberalism and revolutionary socialism.³² Albert Thomas’ adherence to that philosophy is evident in the frequent references in his writings and speeches to the idea of solidarity, to Bourgeois, and to other solidarist thinkers and leaders.

The ILO’s other activities during this period exemplified its self-perception as a ‘living’ institution, vital to resolving the problems of its time. In addition to more general visits, the Office sent staff members on a series of fact-finding missions:³³ to conduct an inquiry into production in the Ruhr; to investigate allegations of atrocities being committed against workers by the counter-revolutionary ‘White Terror’ in Hungary;³⁴ to examine the effects of political disturbances on production and working conditions in Upper Silesia;³⁵ to look into the conditions of Russian prisoners

²⁸ Antoine Picon, ‘Utopian Socialism and Social Science’ in Theodore M Porter and Dorothy Ross (eds), *The Modern Social Sciences* (Cambridge UP 2003) ch 5.

²⁹ JES Hayward, ‘Solidarity: The Social History of an Idea in Nineteenth Century France’ (1959) 4 *Int’l Rev Soc Hist* 261; Paul Rabinow, *French Modern* (MIT Press 1989) 184–195.

³⁰ Roger Cotterrell, *Émile Durkheim: Law in a Moral Domain* (Stanford UP 1999) ch 4; JES Hayward, ‘Solidarist Syndicalism: Durkheim and Duguit Part I’ (1960) 8 *Sociolog Rev* 17.

³¹ JES Hayward, ‘Solidarist Syndicalism: Durkheim and Duguit Part II’ (1960) 8 *Sociolog Rev* 185.

³² JES Hayward, ‘The Official Social Philosophy of the French Third Republic: Léon Bourgeois and Solidarism’ (1961) 6 *Int’l Rev Soc Hist* 19; James T Kloppenberg, *Uncertain Victory* (OUP 1986) 301–305.

³³ GA Johnston, *International Social Progress* (Allen & Unwin 1924) 188, 212–213, 218–224.

³⁴ ‘Enquiry of the International Labour Office into Trade Union Conditions in Hungary’ (26 October 1921) 4(17) ILO-OB 357 (1), 357–364 (1–8).

³⁵ Paul Périgord, *The International Labor Organization* (Appleton and Company 1926) 184; David R Mummery, ‘The “Scientific” Authority of the International Labor Office and Its Director-General’ in Thomas Buergenthal (ed), *Contemporary Issues in International Law* (NP Engel 1984) 371, 374–375.

in German internment camps;³⁶ and to inquire into the application and results of compulsory labor service in Bulgaria. At the instigation of a Governing Body resolution in March 1920, the Office launched an inquiry into postwar industrial production that lasted for four years and resulted in a five-volume report. And ILO officials inserted themselves into diplomatic discussions on economic questions, including the Genoa conference which in April–May 1922 convened representatives of over thirty countries to discuss monetary policy, the reconstruction of Central and Eastern Europe, and relations with Bolshevik Russia, which remained outside both the League and the ILO.³⁷

C. Social reform contested and confirmed

The ever-widening sphere of action into which the ILO's reforming mission carried it went well beyond the previously-agreed meaning of Part XIII, at times bringing it into conflict with its own member states. Thus, for example, government representatives and employer delegates to the Governing Body objected to the Office's general economic inquiry into postwar production as well as its fact-finding missions to Hungary and Upper Silesia, arguing in each case that the 'collection and distribution of information' authorized by Article 396 of Part XIII did not mandate the Office to undertake a systematic study or analysis of that information. More awkwardly, the Italian government resisted a proposal that the ILO investigate allegations of Fascist paramilitary violence against workers' organizations and the status of social legislation in Italy, on the grounds that such matters were purely internal and fell outside the ILO's mandate.³⁸

³⁶ 'Russian Prisoners' Camps in Germany: Mission of the International Labour Office' (15 March 1922) 5(1) ILO-OB 166 (2), 166–167 (2–3).

³⁷ Johnston, *International Social Progress*, 51–52, 62–64; 'The International Labour Organisation and the Genoa Conference' (21 June 1921) 5(25) ILO-OB 3 (427). On the conference and its outcomes, see Steiner, *Lights that Failed*, 189–213.

³⁸ ILO, *International Labour Conference Third Session*, 63, 102. On the protracted struggle between trade union representatives and Fascist government officials in the ILO, see Alcock, *History of the ILO*, ch 4.

Albert Thomas' responses to objections such as these demonstrated an effort to forge a sound 'constitutional' basis for the ILO's activities. The Silesia mission had been undertaken at the Office's own initiative, but Thomas argued that it comprised a simple information-gathering exercise and not an inquiry at all. Likewise, the general economic inquiry fell within the Office's authority to gather information 'with a view to the conclusion of international conventions' under Article 396; and the Hungarian inquiry, although political in nature, was taken at the request of the Hungarian government to demonstrate that the allegations of atrocities were untrue, and was based on the reference in the Preamble of Part XIII to 'the principle of freedom of association'. Accepting these explanations, the Governing Body refused to make a ruling on the possible limits on the meaning of 'collection and distribution of information', to set guidelines for the Office's conduct in inquiries, or even to require its own approval of such inquiries except where they were of 'special importance'.³⁹

Even more significant was a series of legal challenges brought before the PCIJ, which tested the limits of the ILO's legal powers during its earliest years of operations. The first of these challenges concerned whether the competence of the ILO extended to 'international regulation of the conditions of labour of persons employed in agriculture'.⁴⁰ A supplementary question asked whether the 'examination of proposals for the organisation and development of methods of agricultural production, and of other questions of a like character', came within the ILO's competence.⁴¹ And a further legal challenge, raised some four years later, addressed whether it was within the ILO's competence 'to draw up and propose labour legislation which, in order to protect certain classes of workers, also regulates incidentally the same work when performed by the employer himself'.⁴²

The resulting advisory opinions reaffirmed the ILO's far-reaching mandate in relation to the international regulation of labor. In only its second advisory opinion ever, the Court confirmed the ILO's competence to deal with the working conditions

³⁹ Mummery, "Scientific" Authority of the ILO, 374-376.

⁴⁰ *Competence to Regulate Agricultural Labour Conditions* (Advisory Opinion) 9.

⁴¹ *Competence of the ILO to Examine Proposals for the Organization and Development of the Methods of Agricultural Production* (Advisory Opinion) PCIJ Series B No 3 (1922).

⁴² *Incidental Regulation of Employers* (Advisory Opinion) PCIJ Series B No 13 (23 July 1926) 12.

of agricultural workers.⁴³ Its third opinion, issued the same day, denied that the ILO had the power to deal with proposals for the organization and development of the means of production per se, but asserted that the ILO was competent to consider questions of this kind insofar as they were related to the objects stated in the Preamble to Part XIII.⁴⁴ And its advisory opinion in 1926 established that the incidental regulation of employers' work, if necessary to achieve the goal of protecting employees, also fell within the ILO's competence.⁴⁵ In the process of clarifying the boundaries of the ILO's competence, then, these early opinions served to validate the range of activities it had pursued, and encouraged further expansion within the broad limits they described. One particular type of activity which became increasingly important over subsequent years was technical assistance.

D. The turn to technical assistance

Already by 1925, ILO missions had started to include an element of technical advice. In December of that year, the Bulgarian government wrote to the Office to ask for assistance in connection with the problem of 'numerous refugees', whose arrival had caused high levels of unemployment and complaints by Bulgarian workers, and who were therefore seen as 'a source of danger to production and to social peace' in that country. After conducting a rapid visit to the cities and districts most affected by the refugees, two Office staff members prepared a report that analyzed their conditions. Significantly, that report also suggested a *solution*, including adequate protection for Bulgarian minorities in other countries; repatriation or emigration of the Russian and Armenian refugees from Bulgaria; compensation for loss of property suffered by the Bulgarian refugees, and arrangements for their permanent settlement in Bulgaria; and agrarian reforms to set a limit on the size of individual land holdings and increase the total area of cultivable land.⁴⁶ These proposals, many of which had legal

⁴³ *Competence to Regulate Agricultural Labour Conditions* (Advisory Opinion) 39.

⁴⁴ *Competence regarding Agricultural Production* (Advisory Opinion) 57-59.

⁴⁵ *Incidental Regulation of Employers* (Advisory Opinion) PCIJ Series B No 13 (23 July 1926).

⁴⁶ International Labour Office, *Refugees and Labour Conditions in Bulgaria* (ILO 1926) iii-v, 24-38.

implications, set a precedent and pattern for later practices of technical assistance offered by the Office.

One area which supplied some of the earliest opportunities for the Office to apply its legal expertise in a more practical and externally engaged mode was social insurance. Like other mechanisms of the welfare state, social insurance drew upon a rich variety of ideational sources and experiences.⁴⁷ Originating in Germany as a technique for regulating ‘an arena of collective needs, grievances and disruptions that were related to the transformations in the economic realm’,⁴⁸ the idea of universal social insurance seemed to solidarists of the time to be ‘the only road to social peace’.⁴⁹ As such, it had comprised a significant part of the ILO’s scientific and standard-setting work streams almost from the beginning. After establishing a correspondence committee on social insurance in 1921, a special section of the Office was created under the direction of Adrien Tixier in 1924,⁵⁰ and an extensive research program began to explore employment-related risks, including death, sickness, maternity, invalidity, and old age.⁵¹ The correspondence committee grew rapidly from six experts to fifteen in 1925 and 100 in 1930.⁵² Office ‘missions’ collected information on existing insurance systems; Tixier’s section gathered monographs and legislative texts and translated them into French and English for wider distribution;⁵³ and articles comparing the experiences and administrative techniques of social insurance in different countries appeared regularly in ILO publications.⁵⁴ By 1933, the Conference had adopted no fewer than thirteen social insurance conventions, addressing accidents, sickness, old age and invalidity, and more.⁵⁵

⁴⁷ Michael Freeden, ‘The Coming of the Welfare State’ in Terence Ball and Richard Bellamy (eds), *The Cambridge History of Twentieth Century Political Thought* (Cambridge UP 2003) ch 1.

⁴⁸ Steinmetz, *Regulating the Social*, 2.

⁴⁹ Rabinow, *French Modern*, 229.

⁵⁰ Sandrine Kott, ‘Constructing a European Social Model: The Fight for Social Insurance in the Interwar Period’ in Van Daele and others (eds), *ILO Histories*, 173 (ch 7), 175.

⁵¹ Endres and Fleming, *International Organizations and the Analysis of Economic Policy*, 136ff.

⁵² Kott, ‘Constructing a European Social Model’, 182–183.

⁵³ Kott, ‘Constructing a European Social Model’, 181, 182.

⁵⁴ Joseph L Cohen, ‘The Administrative Machinery of Social Insurance’ (1925) 11 Int’l Lab Rev 474; Joseph L Cohen, ‘Unemployment Insurance and Public Assistance’ (1932) 26 Int’l Lab Rev 777.

⁵⁵ Kott, ‘Constructing a European Social Model’, 175.

Through a combination of chance opportunities, ad hoc improvisations, and deliberate action, this accumulation of expert knowledge and experience gradually led the ILO into providing technical assistance to help countries set up social insurance schemes. By the end of the 1920s, ILO member states were asking the Office to indicate ‘solutions which had been adopted for various problems of social insurance, . . . the advantages and disadvantages of different solutions, . . . the practical difficulties which were encountered and to some extent . . . an appreciation of the results achieved by each of the solutions adopted’.⁵⁶ At the same time, workers were also beginning to advocate measures of technical assistance and cooperation as a way to gain more direct participation in the work of the ILO.⁵⁷ In May 1930, Tixier travelled to Greece to assist the government in drafting new social insurance legislation. While there, he found that the Labor Directorate had not been able to gather adequate statistics, and faced a variety of other problems. In his report, Tixier observed that the ILO could draft the laws, but equally necessary were qualified personnel in the Directorate and a level of ‘social discipline’ among all involved—insured, employers and doctors.⁵⁸

The Office offered similar kinds of legal technical assistance services to a growing number of states in eastern and southern Europe, including Bulgaria, Romania, Yugoslavia, Spain, and Turkey.⁵⁹ On a journey through the Balkans in February–March 1930, Albert Thomas was ‘particularly struck . . . [by] the continuous demand for assistance made to the Organisation by the Governments on every sort of topic’. These requests were not only for ‘documentary information, known and resorted to by all great national administrations’, but also for the Office to provide ‘technical advice’ and ‘technical services’ in revising legislative Bills on matters such as ‘industrial hygiene, co-operation, or, most frequently, social insurance’. In addition, Thomas was asked to ‘send Chiefs of technical services or experts on the spot, in order

⁵⁶ Craig and Tomes, ‘Origins and Activities of the ILO Committee of Social Security Experts’, 507–508.

⁵⁷ Thomas, *International Social Policy*, 38.

⁵⁸ Alcock, *History of the ILO*, 140. See also Ioannes Zarras, ‘The Organisation of Social Insurance in Greece’ (1939) 39 *Int’l Lab Rev* 579.

⁵⁹ Kott, ‘Constructing a European Social Model’; Alcock, *History of the ILO*, 148.

to discuss these matters with Government officials or to place information before conferences specially summoned to discuss various Bills'.⁶⁰

The significance of this expansion and shift in the ILO's law-making activities—from standard-setting at the international level, to their operationalization through technical assistance and construction of a growing range of the state administrative mechanisms—went unrecognized by most international lawyers. Yet it was precisely this area of activity that comprised the principal means for the ILO to reach beyond its European core to the global peripheries of Asia, Africa, and the Americas.

3. To the periphery: making social reform universal

The first civil servants who travelled to Geneva to join the International Labor Office were overwhelmingly drawn from the liberal, democratic countries of Western Europe. No matter how cosmopolitan their outlook, these officials brought with them certain basic assumptions—about the nature of the state, the functions of government, class categories and industrial relations, processes of industrialization and modernization—all of which were conditioned and shaped by their particular backgrounds and experiences. These assumptions quickly came under pressure as the ILO sought to reform labor conditions in countries outside Europe, and as social movements and governments in those countries simultaneously attempted to reform the ILO's structure and functioning in various ways. This part of the paper describes that dynamic process of mutual reform with a focus on the emerging practice of technical assistance, first in 'Oriental' countries such as Egypt, China and India, and then in the Western hemisphere, including the US.

⁶⁰ 'The Journey of the Director in the Balkans' (March 1930) 3 ILO-MS 23, 23–24.

A. A faith for all mankind?

At its foundation, the ILO was an essentially European organization, constructed in the aftermath of a European war and designed principally to resolve European problems. The centrality of European interests in the postwar settlement had an inevitable effect on the makeup, practices, and discourse of the early ILO. Only sixteen out of the organization's forty-two original members were European countries,⁶¹ but the victorious Allied powers dominated and controlled the ILO through its Governing Body, and all of its senior officials were either French or British. Moreover, despite being described as having a 'passionate sympathy with small nations',⁶² Albert Thomas initially focused his attention on the large and powerful states of Western Europe. And yet the possibility of universality exerted a strong moral force upon the imagination of ILO officials, which Thomas expressed in characteristically religious vocabulary: 'Must we not affirm a faith in which the whole of mankind can believe? . . . [W]hat is Part XIII of the Treaty of Peace if not the doctrine which can unite us all?'⁶³

This contradiction at the heart of the ILO—between its Europe-centeredness in practice and its universalist aspirations—was already present in the text of its constituent instrument. Part XIII established Western European industrial labor practices as the norm by which all other countries would be measured. Notwithstanding local differences, there were certain 'methods and principles for regulating labour conditions which all industrial communities should endeavour to apply, so far as their special circumstances will permit'.⁶⁴ Exceptions could be made for situations outside the norm: ILO conventions were to stipulate modifications for 'those countries in which climatic conditions, the imperfect development of industrial organisation or other special circumstances make the industrial conditions

⁶¹ Among its remaining members, four were European settler colonies, while the British Empire as a whole also held separate membership; fifteen were from the Americas; five were from Asia; Liberia was the only 'indigenous' African country represented; and both Russia and the US were notably absent. Shotwell, *Origins of the ILO*, vol 1.

⁶² Harold Butler, *The Lost Peace* (Harcourt, Brace and Company 1942) 47.

⁶³ Thomas, *International Social Policy*, 73.

⁶⁴ Part XIII, Art 427.

substantially different'.⁶⁵ Members accordingly pledged to apply conventions which they had ratified to 'their colonies, protectorates and possessions which [were] not fully self-governing', except where a convention was inapt 'owing to the local conditions', and subject to any modifications that 'may be necessary to adapt the convention to local conditions'.⁶⁶ Consequently, the very first Convention adopted by the International Labor Conference stipulated extensive modifications and conditions to its application in Japan and British India, and expressly did not apply to China, Persia, or Siam.⁶⁷

Part XIII's repeated references to 'industrial communities' likewise strongly suggested that recommendations and conventions to be adopted at the Conference were to be drafted primarily with European industries in mind. The findings of the Permanent Court of International Justice (PCIJ) notwithstanding, the ILO's tripartite structure assumed an urban-industrial model of labor relations comprising employers, industrial workers, and trade unions, thereby prioritizing the interests of factory workers who were more likely to belong to unions that could send representatives to the Conference and Governing Body.⁶⁸ It was difficult, therefore, if not impossible, for the ILO to take account of the views of the vast majority of the world's work force—including the unemployed, casual workers, peasants, subsistence farmers, many professionals, home workers, and most non-metropolitan labor.

Implicit in these provisions was an expectation that social and moral progress was universally available—at differing rates, to be sure, but measurable against a common standard of European civilization. If in some countries industrial organization was 'imperfectly developed', the implication was that there were some countries where it had been perfected. If not all labor standards could immediately

⁶⁵ Part XIII, Art 405.

⁶⁶ Part XIII, Art 421.

⁶⁷ Convention Limiting the Hours of Work in Industrial Undertakings to Eight in the Day and Forty-Eight in the Week (ILO Convention 1) (adopted 28 November 1919, entered into force June 13 1921) Arts 9, 10, 11.

⁶⁸ *Competence of the International Labour Organisation in Regard to International Regulation of the Conditions of the Labour of Persons Employed in Agriculture* (Advisory Opinion) PCIJ Series B No 2 (12 August 1922).

be attained in all countries, some certainly could be met at once and the rest would eventually follow. If exceptions and adaptations were to be permitted, these only reinforced the existence of the standard. The regulation of colonial labor was required, according to an article published in the *International Labour Review*, to follow 'step by step the advance of the native populations towards progress and towards an adaptation to successive stages of civilisation approximating to those of European peoples; while the main obstacle to the gradual extension of labor legislation in colonial territories 'consist[ed] mainly in the native mentality, which has not yet reached the point of appreciating the value of these provisions and in particular the fact that they represent a normal means of social progress'.⁶⁹ Commenting on 'the right of self-determination for all nations, whether great or small', Thomas conceded that a 'negro tribe' and a 'civilised State' possessed differing capabilities for exercising that right.⁷⁰ The world could therefore be divided along both spatial and socio-cultural dimensions—not merely East and West, metropole and colony, but also industrial and agrarian, modern and backwards, civilized and uncivilized.

B. To the East: universality and civilization

An early challenge to the ILO's claim to universality arose over the issue of the Governing Body's membership. At the first session of the Conference in 1919, Indian representatives argued that their country should have a seat on the Body as a member of 'chief industrial importance', despite its status as a colonial territory.⁷¹ During the same session, a group of member states expressed dissatisfaction that twelve out of fifteen countries represented on the Governing Body were European.⁷² These complaints eventually led to decision by the Council of the League of Nations in 1922

⁶⁹ Maurice Besson, 'Labour Legislation in the French Colonies' (1927) 16 Int'l Lab Rev 487, 510.

⁷⁰ Thomas, *International Social Policy*, 148.

⁷¹ Butler, 'India and the ILO', 595; Alcock, *History of the ILO*, 40.

⁷² 'Fourth Session of the International Labour Conference' (12 July 1922) 6(2) ILO-OB 15, 16-17; 'Reform of the Constitution of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office' (20 July 1921) 4(3) ILO-OB 35.

to include India on the Governing Body as a member of chief industrial importance, together with Canada.

While seeking reforms to the ILO's governing structure, its Asian delegates also pushed the organization to extend the geographical reach of its efforts. In confirming the ILO's competence in regulating agricultural labor, the second and third advisory opinions of the PCIJ had incidentally strengthened the positions within the ILO of large, predominantly agricultural countries such as India—in particular—increasing the likelihood that they would be represented on the Governing Body.⁷³ Indian delegates soon began to use the Conference as a 'forum of conscience', challenging the ILO to go further in addressing the conditions of workers in colonized territories in Asia and Africa. Addressing the Conference in 1926, an Indian workers' representative called for the Office to investigate conditions of labor 'in the Orient and in the coloured world of Africa and America', and described the task of the Conference as 'the creation of an international atmosphere, bringing facts to light and letting the moral conscience of the world bring about what moral pressure it can on those countries where the conditions of labour are neither good nor desirable nor proper'.⁷⁴ In similar fashion, Indian workers' delegates repeatedly called for greater representation at the Conference of workers in mandated territories and colonies.⁷⁵ Soon after, the Governing Body asked the Office to draw the attention of governments to 'the desirability of providing representation for native and coloured workers in countries where the white population are the ruling class but where the native or coloured workers form either a majority or a substantial portion of the population'.⁷⁶ Another important outcome of these efforts was the increased attention given to the issue of forced labor in colonial and mandated territories.⁷⁷

⁷³ Pillai, *India and the ILO*, 90.

⁷⁴ NN Kaul, *India and the International Labour Organisation* (Metropolitan Books 1956) 50–51.

⁷⁵ 'The Thirty-Ninth Session of the Governing Body' (30 June 1928) 6 ILO-MS 29; 'Resolutions Adopted by the Sixteenth Session of the International Labour Conference' (15 May 1932) 17(2) ILO-OB Supplement 65, 91–92.

⁷⁶ 'Fifty-fifth Session of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office' (1 February 1932) 17(1) ILO-OB 16, 20.

⁷⁷ Luis Rodríguez-Piñero, *Indigenous Peoples, Postcolonialism, and International Law: The ILO Regime (1919–1989)* (OUP 2005).

Encouraged by the active involvement of Asian representatives in its operations, as well as their continuing calls for its reform, the ILO took deliberate steps to expand its official presence outside Europe. In early 1928, the Deputy Director of the Office, Harold Butler, visited South Africa and Southern Rhodesia, where he explained the work of the ILO and observed labor conditions for both 'white and coloured' workers in the 'native territories'.⁷⁸ Between October 1928 and February 1929, Thomas travelled to the Soviet Union, Manchuria, China, Japan, Dutch East Indies, Indochina, and Egypt, attracting publicity that 'served to emphasise the world-wide character of the Organization'.⁷⁹ The first ILO offices in New Delhi and Nanking were established soon afterwards, in 1929 and 1930 respectively,⁸⁰ and Thomas announced that the ILO's influence had extended to 'distant countries, at the other end of the world . . . in regions where the very conception of industrial life had scarcely penetrated and in which the handicraft system of antiquity still persisted'.⁸¹ In early 1933, completing a journey that Thomas had planned to make before his death, an ILO chief of section spent three months visiting India, Iraq, Persia, and Turkey.⁸² The following year, an Assistant Director undertook a three-week mission to Japan to investigate allegations of 'social dumping'.⁸³ Finally, in 1937-38, Butler travelled to India, Ceylon, Malaya, and the Netherlands Indies.⁸⁴

As had happened during earlier missions to Southern and Eastern Europe, these journeys created opportunities for the ILO to develop its practices of technical assistance, as fact-finding led to advice-giving, senior officials were required to deal with the practical problems of administration on the spot, and terms of reference were expanded at short notice. In Nanking, for example, the Chinese Minister of Industry, Commerce and Labor submitted the text of draft labor protection legislation to Albert Thomas and asked him to obtain the views of experts in the International

⁷⁸ 'The Visit of the Deputy Director to South Africa' (February 1928) 2 ILO-MS 10, 10.

⁷⁹ 'The Director's Visit to the Far East' (21 April 1929) 4 ILO-MS 20, 20.

⁸⁰ Aamir Ali, 'Fifty Years of the ILO and Asia' (1969) 99 Int'l Lab Rev 347, 349.

⁸¹ Thomas, *International Social Policy*, 26.

⁸² CWH Weaver, 'Impressions of a Visit to India, Iraq, Persia, and Turkey' (1933) 28 Int'l Lab Rev 465; AM Djamalzadeh, 'Economic and Social Development in Iraq' (1937) 35 Int'l Lab Rev 198.

⁸³ Ali, 'ILO and Asia', 350 (n 2) (citing a 1934 ILO report by Fernand Maurette titled 'Social Aspects of Industrial Development in Japan', *Studies and Reports*, Series B (Economic Conditions), No 21).

⁸⁴ Butler, 'India and the ILO'.

Labor Office. On the same occasion, Thomas ‘drew the attention of the authorities concerned to the necessity of having well-organised inspection services in order to ensure the enforcement of the social legislation [then] in the course of preparation’.⁸⁵ Some two years later, the Chinese government duly requested the Office’s help in organizing factory inspections.⁸⁶

Interactions such as these supplied the occasion for transmitting European ideas and practices of social-liberal government from to Asian societies. One problem facing the Chinese government was the need to devise a unified system of factory inspections in Shanghai, which was at that time administered by three different authorities—the Chinese municipal government, the International Settlement, and the French Concession—with both Chinese and foreign firms located in each area. The ILO experts who travelled to Shanghai organized three-way negotiations to overcome certain objections by the Settlement and the Concession, principally concerning the use of Chinese inspectors in their territories, and were able to secure agreement on a scheme under which inspectors would be trained by the Chinese government but would submit regular reports to all three authorities in Shanghai. The experts also made a number of other recommendations that aimed at deeper reforms, touching on issues of culture and character: the extension of popular elementary education, which would help to abolish abusive practices of industrial child labor;⁸⁷ the employment of women as factory inspectors; and an emphasis in training on ‘the cultivation of resourcefulness on the part of inspectors and the development of good character and a sense of responsibility’.⁸⁸ Each of these measures sought to institutionalize disciplinary techniques associated with modern Western government in a milieu characterized by partial colonization.

Even while carrying out activities of an ostensibly technical nature, then, ILO officials described their efforts in distinctively moral terms, as a mission to reform

⁸⁵ ‘Director’s Visit to the Far East’.

⁸⁶ C Pône, ‘Towards the Establishment of a Factory Inspectorate in China’ (1932) 25 Int’l Lab Rev 591; TK Djang, ‘Factory Inspection in China’ (1944) 50 Int’l Lab Rev 284, 289–292; Alcock, *History of the ILO*, 140–142.

⁸⁷ Pône, ‘Towards the Establishment’, 598–599.

⁸⁸ Djang, ‘Factory Inspection in China’, 292.

the more backward and benighted peoples of the world. Reflecting on his visit to the Far East, Thomas noted that 'personal contact and personal representations' were essential; without them, it was 'impossible for the Office to appreciate at their full value the political, moral and social factors on which the Office must rely in each country for the promotion of international legislation'. Foremost among the challenges in this respect was the sense in the Far East of 'total separation from Europe'. The 'prestige of the white race' had suffered in that region as 'the nationalist idea', 'the racial problem', and Communist propaganda had all mushroomed. Against these movements, 'Western civilization oppose[d] its organizing capacity, its systematic methods, its technical progress', but it was also necessary to forge 'a common system of ideas'. By helping to establish fair conditions of work, by diffusing the principles of social justice and demonstrating the equal application of those principles to both native and European workers, the ILO would be able to 'substitut[e] ideas of collaboration and human equality for racial and national conflict'. But the ILO was not alone in bearing responsibility for progress: the 'possibility of peaceful co-operation' would have to be demonstrated by 'the efforts made by the more advanced countries [in the East], such as Japan, to overcome their psychological and economic difficulties and fall into line with the great industrial countries'.⁸⁹

Perceptions of cultural difference made it difficult for ILO officials to adapt their expertise and policy prescriptions to non-European circumstances. In 1932, Harold Butler visited Egypt, ostensibly to help with establishing a new labor department within the Ministry of the Interior.⁹⁰ Upon arriving, however, he was asked to advise on particular labor reforms that the government intended to implement through the new department. Over the next month, as he travelled around the country, he was amazed to discover modern, Western-style industrial production facilities existing alongside places where 'the peasant [was] using the same primitive implements and methods of irrigation that he used in the time of the Pharaohs, and his standard of living [was] probably about the same'.⁹¹ However, these conditions

⁸⁹ 'Director's Visit to the Far East', 24.

⁹⁰ Alcock, *History of the ILO*, 142–144.

⁹¹ Harold Butler, 'Social Aspects of Scientific Progress' (1934) 15 *Acad Pol Sci Proc* 419, 421.

went largely unaddressed in the reforms suggested by Butler, which were directed to 'the employment of women and children, night-work and weekly rest, accident compensation, safety and health, unemployment . . . and the trade unions'.⁹²

Experiences such as these nevertheless had the cumulative effect of broadening the ILO's understanding of labor conditions outside Europe, as well as in expanding extra-European participation in the ILO itself. Following Butler's visit, the Egyptian government regularly sent official observers to the International Labor Conference, and subsequently joined the organization.⁹³ Reflecting on another, similar mission, Butler emphasized his conviction that the higher officials of international institutions needed to have first-hand information of conditions in all parts of the world. The Office was equipped with a vast array of documentary sources, which provided facts and figures about labor conditions in all parts of the globe. But such information could be misleading, unless supplemented by personal experience; the latter was indispensable for correcting the 'imaginative picture' of a country gained from reading alone, and for providing insight into the 'mentality' of its people. 'Only by using the knowledge and sympathy thus acquired', Butler argued, could the ILO 'fulfil its duty of being a really international institution with a truly universal outlook'.⁹⁴

Just as states and social movements in Asia helped to make the ILO more universal, so too were they shaped through their engagement with it. Indeed, the ILO's expanding program of technical assistance was inseparable from an effort to construct new state capacities, social solidarities and individual subjectivities in lands outside Europe. Among other things, participation in routine ILO processes entailed a degree of internalization of the structures, practices, and assumptions of European models of statehood. The same dynamic also characterized the ILO's technical assistance in support of social insurance legislation and administration in the Western hemisphere.

⁹² Alcock, *History of the ILO*, 143.

⁹³ 'I.L.O. Notes' (1936) 34 *Int'l Lab Rev* 1, 4.

⁹⁴ Butler, 'India and the ILO', iii-iv.

C. To the West: economic crisis and social security

The Great Depression prompted a further shift in the ILO's 'centre of gravity', away from Europe and towards the Americas.⁹⁵ If the organization's standard-setting program had already begun to falter by the late 1920s, then it was verging on irrelevant a few years later; and ascendant militant nationalist regimes were generally inhospitable to social-democratic schemes of social insurance.⁹⁶ These events pushed the ILO to 'probe deeper', to explore new aspects of the problems that affected workers, and to expand the range of services it offered to its members.⁹⁷ The same events also encouraged ILO officials to shift their focus to other regions of the world, where their activities would be more welcome.

Beginning in the early 1930s, ILO officials took systematic steps to attract and secure the membership of the US. The organization found a willing partner in the administration of US President Franklin D Roosevelt, who assumed office in March 1933. To the Roosevelt administration, the ILO offered a useful mechanism to overcome the Supreme Court's opposition to national labor standards.⁹⁸ Efforts to pursue this goal through interstate compacts had encountered significant difficulties, but Professor Joseph Chamberlain of Columbia Law School suggested that ILO conventions would override state legislation if the US joined the organization.⁹⁹ Together with individuals in the American progressive labor movement, the ILO

⁹⁵ Alcock, *History of the ILO*, 123 (quoting a letter from Harold Butler to Albert Thomas in 1930). See also Stephen Hughes and Nigel Haworth, 'A Shift in the Centre of Gravity: The ILO under Harold Butler and John G Winant' in Jasmien Van Daele and others (eds), *ILO Histories* (Peter Lang 2010) 293 (ch 12), 301.

⁹⁶ Ratifications of international labor conventions fell from a peak of seventy-nine in 1928–29 to forty-four in 1929–30, and thirty-eight in 1930–31: Alcock, *History of the ILO*, 99.

⁹⁷ Butler, *Lost Peace*, 50–51.

⁹⁸ Edward C Lorenz, 'The Search for Constitutional Protection of Labor Standards, 1924–1941: From Interstate Compacts to International Treaties' (2000) 23 *Seattle U L Rev* 569.

⁹⁹ Lorenz, 'Search for Constitutional Protection', 587. Chamberlain's argument relied on *Missouri v Holland*, 252 US 416 (1920), which held that laws passed by Congress pursuant to a treaty were constitutional, notwithstanding any concerns about that treaty having abrogated states' rights under the Tenth Amendment to the US Constitution.

mobilized a concerted campaign to persuade US law-makers of the benefits of ILO membership; these efforts bore fruit when the US joined the ILO in 1934.¹⁰⁰

An immediate reward of membership in the ILO was the technical assistance it lent the federal government in setting up the administrative machinery for a key piece of New Deal legislation, the Social Security Act of August 1935.¹⁰¹ Up to this point, social insurance had remained an overwhelmingly European enterprise. The idea had still not taken hold in the US at the start of the decade—in 1930, Butler reported to Thomas that there was ‘a certain amount of discussion of unemployment insurance’ in America, but that he did not think that it would lead to any definite program¹⁰²—and both the correspondence committee and Adrien Tixier’s social insurance section continued to consist almost exclusively of Europeans.¹⁰³ John Winant, an American Assistant Director of the ILO who had only joined the organization in April 1935, was called back to Washington, DC, that October to serve as the first chairman of Roosevelt’s new Social Security Board.¹⁰⁴ The following month, Winant invited Tixier to travel to the US and advise the Board on the practical matters of how to conduct a census for insurance purposes, identify the insured, and collect dues. The ILO continued to provide assistance of various kinds to the Board over the following years as the new legislation was put into effect.¹⁰⁵

These actions marked the beginning of a move by the United States from the periphery to the center of international institutions. In August 1936, the ILO’s social insurance section organized a European tour for members of the US Social Security Board, including a one-week training course in Geneva and visits to social insurance institutions in Czechoslovakia, Austria, England, and Switzerland. Accompanying its

¹⁰⁰ Alcock, *History of the ILO*, 123–125. Several other countries joined the ILO and League of Nations in 1934, most notably the USSR; ‘New Members of the Organisation’ (September 1934) 9 ILO-MS 41. Efforts to persuade American policy-makers of the benefits of ILO membership continued for several years: Edward J Phelan, ‘The United States and the International Labor Organization’ (1935) 50 *Pol Sci Q* 107; Spencer Miller, *What the International Labor Organization Means to America* (Columbia UP 1936).

¹⁰¹ Alcock, *History of the ILO*, 145–146.

¹⁰² Cited in Alcock, *History of the ILO*, 121–122.

¹⁰³ Kott, ‘Constructing a European Social Model’, 175, 182–183.

¹⁰⁴ On Winant’s life, see Bernard Bellush, *He Walked Alone* (Humanities Press 1968).

¹⁰⁵ Kott, ‘Constructing a European Social Model’, 182.

members to Geneva was the US Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins, who paid an official visit to the Office, where she assured an audience of ILO staff and government representatives that ‘all the people of America . . . really want to lay the foundation of a new and better type of civilisation in the United States’.¹⁰⁶ David Morse, who had served in the US Interior Department before being appointed ILO Director-General in 1948, later reflected:¹⁰⁷

There are probably about two people in this country who know that the legislation for the Social Security System and the training of people to administer it were done with the technical assistance of the [ILO]. At the request of Frances Perkins, the Secretary of Labor, they sent teams here. They devised legislative machinery, and they trained our people.

The ILO also extended its social reform efforts in Latin America during the same period. Countries in the region had already introduced welfare and other social reforms during the 1920s, though with little input or influence from the ILO.¹⁰⁸ In late 1934, Tixier undertook a series of missions to study the organization of social insurance in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay.¹⁰⁹ In January 1936, the first Labor Conference of American States was held at Santiago de Chile, attended by representatives of nineteen American states.¹¹⁰ Adopting detailed resolutions on social insurance, immigration, the Indian (indigenous) population, and agriculture, the conference marked, in the words of one ILO legal advisor, ‘an important stage in the process of making the [ILO] effectively universal’.¹¹¹ Following the Conference, Butler—who had become Director of the Office—took the opportunity to visit several countries in the region; the ILO appointed a large number of American technical experts and officials; and a series of new correspondents’ offices and representatives were established. A second Labor Conference of American States, addressing a similar

¹⁰⁶ Cited in ‘Visit to the International Labour Office of Miss Frances Perkins, Secretary of Labour of the United States’ (July–August 1936) 7–8 ILO-MS 47, 48.

¹⁰⁷ Cited in Katie Louchheim (ed), *The Making of the New Deal* (Harvard UP 1983) 94.

¹⁰⁸ Jeremy Seekings, ‘The ILO and Welfare Reform in South Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean, 1919–1950’ in Van Daele and others (eds), *ILO Histories*, 145 (ch 6), 160–161.

¹⁰⁹ A Tixier, ‘The Development of Social Insurance in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay: I’ (1935) 32 Int’l Lab Rev 610; A Tixier, ‘The Development of Social Insurance in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay: II’ (1935) 32 Int’l Lab Rev 751.

¹¹⁰ ‘The Labour Conference of the American States which are Members of the International Labour Organisation, Santiago de Chile, 2–14 January 1936: II’ (1936) 33 Int’l Lab Rev 646; ‘The Labour Conference of the American States in Santiago’ (January 1936) ILO-MS 1; ‘The Santiago Conference’ (March 1936) ILO-MS 16.

¹¹¹ C Wilfred Jenks, ‘The International Labour Organization’ (1936) 17 BYIL 178, 179.

agenda of issues, was held in November 1939 in Havana, Cuba. The first Inter-American Conference on Social Security was held in Santiago in 1942; and a Permanent Inter-American Committee on Social Security was formed in 1943 to facilitate cooperation among Latin American states.¹¹²

Efforts to set up new social insurance schemes in Latin America led to further opportunities for the ILO to provide technical assistance to its member states.¹¹³ During his 1934 mission, Tixier was 'frequently asked to give a sincere opinion on what he had seen and to say what he thought of the legislation and organisation, of their deficiencies and the reforms he thought necessary'. By his own account, he 'did his best to reply to all the questions put to him', describing 'the solutions recommended by the International Labour Conference and by the expert committees of the Office' and offering examples from other countries.¹¹⁴ Over the next decade, the Office offered technical assistance services on social insurance issues to a long list of Latin American countries, including Cuba, Venezuela, Brazil, Bolivia, Columbia, Peru, Ecuador, Costa Rica, Chile, and Mexico.¹¹⁵ Most broadly, an Assistant Director of the Office visited Brazil in 1936/37 and carried out a general survey of that country's economic development.¹¹⁶

It is not possible to give a detailed assessment of the impact of ILO activities in Latin American states during this period. In general, their long-term effects appear to have been mixed at best, relative to the ILO's own professed ethos and goals. As one commentator put it, the following decades saw social insurance in Latin America grow into 'a mechanism for redistribution not from rich to poor, but if anything from poor to rich, with the poor paying through higher prices as well as taxes to subsidize

¹¹² 'The Santiago Conference and the Director's Visit to America' (February 1936) ILO-MS 8; Alcock, *History of the ILO*, 137, 147–148; Seekings, 'The ILO and Welfare Reform', 162–163.

¹¹³ Maurice Stack, 'Social Insurance in Latin America' (1941) 44 Int'l Lab Rev 1.

¹¹⁴ Tixier, 'Social Insurance: I', 613.

¹¹⁵ Tixier, 'Social Insurance: I'; Seekings, 'The ILO and Welfare Reform', 163–165; Alcock, *History of the ILO*, 144–145; Smith Simpson, 'The I.L.O. in Wartime' (1941) 31 Am Lab Leg Rev 108, 125; Gustavo-Adolfo Rohen y Gálvez, 'The Mexican Social Insurance Law' (1943) 6 Soc Sec Bull 11. On the ILO's social insurance and social security activities during WWII, see Gerry Rodgers and others, *The International Labour Organization and the Quest for Social Justice* (International Labour Office 2009) 150–155.

¹¹⁶ Fernand Maurette, *Some Social Aspects of Present and Future Economic Development in Brazil* (International Labour Office 1937).

the social insurance benefits of workers in formal employment'.¹¹⁷ Notwithstanding these outcomes, it is clear that by the late 1930s technical assistance had become a routine and widely accepted practice of the Office, closely associated with its legal authority and its mandate for social reform. The next two parts of this paper reveal how this practice, together with notions of rationalization and planning, formed an integral part of the incipient discourse and rationality of international development during the same period.

4. From scientific management to world planning

The previous part of this paper described how the threat of economic collapse and the changing political landscape in Europe during the 1930s spurred the ILO to shift its focus to new regions of the world. Apart from offering a growing range of technical assistance services in relation to social insurance schemes and other social reforms, ILO officials also started to give deeper consideration to the potential for greater economic coordination on a regional and international scale. Already in 1921, Albert Thomas had noted that capitalism was 'passing from crisis to crisis, from the crisis of under-production to the crisis of under consumption', and had recommended more attention to the possibility of 'a planned economy'.¹¹⁸ The worldwide crisis of the Great Depression renewed interest in that idea, as governments across Europe and the Americas began experimenting with different kinds of economic intervention. By the early 1930s, moreover, Harold Butler had concluded that cooperation with the United States was an essential component of any effort to 'organis[e] the world on a rational basis'.¹¹⁹ This part of the paper traces the ILO's early work in scientific management and its relationship to national and international planning.

¹¹⁷ Seekings, 'The ILO and Welfare Reform', 165. On the labor movement in Latin America, see Ruth Berins Collier and David Collier, *Shaping the Political Arena* (2nd edn, U Notre Dame Press 2002).

¹¹⁸ Albert Thomas, *International Social Policy*, 120.

¹¹⁹ Hughes and Haworth, 'A Shift in the Centre of Gravity', at 303 (citing a letter from Butler to Alfred Zimmern dated 12 April 1934).

A. Scientific management in the ILO

From early stage, ILO officials were intensely interested in exploring techniques of scientific management to enhance worker welfare. Based on the ideas of the American engineer and inventor, Frederick Winslow Taylor, scientific management addressed the problem of the 'larger wastes of human effort, which go on every day through such of our acts as are blundering, ill-directed, or inefficient'.¹²⁰ Applying the methods of his profession to the factory workshop, he claimed to have conducted rigorous scientific studies of industrial behavior and devised a number of techniques that would organize workers and incentivize more efficient production. With greater efficiency would come increased productivity and more wealth for all to share, Taylor argued. All that was necessary was a 'mental revolution' so that both employers and workers would 'take their eyes off the division of the surplus until this surplus becomes so large that it is unnecessary to quarrel over how it shall be divided'.¹²¹

Taylor's ideas were vigorously opposed by trade unions and many on the political left, who viewed them as a way of undermining workers' rights and further commodifying labor.¹²² To Taylor and his followers, however, scientific management held significance far beyond the factory floor. Although aimed especially at 'engineers and . . . managers of industrial and manufacturing establishments', they claimed to offer a comprehensive art of government that was germane to broad problems of social organization on a national scale. Taylor aimed 'to show that the fundamental principles of scientific management are applicable to all kinds of human activities', and hoped it would be clear to his readers 'that the same principles can be applied with equal force to all social activities', including the management of homes, farms,

¹²⁰ Frederick Winslow Taylor, *The Principles of Scientific Management* (Harper & Brothers 1967 [1911]) 5. On Taylor's life, see Robert Kanigel, *The One Best Way* (MIT Press 1997).

¹²¹ Cited in Haber, *Efficiency and Uplift*, 27.

¹²² Milton J Nadworny, *Scientific Management and the Unions* (Harvard UP 1955); Haber, *Efficiency and Uplift*, 66-70.

and even government departments.¹²³ The insights and techniques of engineering now promised to eliminate class distinctions and conflict.¹²⁴

These ideas exerted a particular influence upon the ILO's activities, which in turn helped to transform and apply them on a much wider, international scale. Before the Great War, 'Taylorism' had been seen as a peculiarly American theory; in its aftermath, as countries across Europe struggled to rebuild their economies and societies, hybrid forms of scientific management were embraced by governments in France, Germany, Great Britain, and even Soviet Russia. By the early 1920s, an international scientific management movement was attracting adherents on both sides of the Atlantic.¹²⁵ Reflecting this growing interest, the first issue of the *International Labour Review* included an article that surveyed a range of 'successful experiments in labour management' in the United States under the rubric of 'industrial government'.¹²⁶

It did not take long for the ILO to institutionalize its involvement in this burgeoning field of activity.¹²⁷ During a visit to the US in early 1923, Thomas met with the Boston businessman Edward A Filene and discussed their shared interest in scientific management. In April 1925, Thomas sent Paul Devinat, an Office employee, on a mission to meet again with Filene and other members of his Twentieth Century Fund (TCF), with the goal of negotiating the establishment of an independent institute to collect and disseminate information about scientific management.¹²⁸ The following year, Devinat published an article on 'The American Labour Movement and Scientific Management' in the *Review*, and arranged a tour for Filene to study economic conditions in Europe.¹²⁹ In January 1927, the International Management Institute

¹²³ Taylor, *Principles of Scientific Management*, 7, 8.

¹²⁴ Peter Miller and Ted O'Leary, 'Accounting and the Construction of the Governable Person' (1987) 12 *Accounting, Orgs and Soc'y* 235, 252.

¹²⁵ Judith A Merkle, *Management and Ideology* (U California Press 1980) ch 5.

¹²⁶ John R Commons, 'Industrial Government' (1921) 1 *Int'l Lab Rev* 61, 61.

¹²⁷ Thomas Cayet, *Rationaliser le Travail, Organiser le Production* (Presses Universitaires de Rennes 2010). See also Thomas Cayet, 'The ILO and the IMI' in Van Daele and others (eds), *ILO Histories*, 251 (ch 10), 253; Chris Nyland, Kyle Bruce and Prue Burns, 'Taylorism, the International Labour Organization, and the Genesis and Diffusion of Codetermination' (2014) 35 *Org Stud* 1149.

¹²⁸ Walter-Busch, 'Scientific Management in War and Peace', 220.

¹²⁹ Paul Devinat, 'The American Labour Movement and Scientific Management' (1926) 13 *Int'l Lab Rev* 461.

(IMI) was established at Geneva with funding from the TCF, Filene as its first president, and Devinat as its first Director.¹³⁰ In the same year, the ILO published a lengthy report by Devinat on *Scientific Management in Europe*.¹³¹

To many, it was far from obvious that the ILO should expand into this new area of thought and activity. Recognizing that open and direct espousal of Taylorist ideas would provoke controversy, particularly among worker representatives at the ILO, the IMI was established as an independent institute, rather than as a section of the Office.¹³² Nevertheless, close relations were maintained between the ILO and the IMI. The signatories to the IMI's constitution were Albert Thomas for the Office, Edward Filene for the TCF, and the President of the International Committee for Scientific Management. Several members of the ILO Governing Body also served on the IMI Board, and employees of the Office were seconded to the Institute.¹³³ Observing these arrangements, the French international lawyer Georges Scelle, who was generally very supportive of the new international institutions, described the IMI's work as marginal to the ILO's proper sphere of activity and symbolic of its expanded competence in relation to economic issues.¹³⁴

To officials at the ILO and IMI, on the other hand, it was not difficult to see how the principles of scientific management could and should also apply to the resolution of international problems. In Germany, opposition to Taylor's ideas led to the invention of a new term, 'rationalization', which the ILO adopted as a convenient way to describe the introduction of scientific management reforms in both private firms and the state.¹³⁵ That term gained especially wide currency at the World Economic

¹³⁰ Martin Fine, 'Albert Thomas: A Reformer's Vision of Modernization 1914-1932' (1977) 12 J Contemp Hist 545, 556.

¹³¹ Paul Devinat, *Scientific Management in Europe* (Kraus 1927).

¹³² Cayet, 'The ILO and the IMI', 253.

¹³³ Devinat, 'American Labour', 257ff; International Labour Office, *The International Labour Organisation: The First Decade* (Allen & Unwin 1931) 263.

¹³⁴ Georges Scelle, *L'Organisation Internationale du Travail et le B.I.T.* (Rivière 1930) 93.

¹³⁵ Robert A Brady, *The Rationalization Movement in German Industry* (U California Press 1933); Merkle, *Management and Ideology*, 181-184. On the ILO's interest in the application of scientific management techniques to private firms, see GA Johnston, 'Rationalisation and Industrial Relations' (1929) 20 Int'l Lab Rev 619; GA Johnston, 'The Technique of Discussion in Management-Worker Relationships in the United States' (1930) 22 Int'l Lab Rev 623; International Labour Office, *The Social Aspects of Rationalisation* (ILO, 1931); H Dubreuil and JP Lugrin, 'Scientific Management in a Food Preserving Establishment: The "Géo Factory," Paris' (1936) 33 Int'l Lab Rev 499.

Conference, held in Geneva in 1927, which the IMI helped to organize together with the League of Nations and ILO. A resolution adopted at the conference recommended that producers should '[e]ncourage and promote in every possible way the ascertainment and comparison of the most efficient methods and the most practical processes for rationalisation and scientific management and of their economic and social effects', and 'diffuse in every quarter a clear understanding of the advantages and obligations involved by rationalisation and scientific management, and of the possibilities of their gradual application'.¹³⁶

Following the World Economic Conference, 'rationalization' became increasingly associated with international cooperation, coordination, and planning by institutions such as the League of Nations and ILO.¹³⁷ Moreover, the effect of the Office's growing engagement in technical assistance, especially in relation to social insurance, was to bring the ILO ever closer to 'the invisible frontier between the social and economic domains'.¹³⁸ In August 1931, the IMI, the ILO, and the TCF helped to organize another international conference, the World Social Economic Planning Congress in Amsterdam, which again focused attention on the need for international planning.¹³⁹ Many who attended the Congress were already impressed by the apparently rapid economic progress of the Soviet Union under a series of five year plans and required little persuasion of the need for more purposeful, coordinated action among states.¹⁴⁰ In his speech to the Congress, the managing director of the US-based Taylor Society declared that national stability could not be completely established without 'international stabilization': 'Logic compels us to consider the necessity of ultimate stabilization of world industry by world-scale application of the principles of scientific management.'¹⁴¹ Lyndall Urwick echoed these sentiments, stressing the point that Taylor's 'mental revolution' must take place in international

¹³⁶ Cited in Lyndall Urwick, *The Meaning of Rationalisation* (Nisbet 1929) 151 (Appendix A) 152–153.

¹³⁷ Jo-Anne Pemberton, 'New Worlds for Old: The League of Nations in the Age of Electricity' (2002) 28 *Rev Int'l Stud* 311, 318–326.

¹³⁸ Butler, *Lost Peace*, 52.

¹³⁹ ML Fleddéus (ed), *World Social Economic Planning* (International Industrial Relations Institute 1931) 197; GA Johnston, 'Social Economic Planning' (1932) 25 *Int'l Lab Rev* 58.

¹⁴⁰ Walter-Busch, 'Scientific Management in War and Peace', 224.

¹⁴¹ Cited in Fleddéus, *World Social Economic Planning* 197.

affairs as well as individual businesses, and that the principles of management must be applied to 'the management of national economies and of the world economy'.¹⁴²

Albert Thomas and the other ILO officials who participated in the Congress would have approved. In 1932, an article by Hugo Haan, an ILO staff member who was then on secondment to the IMI as a Senior Chief of Staff, explicitly linked international planning with the principles of scientific management and the ILO's work. World peace, Haan argued, was 'a condition and result' of international cooperation in the political and economic fields, which in turn depended upon international planning. Pure laissez-faire no longer fit 'the present stage of a mechanized mass economy', but the Russian model of starting 'from the top' with a 'preconceived plan' was equally unsuited to the international community. Advocating the 'American concept' of 'planning from below', Haan described the 'technique of planning' as having developed as a tool of scientific management in individual enterprises. Applying American planning practices internationally would require a 'world-wide extension, completion and perfection of statistics, and international coördination of scientific research'; the creation of an international planning agency; and an analysis of various theoretical problems concerning appropriate balance of economic sovereignty and the free will of individual states to safeguard the 'collective interests of the international economic community'. Quoting Albert Thomas, Haan suggested that recent efforts of the ILO and the League of Nations had made a start in the right direction.¹⁴³

B. International economic planning

The idea of international planning and economic management opened up new possibilities for the expansion of ILO activities. Around the time of the World Social

¹⁴² Lyndall Urwick, *Management of Tomorrow* (Nisbet 1933) xvii, 47.

¹⁴³ See Hugo Haan, 'International Planning: Its Necessity and Its Special Features' (1932) 162 *Annals* 36, 36-38, 41. Another article by Haan the following year provided more details concerning the ILO's interest in scientific management, as well as the work of the Office and the IMI in relation to world economic planning; Hugo Haan, 'Scientific Management and Economic Planning' (1933) 166 *Annals* 66, 73.

Economic Planning Congress, the Office started to advocate strongly for the idea of ‘an organised economy, a controlled economy, a planned economy’. This was a vision that required both national and international coordination. From the perspective of ILO officials, the Depression had been caused primarily by a lack of cooperation among states. In 1931, Albert Thomas launched an ambitious campaign for large-scale public works in Europe as ‘an automatic “starting handle” for national economies’, and to relieve widespread unemployment.¹⁴⁴ Writing to the Secretary-General of the League of Nations, he expressed enthusiasm for the idea of a European federal union which had recently been proposed by Aristide Briand, affirming that ‘[a]ny action with a view to the development and—so to say—*the rationalisation of economic co-operation* between the European nations cannot fail to increase the producing capacity of Europe, and the workers stand to benefit by such increase in more ways than one.’¹⁴⁵ Thomas further suggested a series of other measures requiring greater international cooperation, including a European employment exchange that would place workers internationally, an international bank that could provide for medium and long-term credits to mobilize unused capital, and cross-border works such as the construction of a European railway network and international electrical system.¹⁴⁶

A turning point seemed to have been reached the following year, when it became obvious that the ILO’s traditional standard-setting activities were no longer an adequate response to the economic crisis. Acknowledging to the Conference that an atmosphere of ‘profound moral disquiet’ hung over the work of the organization,¹⁴⁷ Thomas urged his audience to resume their work with ‘an attitude of

¹⁴⁴ Thomas, *International Social Policy*, 118, 87.

¹⁴⁵ ‘Commission of Enquiry for European Union: Memorandum by the International Labour Office’ (31 May 1931) 16(1) ILO-OB 35, 35 (emphasis added). Briand had presented his proposal in a speech to the League of Nations in 1929, and in a memorandum the next year. Trevor C Salmon and William Nicolle (eds), *Building European Union* (Manchester UP 1997) 9–15.

¹⁴⁶ Thomas, *International Social Policy*, 85, 88, 89; ‘International Conference of Placing Experts’, (March–April 1933) 3–4 ILO-MS 16; Alcock, *History of the ILO*, 104–105; Johan Schot and Vincent Legendijk, ‘Technocratic Internationalism in the Interwar Years: Building Europe on Motorways and Electricity Networks’ (2008) 6 J Mod Eur Hist 196; Patrick Pasture, ‘The Interwar Origins of International Labour’s European Commitment (1919–1934)’ (2001) 10 Contemp Eur Hist 221.

¹⁴⁷ Thomas, *International Social Policy*, 125.

faith and confidence'. The economic turmoil of the time had only proved the need, from a 'moral and social . . . point of view, to widen the scope of our efforts'.¹⁴⁸ A substantial portion of the annual Director's Report that year was devoted to the problems of planned economies.¹⁴⁹ Making the decision to 'play a more active part in shaping the economic conditions which determine the scope and effectiveness of labour and social standards', the 1932 and 1934 sessions of the Conference then adopted resolutions addressing large measures to be taken regarding national and international public works as well as international monetary policy, currency, credit, and trade.¹⁵⁰

An impressive body of research supported those resolutions. Anticipating the major work of John Maynard Keynes on the topic by several years, ILO economists were among the first to link economic depression to under-consumption and support the use of budget deficits to finance large-scale counter-cyclical public works, and thus to stabilize employment.¹⁵¹ At the World Economic Conference organized by the League of Nations in 1933, ILO officials vigorously championed international public works and the forty-hour week as ways to alleviate unemployment, but gained little support for either.¹⁵² Urging the International Labor Conference to adopt a more ambitious economic program the following year, Harold Butler argued that the ILO could not afford to 'stand still in the face of a world which is moving with great rapidity out of its old tracks into new and untried paths':¹⁵³

The work of this Organisation is closely linked up with the whole problem of economic recovery, with the readjustment of social values and of economic organisation which it implies. These are essentially international problems. . . . [T]he regulation of labour conditions is no longer so much a matter of protecting the worker against abuse as a part of the rational organisation of society.

¹⁴⁸ Thomas, *International Social Policy*, 93, 124.

¹⁴⁹ Thomas died suddenly in Paris on 7 May 1932.

¹⁵⁰ Lewis L Lorwin, 'The I.L.O. and World Economic Policy' (1936) 33 *Int'l Lab Rev* 457, 462; PW Martin, 'World Economic Reconstruction: An Analysis of the Economic Resolution Adopted by the International Labour Conference' (1932) 26 *Int'l Lab Rev* 199.

¹⁵¹ Endres and Fleming, *International Organizations and the Analysis of Economic Policy*, 104, 98.

¹⁵² Patricia Clavin, *The Failure of Economic Diplomacy* (Palgrave Macmillan 1996) 154–155.

¹⁵³ Cited in 'The Seventeenth Session of the International Labour Conference' (June 1933) 6 ILO-MS 26, 30.

The ILO's expansion into the realm of economics proper was instrumental in the construction and diffusion of a model of the welfare state and of economic growth that would become nearly universal over the next two decades, in aspiration if not in reality. By this time, many countries had begun to experiment with economic planning of one sort or another, in an effort to find 'some intermediate form combining the virtues of free enterprise and of collective organisation'. The Office's research capability enabled it to take a broad view of these initiatives, compare their approaches and highlight their significance.¹⁵⁴ ILO officials were particularly interested in the dramatic experiments being conducted by the Roosevelt administration, transforming the scale and philosophy of American government.¹⁵⁵

Welfare economists in the 1930s also saw the ILO as a key institutional ally and support for their efforts. In a footnote in his most celebrated work, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* (1936), Keynes praised ILO researchers for their "consistent appreciation of this truth," that is, of the need for active public investment programs involving concerted international initiatives'.¹⁵⁶ A simplified account of Keynes' main argument, which he had read and approved, appeared in the *International Labor Review* in the year the *General Theory* was published.¹⁵⁷ The previous year, the *Review* had published an article on the economic crisis and unemployment in Sweden by Bertil Ohlin (1899–1979), a professor in the Stockholm School of economics who was later awarded the Nobel Memorial Prize in economics.¹⁵⁸ Several years later, the *Review* also published a significant article on family security in Sweden by Alva Myrdal (1902–1986), who had gained prominence as the co-author, together with her husband, the welfare economist Gunnar Myrdal (1898–1987), of a book on the population crisis.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁴ 'Report of the Director', 14.

¹⁵⁵ *Social and Economic Reconstruction in the US*.

¹⁵⁶ Cited in Endres and Fleming, *International Organizations and the Analysis of Economic Policy*, 82.

¹⁵⁷ AP Lerner, 'Mr. Keynes' "General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money" (1936) 34 *Int'l Lab Rev* 435.

¹⁵⁸ Bertil Ohlin, 'Economic Recovery and Labour Market Problems in Sweden: I' (1935) 31 *Int'l Lab Rev* 498.

¹⁵⁹ The book was *Crisis in the Population Question* (1934). On the Myrdals, see Thomas Etzemüller, *Alva and Gunnar Myrdal: Social Engineering in the Modern World* (Lexington Books 2014).

The importance of these new directions in the ILO's work was recognized at the annual conference of the League of Nations in 1936, which was devoted to the theme of 'The I.L.O. and World Planning'. In his address to the opening session of the conference, an economic advisor to the Office summarized the ILO's emerging vision of the need for international economic planning and its own role in that process. Based on 'a conception of world development which is both rational and hopeful', Lewis Lorwin (1883–1970) explained, world planning was not be imagined as a centralized process of command and control. Rather, it was 'a flexible process of international discussion, of concerted action by means of which a series of inter-related measures and policies may be carried out by all the countries of the world for a common end'. The ILO itself was 'a manifestation of international planning *par excellence*', endowed with 'a high degree of concreteness, flexibility, and realism' by the provisions of Part XIII. Its goals had evolved with its activities in a positive and dynamic way, by adhering to the principles of universality, equalization, functional representation, flexibility, and factual research. In this sense, the ILO could and 'should be regarded as the most important agency of world planning within a given sphere, namely, in the sphere of industrial relations and social justice'.¹⁶⁰

Contrary to any expectations at its creation, the International Labor Office had emerged as a leading site of reflection and innovation at the vanguard of international economic thought. The IMI was closed in 1933 when the TCF withdrew its financial backing, and by the mid-1930s rearmament in many countries made the possibility of effective international planning seem doubtful. Nevertheless, the ILO continued to encourage greater coordination of economic and trade policy among states, while promoting the principles of scientific management and rationalization internationally.¹⁶¹ Even as Europe descended into a second world war, the ILO was

¹⁶⁰ Lorwin, 'I.L.O. and World Economic Policy', 462, 458–461.

¹⁶¹ 'The Social Aspects of Measures of Scientific Management' (April 1936) 4 ILO-MS 20; PW Martin, 'The Present Status of Economic Planning: I. An International Survey of Governmental Economic Intervention' (1936) 33 Int'l Lab Rev 619; PW Martin, 'The Present Status of Economic Planning: II. The Problems Involved' (1937) 35 Int'l Lab Rev 177; 'The Terminology of Rationalisation and Scientific Management' (1937) 36 Int'l Lab Rev 250; Hugo von Haan, 'International Aspects of the Terminology and Ideology of Management' (1938) 37 Int'l Lab Rev 419.

turning its attention to applying the lessons of scientific management to problems of world development.

5. Into development

The streams of the ILO's expanded work program described above—its technical assistance activities outside Europe, its move into rationalization and planning, and the growing influence of American policy ideas—combined to produce a particular approach to economic and social development in the non-Western world. Lorwin's 1936 address reflected the ILO's growing appreciation of the colonial dimensions of international economic planning, albeit viewed through the lens of a certain European parochialism. The nations of the world and the League of Nations, he argued, should establish a series of permanent expert committees, which would develop a plan to realize 'the simultaneous improvement of the conditions of living throughout the world', and 'to equalize the opportunities of all countries with regard to raw materials, credits, markets, etc'. Yet even while expressing a relatively enlightened concern for the interests of colonized peoples, his proposal left the legitimacy of colonialism itself fundamentally unquestioned and undisturbed:¹⁶²

... changes of territory and redistribution of colonies seem to me to be of less importance than the equalisation of benefits which come from the possession of colonies. What we must strive for is to find a programme which will help not only the white people to settle their quarrels but the less developed populations to prepare themselves for an independent part in the government and economic life of their own countries.

These tensions in ILO discourse on international economics grew out of its practical efforts to implement ostensibly 'universal' social reforms in non-European societies, as surveyed in Part 3 above. The expanded program of missions to countries in Asia, Africa, and the Americas, involving increasing instances of technical assistance, had convinced ILO officials that an essential condition of 'native' welfare was a certain kind of economic development. Further industrialization would be required to provide the capital to fund social insurance and other reforms, but a more

¹⁶² Lorwin, 'ILO and World Economic Policy', 463–465.

deep-seated cultural transformation would be necessary to push 'traditional', agrarian societies towards a more modern economy. Gradually replacing the older language of 'civilization', the vocabulary of 'development' and 'modernization' assumed much the same trajectory and teleology.

This emerging understanding of economic development as part of a wider process of modernization informed a 1938 report by Harold Butler on his travels through South and Southeast Asia. In Ceylon, Malaya, and Sumatra, workers' health and living standards had been raised by their being engaged on plantations, instead of 'snatching a precarious existence from the soil by primitive and outworn agricultural methods'. In India, the wages of factory workers remained low 'by European standards,' but they had otherwise 'risen a step higher in the scale of living than if [they] had remained tied to [their] village'. Butler's analysis reflected stereotypes that were widespread, even among cosmopolitan internationalists at the time:¹⁶³

Every observer of Indian industry is agreed that the greatest handicap is the ignorance of the workers. . . . In most Indian factories it is noticeable that workers are not the masters but the servants of their machines. They do not understand them . . . Indeed, it is impossible to imagine adequately the bewilderment of the Indian worker drawn in from his village, where life has moved sluggishly along grooves of custom and tradition for centuries, and hurled into the vortex of factory life with its insistence upon speed, precision and punctuality.

To Butler, modernity was an inescapable fact with unavoidable consequences for 'backward', agricultural populations. Despite their ingrained resistance to change, the 'traditional native methods of cultivation' were 'slowly beginning to give way to the teachings of modern science', and the 'immemorial passivity and fatalism of the Orient' were 'beginning to yield to the desire for higher standards and the determination to acquire them'. The levels of industrialization already achieved by Japan, India and China had demonstrated that the whole of Asia could follow the path of modernization set by the West. In time, he was confident, all the countries of the East would have to face the range of problems that already perplexed the Western mind: questions of wage rates, working hours, unemployment, social insurance, and

¹⁶³ Butler, *Problems of Industry*, 23–24.

other, similar issues of industrial labor.¹⁶⁴ Indeed, as he noted elsewhere, the ‘modern technique’ of economic development had become ‘more or less universal’:¹⁶⁵

[W]hether it be a question of developing national resources, promoting national industry, controlling output, marketing and prices, regulating credit and currency, adjusting internal indebtedness, redistributing income by the taxation of large incomes and profits, or deflecting the course of international trade and capital, it is impossible to draw any firm distinctions along ideological lines. These practices are the common property of all countries.

As the decade drew to a close, US interests and concerns increasingly influenced ILO activities. In 1939, John Winant was appointed Director of the Office—the first American to serve as executive head of an international organization. The Office moved (albeit with a much-reduced staff) from Geneva to Montreal at the end of 1940. The new location gave it easy access to Washington, DC, without raising doubts about the Roosevelt administration’s neutrality in the war, and allowed it to continue its technical co-operation work in Latin America.¹⁶⁶ In 1941, the Conference was held in New York, chaired by Frances Perkins, and its closing session was hosted at the White House, where Roosevelt addressed the delegates and described the ILO as ‘an invaluable instrument for peace’.¹⁶⁷ The central resolution of the Conference addressed the ILO’s role in postwar reconstruction,¹⁶⁸ but its larger significance was in linking together the ideas of social justice, social security, and ‘the basic elements of economic democracy’ as ‘the essence of the conflict and the very stuff for which free men fight’.¹⁶⁹ A month later, the Imperial Japanese Navy attacked Pearl Harbor and the US declared war on both Japan and Germany.

The ILO’s wartime policy and planning work drew upon its experiences with technical assistance over the previous two decades, concentrating to a significant degree on the problems of development in the less industrialized countries outside Europe and North America.¹⁷⁰ ILO officials had started to think about social security

¹⁶⁴ Butler, *Problems of Industry*, 5, 66.

¹⁶⁵ Cited in ‘Report of the Director to the Twenty-third Session of the International Labour Conference’ (March–April 1937) 3–4 ILO-MS 11, 13.

¹⁶⁶ Hughes and Haworth, ‘Centre of Gravity’, 307–308; Carter Goodrich, ‘Program of the International Labor Organization’ (1942) 54 *Monthly Lab Rev* 305, 314; Simpson, ‘ILO in Wartime’.

¹⁶⁷ Cited in Goodrich, ‘Program of the ILO’, 317.

¹⁶⁸ International Labour Office, *The I.L.O. and Reconstruction* (ILO 1941).

¹⁶⁹ Goodrich, ‘Program of the ILO’, 306.

¹⁷⁰ Maul, *Human Rights, Development and Decolonization*, ch 1.

as one element within a much broader, unified strategy for national economic development. Social security was only possible if combined with a wide range of other social and economic interventions by the state: to promote and maintain employment at a high level; to grow and share the national dividend more equitably; to improve nutrition, housing, and medical care; and to widen educational opportunities.¹⁷¹ Moreover, the same model of state-led development was now expressly intended to apply in the colonies as well. A comprehensive study of social policy in dependent territories suggested that the extension of social security to those territories would require a planned economy, industrialization, and intensive capital investment. Revealing a growing anxiety regarding ‘the foundations of colonial responsibility’ and ‘the ethical bases of colonial rule’, the study argued that ‘[t]he State, in the colonies as at home, should be not merely an agency for maintaining justice and equal rights or for preventing abuse, but the most active agency for promoting social welfare and improving the general standard of living’. Experience had shown that liberal welfare policies almost always depended upon a vibrant export economy, which ‘often meant European production’.¹⁷²

As these conclusions indicate, the ILO was an important early incubator of modernization theory, which would become dominant in international development practice over the following two decades. A series of important studies published by the ILO—one of which was written by one of the most influential early modernization theorists, Eugene Staley¹⁷³—presented many of the familiar tropes of that discourse: the social disruptions and problems afflicting native populations as a result of their being ‘swept into the world market’; their moral degradation, resulting from urban poverty, which evoked ‘pity’ and ‘shame’ on the part of European observers; the inability of rural traditions to resist the onrushing pressure of modernization; and so on. Its core policy prescriptions for cultural reform were also foreshadowed here: the

¹⁷¹ Endres and Fleming, *International Organizations and the Analysis of Economic Policy*, 103, 165–166 (citing an ILO report in 1942).

¹⁷² International Labour Office, *Social Policy in Dependent Territories* (ILO 1944) 62, 14.

¹⁷³ Eugene Staley, *World Economic Development* (2nd edn, International Labour Office 1945). On Staley’s intellectual evolution and influence on modernization theory, see David Ekbladh, *The Great American Mission* (Princeton UP 2009) 65–69.

need to instill a 'desire for social progress', to help the natives choose new standards over old, disintegrating ones, and to encourage 'an individual and community sense of informed responsibility'.¹⁷⁴

The ideas of social welfare and economic planning, as promoted by the ILO, became more widely established and accepted during the war. In Britain, the 1942 Beveridge Report laid the foundations for the modern welfare state;¹⁷⁵ ILO staff were invited to advise the government on plans for a postwar review of its social insurance and social assistance schemes;¹⁷⁶ and Winston Churchill galvanized the war effort by drawing a contrast between the British 'welfare' state and the Nazi 'power and warfare state'.¹⁷⁷ Social welfare concerns were extended to colonial territories, too, with the passage of the Colonial Development and Welfare Act in the UK in 1940, and the creation of the *Fonds d'Investissement et de Développement Economique et Social* in France in 1946.¹⁷⁸ After the war, country after country adopted new social security legislation,¹⁷⁹ together with more or less comprehensive and universal welfare programs, including the provision of health, education, and housing by the state.¹⁸⁰

The ILO's construction of a universal model of social and economic development reached an apotheosis with the adoption of the 'Declaration of Philadelphia' at the twenty-sixth session of the Conference in April–May 1944.¹⁸¹ Reaffirming the organization's fundamental principles, that Declaration presented a vision of development linked to universal human rights: the right of 'all human beings, irrespective of race, creed, or sex . . . to pursue both their material well-being and their spiritual development in conditions of freedom and dignity, of economic security and equal opportunity' would now constitute 'the central aim of national and

¹⁷⁴ International Labour Office, *Social Policy in Dependent Territories*, 18–19, 24, 21, 125, 133.

¹⁷⁵ Michael Freedon, 'The Coming of the Welfare State', in Terence Ball and Richard Bellamy (eds) *The Cambridge History of Twentieth Century Political Thought* (Cambridge UP 2003) ch 1.

¹⁷⁶ Goodrich, 'Program of the ILO', 314.

¹⁷⁷ Cornelia Navari, *Internationalism and the State in the Twentieth Century* (Routledge 2000) 125.

¹⁷⁸ Frederick Cooper, 'Modernizing Bureaucrats, Backward Africans, and the Development Concept' in Frederick Cooper and Randall Packard (eds), *International Development and the Social Sciences* (U California Press 1997) 64 (ch 2), 67–70.

¹⁷⁹ 'Post-War Trends in Social Security' (1949) 59 Int'l Lab Rev 668.

¹⁸⁰ Gøsta Esping-Andersen, *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* (Princeton UP 1990) 26–27.

¹⁸¹ Maul, *Human Rights, Development and Decolonization*, ch 2.

international policy'. The ILO had an obligation to promote international programs that would, among other things, achieve full employment, raise living standards, extend social security measures and comprehensive medical care, assure equal educational opportunities, and provide adequate nutrition, housing and facilities for recreation and culture. These goals could be achieved through a 'fuller and broader utilization of the world's productive resources', and 'effective international and national action, including measures to expand production and consumption . . . to promote the economic and social advancement of the less developed regions of the world . . . and to promote a high and steady volume of international trade'.¹⁸² The ILO's initial narrow focus on setting labor standards had given way to a complete worldview in which the achievement of human rights, development, industrialization, and trade were all inextricably bound together.

As the reference to the 'less developed regions of the world' suggests, the Philadelphia Declaration assumed a protective, paternalistic attitude towards the welfare of populations in colonies and other dependent territories. The principles set out in the Declaration were intended to be 'fully applicable to all peoples everywhere'. The manner of their application had to be determined, of course, 'with due regard to the stage of social and economic development reached by each people'. Nevertheless, their 'progressive application' to peoples who were still dependent, as well as to those who had already achieved self-government, was 'a matter of concern to the whole civilized world'.¹⁸³

The same session of the Conference also adopted a landmark recommendation concerning the minimum standards of social policy in dependent territories which established the general principle that '[a]ll policies designed to apply to dependent territories shall be primarily directed to the well-being and development of the peoples of such territories and to the promotion of the desire on their part for social progress.' Among other things, those standards addressed the issues of slavery and forced labor, traffic in opium and other narcotics, penal sanctions, the employment of

¹⁸² Declaration Concerning the Aims and Purposes of the International Labour Organisation (26th Session of International Labor Conference, 10 May 1944) 15 UNTS 104 (Philadelphia Declaration).

¹⁸³ Philadelphia Declaration, Part V.

children, young persons, and women, health, housing, social security, and labor inspection services.¹⁸⁴ Aligning closely with the policies of leading Allied powers who were already making plans for a new international order, the approaches embodied in these and related instruments promised to secure the ILO's position in the hierarchy of international institutions.¹⁸⁵

6. Conclusion

This paper has uncovered a new source of development thinking and practice in the ILO's interwar activities. ILO technical assistance during that period drew upon—and helped to confirm and connect—a powerful set of ideas and practices: the promise of social reform; the extension of that promise beyond Europe, to the very different contexts of dependent and independent territories in Africa, Asia, and the Americas; the gradual ascendance of US interests and ideas in international institutions; and the earliest articulations of the modernization theory that would become ubiquitous in postwar development discourse. Indeed, the legacies of this episode remain with us today. Technical assistance is now seen as a normal and natural part of the range of services provided by international institutions to their members. A wide range of international interventions in the global South are routinely carried out in the name of modernization and development. And the concept of the 'social', social welfare, and social security continue to play an important role in contemporary political thinking, particularly since the global financial crisis of the last decade. As the paper shows, each of these features of present-day international governance can be traced back in important ways to the activities of the ILO during its first twenty-five years of operations.

¹⁸⁴ B Condliffe and A Stevenson, *The Common Interest in International Economic Organisation* (International Labour Office 1944) Appendix A: Part I, Annex: Part II.

¹⁸⁵ Rodgers and others, *ILO and Social Justice*, 154.