

Public Services International



The Beginnings

1907 – 1914

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There is some confusion about the terminology used when referring to Public Services International in the early days. Different translations of the German "Internationale der Arbeit öffentlicher Betriebe" appear in the various documents. To simplify matters the name "International of Workers in Public Services" has been used throughout in this translation.

Public Services International

Dieter Schneider

The Beginnings

1907 - 1914

**With a Foreword
by Heinz Kluncker**

Foreword

Workers in public services were among the last to organize when trade unions were formed last century, first in Britain, then on the European continent. Their unions brought together a new type of worker. The rapid growth of the towns was responsible for the emergence of these workers and their numbers increased accordingly.

Wherever large masses of people were crowded together, mostly attracted by hopes of industrial employment, authorities were confronted by tasks which, to safeguard the interests of the workers and their families, had to be taken out of the hands of those striving for private profit.

For many tasks an army of workers had to be employed to serve the community and to make it possible for communal life to function at all. Suburbs needed transport links to town centres, streets had to be cleaned and lit, slaughterhouses and market halls maintained, the inhabitants of towns had to be supplied with water and energy, their refuse had to be taken away and sewers installed and maintained. Parks were established, as were public baths, municipal hospitals and the like.

Much of the work to provide these utilities had to be done under conditions which defied description. Working hours were long, pay miserable and the workers' health endangered. This applied especially to the murderous conditions in the gas works. If one reads the death notices in the trade union newspapers of the day one is shocked today at the short life-span workers in public services had. Many did not even reach their forties.

This was where trade union work had to begin and here, too, lay the motives for the first international contacts. In 1902 a delegation of the German public workers' union executive visited Denmark to study the conditions the trade unions had been able to achieve in the gas works there. This and other visits achieved much on the thorny and arduous path towards making work more humane.

Gas workers pioneered trade unionism in public services all over Europe. For a long time they were the most numerous and most active members of the unions of municipal and state workers. The number of strikes they fought is legion. From the outset they looked beyond national frontiers.

»Let us take an active interest in the well-being of our brother workers in other countries and let us try by international cooperation to achieve further improvements in our living conditions« read the invitation to the First International Conference of Workers in Public Services sent out on March 22, 1907 by the German Association of Municipal and State Workers. Learning from one another and helping each other were also the motives for convening the inaugural assembly five months later, from August 25 to 27 in Stuttgart. The International of Workers in Public Services came into being. It was the beginning of the Public Services International.

August 1982

Heinz Kluncker

President of the Public Services International

I. A Brotherhood of Nations

It all started in 1863 as a result of Russian action against the insurrection of the Poles. English trade unionists protested and invited their French colleagues to London. Together they pledged solidarity to the Polish freedom fighters. The date was July 22, 1863.

It was a Frenchman who revived an old idea on this occasion and called for an international union of workers. His suggestion met with an enthusiastic response.

Four months later, the British, led by top unionists, appealed to the French: »As a means of ending the present abuse of power we call on you to join a brotherhood of nations. Let us convene a conference of representatives from France, England, Germany, Italy, Poland and all countries where there is the will to work together for humanity. Let us hold our congresses and discuss the great issues on which the peace of nations depends.«

The Britons also wanted to harness the proposed organization to practical trade union work:

»A brotherhood of nations is of the utmost importance to the labour movement, for whenever we try to improve our social situation by cutting working hours or increasing wages our employers threaten to bring over French, German or Belgian workers, to have them do our work for lower pay.«

The idea was followed by the deed and on September 28, 1864, Britons, Frenchmen, Germans, Irishmen, Italians and Poles met in St. Martin's Hall in London. The conference was chaired by Professor Edward Spencer Beesly, an English scholar with a record of meritorious service to the labour movement. Karl Marx was invited and came. He assisted, as he wrote to his friend, Friedrich Engels, »as a silent figure on the rostrum«. This was the birth of the International Working Men's Association. It went down in history as the First International.

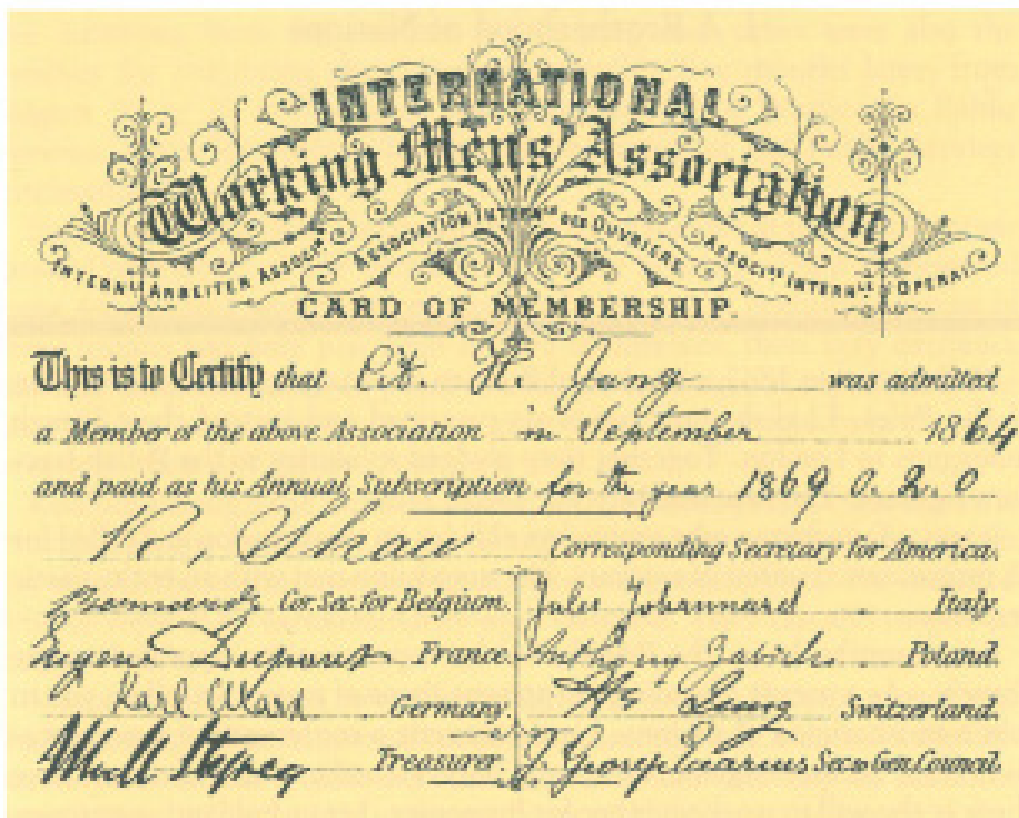
The First International unified a broad spectrum of political forces from utopian socialists to radical bourgeois democrats. Initially the strongest backing came from the British trade unions. Followers of Karl Marx were members, as were those of his antagonist, Mikhail Bakunin, the Russian anarchist.

Karl Marx wrote the organization's programme, the inaugural address, and the statutes.

The inaugural address - Edward Spencer Beesly called it »probably the most powerful and telling rendition of the workers' cause ever compressed into a dozen small pages« - encouraged the European workers to start their own political parties, found trade unions and actively take part in political and social life.

The First International which, strictly speaking, lasted only eight years and finally broke apart after 12 years, following acrimonious in-fighting, achieved a great deal. At its first congress, in Geneva in 1866, a resolution referred to the trade unions as »the central organizing points of the working class « - indispensable on the one hand »to the small war between labour and capital«, and called upon on the other hand to remove the »rule of capital«:

»If they (the trade unions) regard themselves as the champions and representatives of the entire working



The emancipation of the working classes must be accomplished by the working classes themselves. The struggle for their emancipation means a struggle for equal rights & duties and the abolition of all class rule. The economical subjection of the mass of labour to the monopolies of the means of labour, lies at the bottom of everything in all its forms of social misery, mental degradation and political dependence. The economical emancipation of the working classes is therefore the great end to which every political movement ought to be subordinated as a means. All efforts aiming at that great end have hitherto failed from the want of solidarity between the manifold divisions of labour in each country and from the absence of a fraternal bond of union between the working classes of different countries. The emancipation of labour is neither a local nor a national, but a social problem, embracing all countries in which modern society exists & depending for its solution on the concurrence practical and theoretical of the most advanced countries.

L'émancipation des travailleurs doit être l'œuvre des travailleurs eux-mêmes, les efforts des travailleurs pour acquiescer leur émancipation ne tendent qu'à établir pour tous des droits et des devoirs égaux et à assurer la domination de toute classe. L'assujettissement économique du travailleur aux détenteurs des moyens de travail, c'est-à-dire des sources de la vie, est la cause première de sa servitude politique, sociale, matérielle. L'émancipation économique des travailleurs est conséquemment le grand but auquel tout mouvement politique doit être subordonné comme moyen. Tous les efforts faits jusqu'ici ont échoué faute de solidarité entre les ouvriers des divers peuples et d'une union fraternelle entre les travailleurs des divers continents. L'émancipation du travail n'est ni un problème ni local ni national, mais social, embrassant tous les pays dans lesquels la vie moderne existe et dépendant pour sa solution de la concurrence théorique et pratique des pays les plus avancés.

Die Emancipation der Arbeiterklasse muss durch die Arbeiterklasse selbst bewerkstelligt werden, der Kampf ihrer Emancipation der Arbeiterklasse ist kein Kampf für eine Klassenvermehrung, sondern für die Vernichtung aller Klassenherrschaft. Die ökonomische Unterwerfung des Arbeiter unter den Anseher der Arbeitsmittel, d. h. der Quellen des Lebens liegt der Herrschaft in aller ihrer Formen zu Grunde, dem sozialen Elend, der geistigen Verarmung und der politischen Abhängigkeit. Die ökonomische Emancipation der Arbeiterklasse ist daher das grosse Ziel, jeder politischen Bewegung als Mittel dienen muss. Alle nach diesem Ziel strebenden Versuche sind bisher gescheitert aus Mangel an Einigung unter den verschiedenen Arbeitervölkern jedes Landes und aus der Abwesenheit einer politischen Einigung. Die Emancipation der Arbeiter ist weder eine lokale noch eine nationale, sondern eine gesellschaftliche Aufgabe. Sie umfasst alle Länder, worin die moderne Gesellschaft besteht. Sie kann nur gelöst werden durch die planmässige Zusammenarbeit dieser Länder.

Both sides of a membership card of the International Working Men's Association with the signature of Karl Marx

class and act accordingly they should not fail to draw into their ranks those workers who are still missing. They must apply themselves with the necessary seriousness to the plight of the worst -paid workers, for example the agricultural day-labourers, who have become powerless through exceptional circumstances. They must convince the world that their efforts, far from being petty and selfseeking, are aimed at liberating the millions of oppressed.«

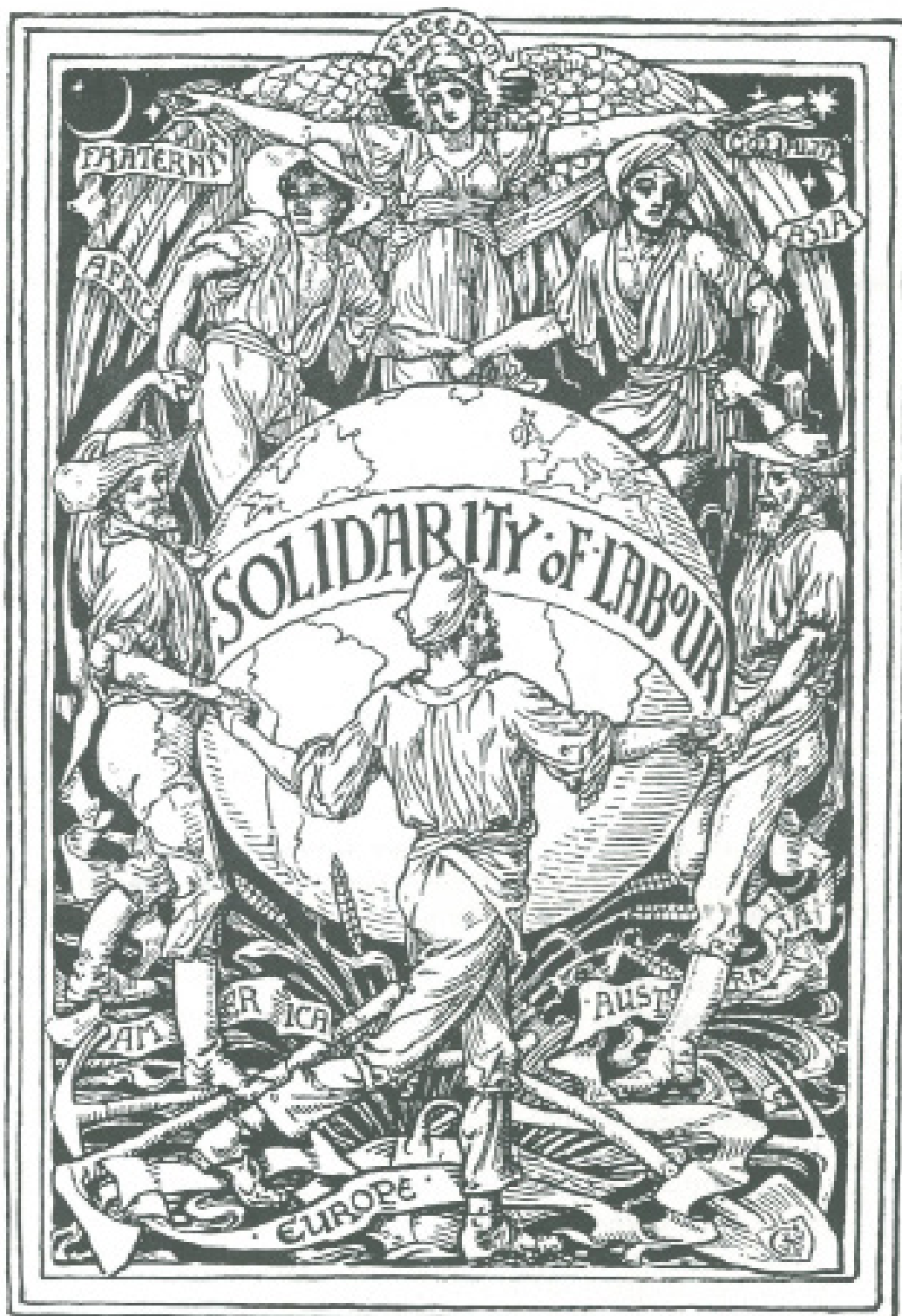
In Germany the Fifth Conference of Working Men's Associations adopted the principles of the First International in 1868 and at the same time began to build up trade unions .

The motives which determined the actions of the First International were the joint struggle for all who were oppressed and, where possible, practical solidarity with strikers . The International collected money for several strikes on the continent and became a legend even in its early years. In some cases the mere rumour that it would back a strike sufficed to make employers give way.

The continental socialist parties were formed with the help of the First International. After a decade and a half of paralysis and apathy following the unsuccessful bourgeois revolutions of 1848 it strengthened the feeling among progressive workers that they shared a common fate. Its authority was not least due to the fact that all the parties linked to it were still weak.

Julius Braunthal has accurately characterised the first international labour organization:

» The First International is one of the most notable episodes in the history of socialism(...). The size of its membership was insignificant. Its financial resources were incredibly meagre. All the same, it stamped indelible marks on the face of its time. To millions of workers it appeared to be a legendary force in which they placed extravagant hopes. The leading voice of the English middle class compared it with the early Christian church. Governments saw in it a mysterious, ominous, gigantic power. The cabinets of Europe pondered over plans to destroy it. In France and Spain it was persecuted by special laws, in the Austro-Hungarian empire banned as a danger to the state, and the Pope condemned it as an >enemy of God and humanity<. With the First International, much admired and much reviled, socialism stepped on to the stage of history as a world movement.«



Walter Crane: *Solidarity of Labour*

II. A Clarion Call

The Second International came into being at the International Workers' Congress which was held in Paris from July 14 to 20, 1889 and was attended by representatives of parties and trade unions from twenty countries. The delegates sent out a clarion call when they resolved »to organize a large international rally« for May 1, 1890. In »all countries and all towns workers were to demand that the public authorities set the working day at eight hours and carry out the other resolutions of the International Congress of Paris.«

This courageous decision ushered in the only lasting worldwide action of the labour movement. International Labour Day was born. Year after year it brought ever more workers together for ever mightier demonstrations. At the time of the Second International, unions - mostly craft unions - were being formed on the European continent. For some it was a second attempt, and, closely allied with political parties, they sought international contacts from the very beginning.

These contacts and the first international alliances among unions grew out of the practical need for better mutual information, understanding and strike support. All this developed more or less in the wake of the Second International.

The printers and tobacco workers met in Paris in 1889 for their first international congresses. In 1890 the International Miners' Federation (later International Miners' Association), which was for many years the largest trade secretariat, was constituted, based in Manchester. In connection with the congresses of the

Erik Henningsen: The Agitator





Budapest, 10–12 August 1911: Seventh International Conference of the Secretaries of the National Trade Union Centres; group photo

Second International-Brussels 1891, Zurich 1893, London 1896, Paris 1900, Amsterdam 1904, Stuttgart 1907 and Copenhagen 1910 - conferences of trade union representatives took place, for example those of the wood, metal and textile workers in Brussels in 1891. Information offices and secretariats were set up, most of which were based in Germany before the First World War.

The present International Metalworkers' Federation (IMF) owes its existence to a resolution passed at the International Metalworkers' Congress in Zurich in 1893. The delegates decided to establish an international information bureau which initially went to Winterthur, Switzerland. In the same year the International Secretariat of Woodworkers, established in 1891, moved from Brussels to Stuttgart. From 1900 Stuttgart was also the base of the International Printers' Secretariat founded in 1893. In 1905 the metal workers followed them there.

The London-based International Secretariat of Railway Workers was also founded in 1893. In 1896 a provisional central committee for seamen and dockers was created which in 1897 became the International Federation of Ship, Dock and River Workers. In 1900 the Railway Workers' International and the International Federation of Ship, Dock and River Workers merged to form the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF). From 1904 this international was based in Hamburg. Since 1903 the International Carpenters' Secretariat had also worked from there, and in 1907 the International Bricklayers' Secretariat moved there as well.

The international contacts of the craft unions, which began to set up international trade secretariats from the end of the 19th century, were the beginnings of international trade union cooperation. The unions' national centres, the umbrella organizations, only followed suit from about the turn of the century.

The proposal for this came from Carl Legien, the president of the General Commission of German Trade Unions. At the Scandinavian Labour Congress in Copenhagen he proposed a conference on August 21, 1901 of the secretaries of national trade union centres. Representatives from Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden were joined by those from Belgium, England and Germany. They agreed to meet regularly and also to invite the secretaries from those countries not represented to the next conference.

The first conference was followed just a year later by the second, on August 17 and 18, 1902, in Stuttgart, where the Fourth Congress of the German Trade Unions was in session. Twelve national centres were represented, from Austria, Bohemia, Britain, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland.

Carl Legien



The secretaries discussed mutual aid during strikes, joint statistics and mutual information about all important matters. Germany became the seat of a provisional international centre.

The Third International Conference of Secretaries of National Trade Union Centres in Dublin on July 7 and 8, 1903 created the International Secretariat of National Trade Union Centres, based in Berlin, with the German president, Carl Legien, as secretary. It introduced regular affiliation fees and adopted principles of strike support: »On demand by a national centre the international secretary must send to all national centres a call for support in larger disputes.

The national centre which sends such an application for support must also enclose a report which states:

1. The number of workers on strike and the number of workers employed in the trade;
2. how many workers of the trade concerned are organized;
3. the volume of support funds raised in its own country. The individual national centres decide what support to give.

The support funds are to be sent directly to the national centre seeking support, which is obliged, however, to send to the international secretary a report on total expenditure for the dispute and the contributions made by the various countries. This information must be included in the report to be placed before the international conference of national secretaries. «

On the basis of this decision, which was supplemented and expanded in 1911, industrial disputes throughout Europe were financially supported in the ensuing years, including the 1909 general strike of the Swedish unions, the 1912 strike of British transport workers and the struggle in 1913 of the Dutch tobacco workers who were locked out by their employers.

In 1909 the struggle of the Swedish trade unions triggered off a wave of international solidarity. The Swedish employers' federation had responded to small strikes with a country-wide lock-out. Donations totalling more than 1,3 million marks poured into the general committee of the German trade unions. The picture shows the call for support published by the Association of Municipal and State Workers.

Die Gewerkschaft

Zeitschrift zur Vertretung der wirtschaftlichen und sozialen Interessen der in Gemeinde- und Staatsbetrieben beschäftigten Arbeiter und Unter-Angestellten

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Aufruf zur Unterstützung der Aussperrung und des allgemeinen Streiks der Gewerkschaften Schwedens!

Den Gewerkschaften Schwedens ist durch das organisierte Unternehmertum bei dem Mittel anfangs gemacht worden, den allgemeinen Streik, der am 4. August begonnen hat. Auf den Überstand der Arbeiter in der Produktion und in der Lebenshaltung zu unterstützen die Unternehmern mit Aufstellungen der ersten Arbeiter dieser Branche. Darauf sollte der Schwedische Arbeitgeberverband, die Vertreter der größten Unternehmerräte, den Gewerkschaften bei Stockholm, bei am 21. Juli die Arbeiter der Holzschleifereien, Sägewerke und der Textilindustrie ausgesperrt werden, wenn am 2. August die Arbeiter der Eisenwerke folgen würden, falls nicht bis dahin die Konflikte in den Schwerindustriebetrieben beendet sind. Diese Aufstellungen sollten weitere Bedenken folgen.

Die Gewerkschaften Schwedens beschließen auf ihrer Vorstandssitzung, die Arbeitsverhältnisse weiterzuführen, auf die Verwirklichung der Generalaussperrung am 26. Juli und 2. August aber mit der allgemeinen Arbeitseinstellung aller Gewerkschaften am 4. August zu antworten. Um der Arbeitseinstellung folgen unmittelbar hinter die Arbeiter, die bei der Wartung traktor Maschinen, bei Pflege der Tiere und bei der öffentlichen Reinigung, Wasserreinigung und Reinigung beschäftigt sind. Jede praktische Unterstützung während dieses Kampfs wird gewünscht; die verfahrensmäßig Mittel werden versprochen, um den wichtigsten Ziel zu dienen. Das in Arbeit stehenden Mitgliedern wird ein hoher Entlohnung ausgesetzt.

Die Aussperrungen am 26. Juli und am 2. August hat den Programm der Arbeitgeberverband nicht erfolgt, worauf der allgemeine Streik der Gewerkschaften am 4. August seinen Anfang nahm. 83.000 Arbeiter sind ausgesperrt; 250.000 müssten insgesamt am Kampf beteiligt werden.

Die Vorbedingung der Gewerkschaften Schwedens ist sich vollständig klar darüber, daß ein Kampf von solcher Ausdehnung in kürzester Frist entschieden sein muß und daß sich die größten verfügbaren Mittel nicht sammeln müßten, als Kampfer genügend anzuweisen zu können. Gleichwohl appelliert sie an die Solidarität der organisierten Arbeiter aller Länder, der Träger in Schweden in diesem ihrem außerordentlichen Kampf auch besten Maßes zu unterstützen. Das die Unterstützung wie keine Unterstützung steht bei längerer Dauer diese Punkte.

Die Generalkommission der Gewerkschaften Deutschlands hat unverzüglich alle Schritte eingeleitet, um Hilfe für die Arbeiter zu leisten und die Verhältnisse der Industriearbeiter haben den Auftrag der Generalkommission auf sofortige Einleitung einer Sammlung für die Kampfer schwedische Arbeiterkraft zu bestimmen.

Die richtigen Anzeichen an die organisierte deutsche Arbeiterkraft die bringende Hilfe, nicht nur nötig zur Unterstützung ihrer Kampfzwecke in Schweden beizutragen. Nicht entgegen sich dieser Pflicht der Arbeiterkraft.

Die Gewerkschaftskomitee werden ersucht, die Sammlung an ihrem Ort zu kontrollieren. Alle Zusendungen sind zu richten an: H. Rabe, Berlin S. O., Engelstraß 14. Auf den Postämtern ist anzugeben, daß der Betrag für Schweden bestimmt ist.

Mit Gruß

Die Generalkommission der Gewerkschaften Deutschlands
 C. Regin.

The affiliates of the International Secretariat of the National Trade Union Centres were:

Year	National centres	Combined membership	Year	National centres	Combined membership
1904	14	2,378,975	1909	20	5,859,257
1905	14	2,849,680	1910	20	6,121,711
1906	14	3,706,425	1911	19	6,900,995
1907	16	4,079,805	1912	19	7,394,461
1908	17	4,313,516			

The combined membership of the unions affiliated to the national centres:

Country	1908	1909	1910	1911	1912
Belgium	67,412	73,361	68,984	77,224	116,082
Bosnia-Herzegovina	3,117	3,690	6,086	5,587	5,522
Bulgaria	2,474	3,020	3,000		
Denmark	97,231	98,643	101,563	105,269	107,067
Germany	1,831,731	1,832,667	2,017,298	2,339,785	2,553,162
Great Britain	700,937	703,091	710,994	861,482	874,281
Finland	24,009	19,928	15,346	19,640	20,989
France	294,918	357,764	340,000	450,000	387,000
The Netherlands	36,893	40,628	44,120	52,235	61,535
Italy	337,092	359,383	359,383	384,446	320,912
Croatia		4,198	5,108	7,182	5,538
Norway	47,212	43,570	46,397	53,475	60,975
Austria	482,279	415,256	400,565	421,905	428,363
Romania		8,515	8,515	6,000	9,708
Sweden	169,776	108,079	85,176	80,129	85,522
Switzerland	67,348	66,174	63,863	78,119	86,313
Serbia	3,238	4,462	7,418	8,337	5,000
Spain	44,912	43,562	40,984	80,000	100,000
Hungary	102,054	85,266	86,478	95,180	111,966
United States	-	1,588,000	1,710,433	1,775,000	2,054,526

One year before the outbreak of the First World War the national centres of New Zealand and South Africa joined. The trade union international which had at first been limited to Europe began to spread around the world.

The combined membership of the organizations affiliated to the international trade secretariats in 1912 were: Miners 1,374,000, metal workers 1,106,003, transport workers 881,950, wood workers 393,355, factory workers 298,001, tailors 158,062, printers 137,451, brewery workers 130,892, footwear and leather workers 105,600, carpenters 83,863, stone workers 75,000, painters 72,074, workers in public services 72,025, bakers 68,681, tobacco workers 54,656, book binders 49,906, lithographers 35,923, hatters 32,913, glass workers 29,020, saddlers 20,119, hotel, restaurant and bar workers 18,054, potters 15,974, diamond workers 9,850, fur workers 6,169, barbers and hairdressers 4,850.

Including the butchers, bricklayers, porcelain workers, paviours and textile workers, for whom figures are missing, there were 30 international trade secretariats in 1912.

This reflected the structure of the trade unions of the day: at both national and international level craft unions still predominated.

The Eighth International Conference of the Secretaries of the National Trade Union Centres, which met jointly with the international trade secretaries in Zurich from September 16 to 18, 1913, changed the »International Secretariat of the National Trade Union Centres« to the >>International Federation of Trade Unions«. The headquarters remained in Berlin and Carl Legien was elected president.

III. Solidarity must not remain an illusion

Workers in public services, municipal and state workers were late in organizing. They came to the movement in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, initially in the mother country of unionism, England, then in Denmark, Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland. In some countries, for example Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Hungary, they belonged initially to the unions of workers in private enterprise.

Many early attempts at organization failed because of the chicanery of the municipal and state employers. Workers active in trade unionism courted dismissal. Often workers in public services were not even allowed to talk about organizing while at work. Hospital employees suffered under unbelievable conditions which approached serfdom. If public utility workers - in gas or electricity works, for example - went on strike, troops and fire brigades were brought in to do their work. Strike-breakers were even brought in from abroad.

Even at the beginning of the 20th century practically all town administrations in Germany still refused to negotiate with union representatives. In most European states it took bitter struggles to assert the right of municipal and state workers to form unions. And once established, it remained perpetually threatened. It was natural that powerful organizations of municipal and state workers could be formed only on the basis of individual works or companies. All the workers employed in one place of work had to belong to the same union, regardless of their various trades.

That was a realization which pointed far into the future. It was asking too much of the many small unions, each of which was supported by craftsmen or skilled workers of one particular trade. During the period we are referring to the vast majority of organized workers rejected organization at company level. Instead there was something akin to caste-like vocational arrogance. Craft unions laid claim to certain groups of workers in public services. Squabbles over borderline cases were the order of the day. Executive conferences and trade union congresses fell out over them.

The report of the International Secretariat of Workers in Public Services for 1912 still deplored »the very great fragmentation of the organized municipal and state workers in many and different organizations«. The report went on to warn: »Without doubt this is damaging to the movement of the workers in public services. It weakens their strength and their influence vis-a-vis the authorities. We must strive(...) to bring more unity

into the movement of the municipal and state workers. If we had this already, the successes of our wage movements would surely be greater, for the greater our strength, the greater our influence and our successes, and therefore the greater the usefulness of the organization to its members.«

The trade unions of the workers in public services had to fight for their field of action against competition from within their own camp, not to mention opposing organizations. In some countries, such as Switzerland and the multi-national Austria, language barriers stood in the way of the unification of trade union forces.

This was how the difficulties looked when after the turn of the century the first international contacts were taken up between trade unions of municipal and state workers. They began in 1902 with bilateral links between the Germans and the Danes, the Germans and the Austrians, the Danes and the English. The

Heinrich Bürger



Germans wanted to learn from the Danes who, with their exemplary rate of unionsation, had substantially improved pay and working conditions. In 1903 Danes were guests of the German Unions' Congress and Germans attended the congress of the Dutch. The German Unions' Congress which convened in 1906 in Mainz was attended by representatives from Denmark, France and the Netherlands. It was almost a small international conference. It was to have consequences.

Encouraged by their foreign guests, with whom he had consulted, Heinrich Bürger, a German, tabled a resolution on June 1, 1906, the last day of the congress, which read:

»The Fourth Union Congress in Mainz instructs the union executive to take up international relations with the municipal workers' organizations in the other countries and to institute the regular exchange of essential materials. To this end a colleague in Berlin will be asked to function as international secretary.

The various national organizations are recommended to send representatives to the international congress in Stuttgart in 1907 where a definitive regulation of international relations is to be resolved. Until then the national union centres are to decide whether an international secretariat is to be set up and on what basis.«

The 1907 international congress in Stuttgart referred to was the International Socialist Congress which was to convene from August 18 to 24.

In the debate about the resolution, in which Danish, French and Dutch representatives also took part, it was suggested that only the first sentence of each paragraph should be accepted. It had to be left up to the Stuttgart congress to decide whether an international secretary was to be employed, it was said. This decision should not be anticipated.

The resolution passed in Mainz went as follows:

»The Fourth Union Congress in Mainz instructs the union executive to take up international relations with the municipal workers' organizations in the other countries and to institute the regular exchange of essential materials. The various national organizations are recommended to send representatives to the international congress in Stuttgart in 1907.«

In March 1907 the executive of the German »Verband der Gemeinde und Staatsarbeiter« (Federation of Municipal and State Workers), based in Berlin, called on »the workers employed in municipal and state undertakings, in power stations, in gas and water works in all countries« and convened the »First International Conference« from August 25 to 27, 1907 in Stuttgart. The invitation read:

»The purpose of the conference is to bring about an exchange of views on pay and working conditions and on worker welfare in general, to pave the way for support in pay disputes and create firmer international ties for the workers.

Without a doubt our employers are exemplary in this respect. In the economic struggle they know no national frontiers, no differences in party and denominational leanings. Let us do likewise as workers. Let us take part actively in the struggle for the wellbeing of our brother workers in other countries and let us try through international understanding to achieve further improvements in our situation.

The international solidarity of workers must not be allowed to remain an empty illusion for the workers employed in public services. This is why we hope that colleagues from all nations will take part.«

Un die in Gemeinde- und Staatsbetrieben, sowie in Kraft-, Licht- und Wasserwerken beschäftigten Arbeiter aller Länder.

In Verbindung mit dem vorjährigen Verbandstag der deutschen Gemeinde- und Staatsarbeiter in Mainz hat auch eine internationale Vorkonferenz stattgefunden, an der die Beleuchtungsarbeiter Dänemarks, die Gemeinde- und Staatsarbeiter Deutschlands, Frankreichs und Hollands teilnahmen. Auf dieser Zusammenkunft gaben alle Delegierte dem Wunsche Ausdruck, die internationalen Beziehungen möchten enger geknüpft und mehr Fühlung zwischen den einzelnen Organisationen genommen werden. Ferner einigte man sich dahin, den einzelnen Landesorganisationen zu empfehlen, sich auf dem internationalen Kongreß 1907 in Stuttgart vertreten zu lassen und im Anschluß hieran eine internationale Konferenz für die fraglichen Arbeiterkategorien abzuhalten. Die Vorarbeiten zu dieser Veranstaltung wurden dem Vorstand des deutschen Gemeinde- und Staatsarbeiter-Verbandes übertragen.

Entsprechend diesen Vereinbarungen berufen wir nunmehr die

erste internationale Konferenz

**der in Gemeinde- und Staatsbetrieben, sowie
in Kraft-, Licht- und Wasserwerken beschäftigten Arbeiter
für den 25. bis 27. August 1907**

==== nach Stuttgart ====

ein. Die Konferenz soll den Zweck haben, einen Meinungsaustausch über die Lohn- und Arbeitsverhältnisse, sowie über die allgemeine Arbeiterfürsorge herbeizuführen, eine gegenseitige Unterstützung in Lohnkämpfen anzubahnen, sowie ein festeres internationales Band für die Kollegen zu schaffen.

Vorbildlich in dieser Beziehung sind wohl unstrittig unsere Arbeitgeber. Sie kennen im wirtschaftlichen Kampf keine Landesgrenzen, keine Partei- und Konfessionsunterschiede. Handeln wir als Arbeiter ebenfalls danach. Nehmen wir regen Anteil an dem Wohlergehen unserer Arbeitsbrüder in den anderen Ländern, und versuchen wir, durch eine internationale Verständigung eine weitere Verbesserung unseres Daseins zu erzielen.

Die internationale Solidarität der Arbeiter darf auch für die in sogenannten öffentlichen Betrieben beschäftigten Arbeiter kein leerer Wahn mehr bleiben. Deshalb hoffen wir auf eine Beteiligung der Kollegen aller Nationen.

Mit Brudergruß und Handschlag

Der Vorstand

des deutschen Gemeinde- und Staatsarbeiter-Verbandes.

J. U.: Ulbin Koch, Berlin W. M., Winterfeldstr. 24.

PS. Auf die Konferenz bezügliche Anfragen beliebe man an vorstehende Adresse zu senden. Weitere Publikationen, betreffend Lokal, Unterbringung der Delegierten etc. folgen zur gegebenen Zeit.

1. Internationale Konferenz der in Gemeinde- und Staatsbetrieben, in Kraft-, Licht- und Wasserwerken, sowie in Kranken- pflege- und Heilanstalten beschäftigten Personen.

Bezugnehmend auf unsere Publikation in Nummer 12 der
„Gewerkschaft“ teilen wir mit, daß die Tagung vorgenannter
Konferenz in der Zeit

vom 25. bis 27. August 1907, im
„Gewerkschaftshaus“ zu Stuttgart,
Eßlinger Straße, „Grüner Saal“
stattfindet.

Eröffnung: Sonntag, den 25. August, nachmittags 3 Uhr.

Als provisorische Tagesordnung ist festgesetzt:

1. Die rechtliche Grundlage des Koalitions- und Streik-
rechtes der Arbeiter öffentlicher Betriebe in den einzelnen
Ländern und die praktische Durchführung von Lohn-
bewegungen.
2. Lohn- und Arbeitsverhältnisse sowie allgemeine Fürsorge
für die Arbeiter in öffentlichen Betrieben.
3. Internationale Verbindung und gegenseitige Unterstützung
bei Lohnkämpfen.
4. Sonstige Anträge.

Weitere Anträge bitten wir an unten stehende Adresse senden
zu wollen.

Verband der Gemeinde- u. Staatsarbeiter Deutschlands.

Für den Vorstand: Albin Mohs, Berlin W. 30,
Winterfeldtstr. 24 III.

The invitation to the inaugural congress (left) was sent out by the German Association of Municipal and State Workers on March 22, 1907. The agenda followed on August 9, 1907. In Stuttgart it was then called the First International of the Workers in Public Services.

IV. The Advance of the International

Four Danes, two Dutchmen, eight Germans, a Hungarian, a Swede and a Swiss met on August 25, 1907, in the Stuttgart trade union building for the First International Conference of Workers in Public Services. The International Socialist Congress had just finished in Stuttgart's Liederhalle. The 17 delegates represented six unions with a combined membership of some 44,500. They talked for three days, mainly about the legal status, pay and working conditions of workers in public services in their respective countries.

The technical and organizational aspects of expanding international contacts were only marginally dealt with at the first congress. After the delegates had been unable to agree on the appointment of an international secretary, it was decided to commission the incumbent president of the German »Verband der Gemeinde- und Staatsarbeiter« (Union of Municipal and State Workers) to take care of any work which had to be dealt with. At that time it was Albin Mohs. The costs of the international secretariat were to be financed by a levy of the affiliated national unions. A proposal was to be worked out later on financial support in wage disputes, which a resolution of the Dutch delegates had demanded. No regular rotation for the conferences was laid down, but it was decided to meet again in 1910 directly after the International Socialist Congress in Copenhagen. The unanimously adopted »Resolution on the establishment of an international secretariat«, the founding document of the International of Workers in Public Services, read:

»For the purpose of better international liaison the incumbent president of the German Federation of Municipal and State Workers is instructed to carry out the work necessary to achieve this as well as to deal with the resolutions adopted by the conference.

Commemorative card of the International Socialist Congress in Stuttgart



Verband der Gemeindearbeiter

Filiale Stuttgart.

Sonntag den 25. August, von nachmittags 3 Uhr an

== Grosses Herbstfest ==

im Garten und Saal der Brauerei Wulle, Neckarstraße
unter Mitwirkung des Stuttgarter Konzertorchesters (Dir. Herr Malle.)
Eintritt à Person 10 Pf.

Am gleichen Tage findet von abends 8 Uhr an im gleichen Lokal eine

Begrüßungsfeier

zu Ehren der Delegierten zur Ersten Internationalen Gemeindearbeiter-
konferenz statt.

Das außerordentlich reichhaltige Programm wird ausgeführt durch
das Stuttgarter Konzertorchester, Herrn Xaver Rudolphi als Leiter
der Aufführungen; Frau Heinemann als Stuttgardia, sowie des Männer-
gesangvereins Aurora Gaisburg unter Leitung des Herrn Musiklehrer
Steiner.

Zu diesen Veranstaltungen ladet die Kollegen und Freunde herz-
lichst ein Die Ortsverwaltung.

Zu der Abendfestlichkeit haben Kinder unter 14 Jahren
keinen Zutritt.

7185

Invitation to the welcoming ceremony for the delegates of the inaugural congress («Schwäbische Tagwacht» of August 24th, 1907)

The costs caused by the international secretariat are covered by annual contributions from the affiliated organizations in proportion to their respective memberships.

For the support of wage disputes the secretariat is to prepare a proposal which will then be submitted for decision to the affiliated organizations.« The Second International Conference of Workers in Public Services took place in Copenhagen from September 4 - 6, 1910. Thirty delegates represented nine unions from eight countries with a combined membership of about 48,200. They began by debating at length the report for the period 1907 to 1909. The subject of »international relations« received greater attention in Copenhagen. To be able to resist the employers, who operated internationally and had brought in strikebreakers from abroad in various pay disputes - including during the 1900 strike of municipal workers in Kiel - a tight international organization was necessary, »which must, however, have its foundations in the unions of the individual countries«. Over and over again Albin Mohs spoke in his report of his disappointment about the still »relatively loose« and by no means satisfactory relations within the international, which needed a »firmer structure« to be effective. He saw in an improved exchange of information between the brother organizations an essential means of achieving this. This should include above all statistics about pay and working conditions, which up to then had been sent to the international secretariat only hesitantly, or, in the case of some unions, had not been sent at all. Adequate funds would have to be made available for such an information network and this had to happen within the individual affiliated organizations as well. How the one or other union fared in this respect was made clear by the example of the Dutch: they were not able to raise the money to send a delegation to the conference.

The Copenhagen meeting adopted »Fundamental regulations for international contacts«, a kind of statute. It said:

»Entitled to affiliate to the International Secretariat are all organizations of workers in public services which strive to improve the situation of their members by applying in their struggle the means of the modern labour movement. Departments which now belong to a recognized national union within the existing labour party and leave the national organization legitimately or illegitimately cannot be admitted to the International Secretariat without the national organization from which the department has withdrawn giving its written approval.

The conference delegation is a matter for the individual organizations to decide. In votes on resolutions, however, the real membership numbers are decisive. The procedure adopted will be according to the principle that each organization with up to 2,000 members will have one vote. For 2,000 to 5,000 members one further vote and for every further 5,000 members one additional vote will be accorded. Membership figures will be based on the dues paid up - 13 weeks or three months per quarter.

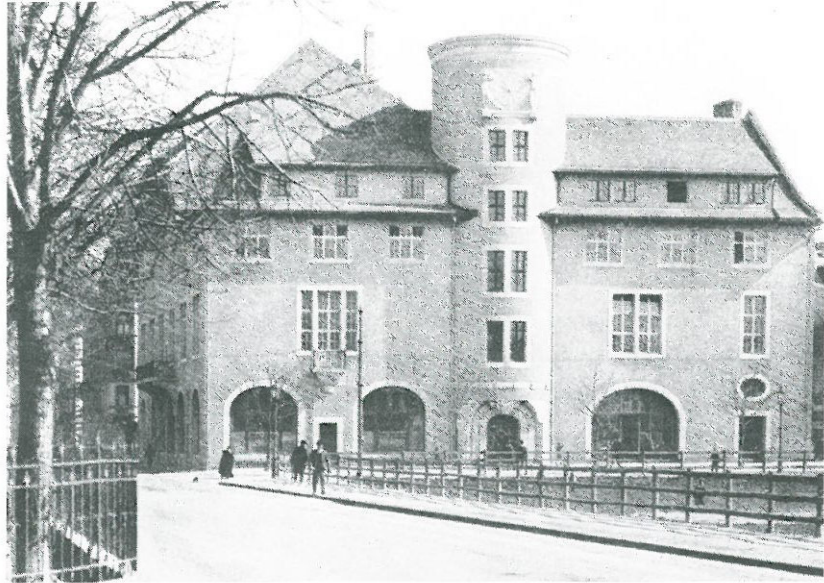
The First International Conference of the Workers in Public Services met in the Trade Union Building in Stuttgart (on right of picture)



The Second International Conference of the Workers in Public Services met in 1910 in Copenhagen in the Folkets Hus, Jagtvej 69



The Third International Conference of the Workers in Public Services met in 1913 in Zurich in the Volkshaus, Helvetiaplatz



To defray the costs of the International Secretariat, the affiliates pay three pfennigs per member and year to the secretariat. The funds thus accruing will serve to cover the costs of the secretariat.

The reports of the International Secretariat are published as occasion demands. A printed business report is to be published every three years.

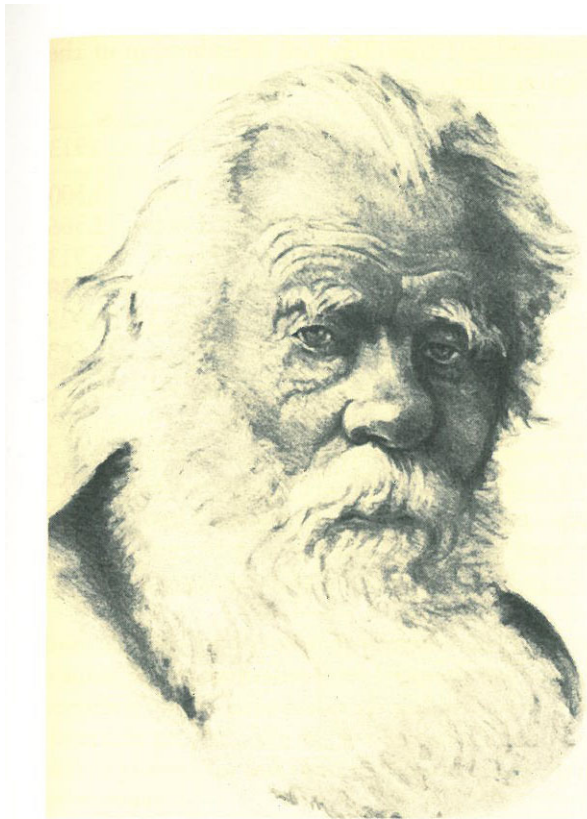
The International Secretary also administers the finances of the secretariat. A report on these is to be submitted annually. The German affiliate assumes responsibility for the auditing of the accounts, electing three auditors who audit the finances at least once a year.

The seat of the International Secretariat remains Berlin; its leadership likewise remains in the hands of the president of the German affiliate, Brother Albin Mohs.«

The Third International Conference of Workers in Public Services was to convene in Vienna immediately after the International Socialist Congress in 1913. This had been decided by the delegates in Copenhagen. But the organization of Austrian municipal workers was still too young and weak to be able to organize such a conference. On top of that, the International Socialist Congress also had to be postponed. And so the third international conference was convened instead in Zurich from September 23 to 25. Twenty-nine delegates attended, representing 11 unions in 10 countries with a combined membership of 102,900. Belgian, British and French unions were welcomed as new affiliates to the International of Workers in Public Services.

As previously in 1907, the central issue on the agenda in Zurich in 1913 was the right of workers in public services to organize unions and to strike. Other major themes were international cooperation and collective bargaining for municipal and state workers. Once more Albin Mohs complained that the international exchange of information had not improved. He cited the example of questionnaires sent out by the secretariat on pay and working conditions in the various countries. They had been returned either incompletely filled in or not at all. After a long discussion it was agreed that the affiliation fees member-unions had to pay to the secretariat would be raised from three to five pfennigs per member and year. The conference unanimously welcomed the suggestion that for the sake of better information about the affairs of brother organizations and to stabilize the international contacts, the secretaries should take part in the conferences of the affiliated unions.

Berlin was unanimously confirmed as the seat of the international secretariat. The demand by Louis Uytroever, of Belgium, that the conference should also elect the international secretary was contradicted by the conference chairman, Herman Greulich: »According to the decision of the Stuttgart conference the president



Herman Greulich

of the German organization is the international secretary. As long as we are not able to pay for a fulltime secretary of our own we cannot elect a secretary either.« Against the protest of the Belgians and the French this point was declared settled.

In Zurich the French had moved to place on the agenda: »Agitation for common and simultaneous disarmament in all countries and agitation against chauvinism.« The point provoked a short debate towards the end of the conference. The request of the French was turned down by 15 votes to 7, the main reason probably being that there was not enough time left for discussion. Instead, the delegates passed a motion put forward by the Danes to refer the issue to the next International Socialist Congress.

Even before the Third International Conference in Zurich Albin Mohs had written: »On the whole it must be noted that our international is gaining ground. The trade unions of municipal and state workers in the various countries have been able to win respect. They are beginning to gain a degree of influence which many of our powerful municipal administrators find disagreeable. Let us further our interests by increasing our power.«

The Third International Conference had instructed the International Secretariat to »draw up an estimate of the costs connected with the employment of a secretary«. A few months later the relevant papers went out to the affiliated unions. All agreed in writing with the proposal to set up an autonomous secretariat in Berlin from July 1, 1914 and thereby to place the international on a sounder footing.

Albin Mohs became the salaried secretary, having shortly before resigned from his office as president of the German member organization.

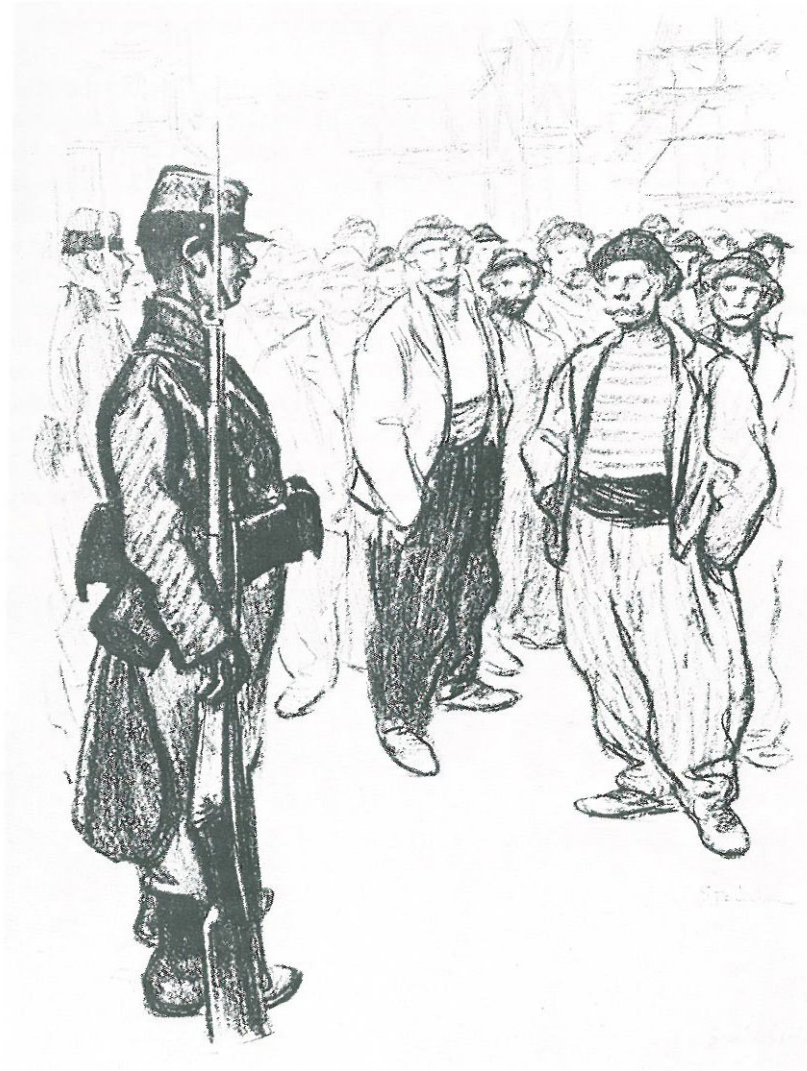
A few weeks after the autonomous secretariat had begun its work the First World War broke out.

The International of Workers in Public Services: Membership of the affiliated organizations (Figures refer to the end of the year)

Country	1908	1909	1910	1911	1912	1913
Belgium	-	-	-	-	3,098	3,500
Bohemia	-	504	1,024	1,176	1,605	2,566
Denmark	-	3,152	4,525	4,444	5,674	5,913
France	-	-	-	-	-	12,000
Germany	29,316	32,488	39,262	47,376	51,083	53,925
Great Britain	-		-	-	-	25,563
Holland	4,307	4,055	4,067	4,950	5,471	6,687
Luxembourg	-	81	78	83	98	95
Sweden	4,192	2,272	1,218	1,602	2,004	2,673
Switzerland	1,966	2,553	2,534	2,655	2,992	2,315
Total	39,781	45,105	52,708	62,286	72,025	115,237

From Denmark, two unions were affiliated to the International Secretariat.

Theophile-Alexandre Steinlen: Strike



V. A Vanguard for Union Rights

We have learnt within the ranks of our colleagues that public undertakings are by no stretch of the imagination exemplary in terms of pay and working conditions and general care for the wellbeing of the workers. Our experience has led us to realise that our employers - whether state, municipal or private - are by no means willing to make any really radical improvements in our situation. The determination is therefore growing in our ranks to fight most insistently for our interests, with the help of the union organizations and by exhausting all the legal means at our disposal to achieve improvements in our living conditions.«

Thus wrote Albin Mohs in his foreword to the report on the First International Conference of Workers in Public services. His German colleague, union journalist Emil Dittmer, had noted at the conference: »The sentence, >State enterprises should be model enterprises< is no more than theory at present. We must therefore do our utmost, first of all, to gain firmer ground for our right to negotiate, for this is a major part of the right to organize.«

Three years later, the Second International Conference heard: >>The right to organize is degraded to a farce for us the moment we are deprived of the right to strike.« And in 1913 the Third International Conference was told:

»The right to organize without the right to strike is indubitably a knife without a blade. If we have the right to organize but are to forego the right to strike it is impossible for us as workers in public services to achieve any success whatsoever.

If the authorities, which in any case are in a better position than private employers, know that they have nothing to fear, the muzzling of the workers in public services is complete.«

The right to organize, the right to negotiate, the right to strike: only these elementary workers' rights enabled the trade unions to achieve improvements for their members. But these rights had to be fought for. Where they had been won they needed to be secured and defended. The other side limited the right to organize and banned strikes wherever it could.

This was why the First International Conference in Stuttgart 1907 protested »in every way and in every form against the limitation of the right to organize and to strike for the workers in public services.« The delegates saw it as the »honorable duty of all relevant organizations to fight with all means for the freedom to organize and the unlimited right to strike for all workers in public services because they cannot forego the ultimate, albeit sharpest, weapon in the economic struggle. «

The main support in the unions' struggle was their own strength. Paul Johansen, a Dane, said in 1910: »The most important thing is for workers to form strong trade unions, to be diligent and active organizers and to know how to act in line with the basic principles of the organization.«

As early as 1907 95 % of the Danish gas workers were organized in the Dansk Arbejdsmandsforbund (Danish Workingmen's Association). Its president, Martin Lyngsø, was able to state with pride in Stuttgart: »In Denmark the organizations are so strong that they were always able to achieve recognition and it has not

Martin Lyngsie



been possible to deny them their right to organize. We can also strike.«One reason for this was given by the Danish president in his welcoming address in Copenhagen in 1910: »Anyone who is not organized in our country is regarded as a disgrace to the working class.«

But things were not as favourable everywhere as they were in Denmark. In some countries, for example Austria and Hungary, the trade unions of the workers in public services had to fight both the legislators, and their own colleagues' fear of the public employers.

A high degree of organization and practical solidarity were the preconditions of trade union success. The president of the Federation of Swiss Municipal and State Workers, Herman Greulich, mentioned this in 1907 in Stuttgart: »As our power grows, the realization increases that improvement can only be won by organization.«

The First and Third International Conferences discussed the effectiveness and possibilities of strikes, passive resistance, sabotage, political influence and trade union public relations work. The delegates agreed that »the strike must remain the last weapon workers in public services resort to to improve their situation«. »In particular because of the far-reaching consequences for the entire population« the strike was »a sharper weapon for the workers in public services than for the workers in private enterprises«. The counter argument that the strike was »always a horribly two-edged sword« and that in its history there had been »more failures than successes« was contradicted in 1907 in Stuttgart by the German delegate, Heinrich Schafer:

»Certainly, we have lost a lot of strikes, which nonetheless were useful insofar as they made the town administrations sit up and take notice so that they did not go looking for trouble a second time.« In many instances, noted the German Emil Wutzky, the threat of a strike had made employers give in. In 1907 Albin Mohs urged the unions to set up strike funds. To him it was self-evident »that a strike devours unbelievable sums of money. In Berlin alone we would need several hundred thousand marks a week to support a strike by gas workers.«

Delegates' views differed on the use of other means of waging the trade unions' battle. In 1907 Leopold Schmidl, of Hungary, argued strongly in favour of »passive resistance« as the most suitable fighting form.

The Hungarian gas workers had successfully applied it three or four times, he reported. Herman Greulich dismissed it outright as »nonsense«, while the Germans Heinrich Burger, Karl Altvater and Albin Mohs did not want to drop passive resistance from the repertoire of possible methods. But, they noted, »our people would have to be as thoroughly drilled in this method as in strike action« and the organization would have to be able »to rely on every single man, or many a one who has not done his homework well enough will keel over«. Without condemning passive resistance, reference to it was struck from the 1907 resolution text. The use of sabotage was brought into the debate in 1907 by Leopold Schmid!. He wanted to resort to it »to prevent the military continuing to work in the plants«. Emil Wutzky, expanded on the idea: »I don't know what means we would use against military, fire brigades and the like being moved into works our colleagues have left. In such cases we shall be forced to consider whether this method (sabotage) is not fitting as the ultimate means(...). In such situations the labour movement will have to resort to this means if all else fails. I do not believe that any town administration which has compliant people at its disposal would hesitate for a moment to drive these into the gas works. I repeat: this question cannot be dismissed out of hand. It appears to me we shall one day be confronted with the need to resort to this means as well.« Karl Altvater took a different view: »We cannot and must not even consider sabotage, the destroying of tools, for that would be the same means as rebounded disastrously on the workers in the weavers' uprisings in the 40s.«

The majority at the 1907 conference saw more promise in exerting influence on municipal parliaments and administrations. Herman Greulich banked explicitly on this: »If we succeed in getting people elected who represent the interests of the workers, the situation of the workers in public services will be improved. « His thinking was steeped in democratic traditions: Switzerland had long had universal, equal, direct and secret franchise for municipal parliaments. The Dutch were still denied it in 1907. Nico van Hinte of the Bond von Nederlandsche Gemeentewerklieden (Federation of Netherlands Municipal Workers) said: »If we had it, the municipal workers would be able to exercise influence of an altogether different order. « The same held for the Hungarians. Emil Wutzky warned against placing too much hope in political struggle in Germany: »What can come out of the three-class electoral system, I ask you? At the very most we could win a third of the seats in the municipal councils. «

Martin Lyngsie was able to report on exemplary Danish advances: »The fact that our municipal workers are in such a good position is due to our also having woken up politically. We take part in all elections, be it for

Michael Munkácsy: Before the Strike





parliament or for the municipal councils.« The figures he presented impressed the delegates to the First International Conference: a municipal council majority of Social Democrats (43%) and Liberals (33%) backed a Social Democrat major in Copenhagen. It was possible to achieve such successes, Martin Lyngsie stated: »if the trade union and the political movements always go hand in hand.«

Public opinion was seen as »an important factor« by the delegates to the First International Conference. Albin Mohs said the workers in public services carried »quite a strong responsibility towards the public«. Therefore he demanded: »When we are fighting for better pay we must make sure of the sympathy of the public, or we shall fail.«

Heinrich Burger reported on an example of successful trade union public relations work in Altona, a part of Hamburg: »First the mayor refused outright to negotiate with the organization's representative. Then the workers themselves went into action: public protest meetings were called, we made use of the press - both the Social Democratic and the bourgeois - and all this made the mayor declare his willingness to receive a commission of municipal workers elected at a public meeting. He declared that he recognized the right to organize and wanted to make concessions to the workers. The outcome was that by and large all the workers' demands were met. « Some delegates saw no sense in cooperating with the bourgeois press. Karl Altwater for example: »They can put one over on us, those gentlemen, they can make us look bad, and when they're fishing for our votes, then they acknowledge us and not at any other time. We're opposites, there's no getting around that. And if there is ever a real democrat sitting in a bourgeois editorial office, then he's the odd man out.«

After a lengthy discussion of the possible methods of carrying on the struggle the delegates to the 1907 conference agreed in their resolution on the following wording: »For the practical implementation of wage movements of all kinds, the economic weapons of the modern trade union movement are to be used as they are appropriate to conditions prevailing in each case.

The public and the municipal politicians are to be appropriately informed about the situation in general, and our point of view in particular is to be emphasized. Participation in elections to public institutions is to be especially propagated. «

Carl Petersen



The Dane, Carl Petersen, president of the Kjøbenhavns Kommunale Arbejderforbund (Union of Copenhagen Municipal Workers) posed the following question in Zurich in 1913: »What, then, is the best way to achieve contracts - through strikes, negotiations or socialist representation in municipal parliaments?« The answer he gave summarizes the debates about the rights to organize and strike since the First International Conference: »The first condition is organization and more organization and still more organization. All workers must be organized, they must affiliate to the central federation which in turn is linked to other federations. The right to organize is no use to us if the workers don't have the will to organize themselves, and neither is the right to strike if there are no workers willing to strike. Nor is it enough for us to have socialist representatives in the municipal parliaments if the workers aren't organized, because the officials know exactly what our organized strength is and if only a quarter are organized they don't take any notice of us. Once you've got half the workers organized the officials will start to take notice and if all are organized the administrations will make far-reaching concessions. The political movement, which has become a necessity for all workers, can be a great help to the organized workers because as soon as we have the necessary influence we shall be able to get altogether different regulations passed.«

The resolution unanimously passed at the Third International Conference in Zurich was the culmination of a debate of an extraordinarily high standard:

»In confirmation of the resolutions of the First and Second International Conferences of the Worker in Public Services, the Third International Conference declares its most vehement protest against any limitation of the right to vote, to organize and to strike by the legislative bodies (state, municipal and so on). It calls on the workers in public services in all countries to resist such attempts with all the means at the disposal of the modern labour movement and to give each other pecuniary support.

The best and most effective defence against all hostile attacks on the right to organize and to strike is the firm closing of ranks of all workers in public services in unitary organizations. The Third International Conference therefore calls on all employees in these services to create a strong, irresistible defensive phalanx which is able to withstand any attack.«

Membership Certificate of the National Municipal Labour Union
(England)



VI. Fighting Arbitrary Administrations

At the present time the wages and working conditions of the majority of workers in public services are not in line with the expectations to be placed in enterprises which serve the general public. In most cases working hours are longer and wages often lower than in similar private enterprises. Those welfare provisions which do exist are more than cancelled out in this way. The security of employment is inadequate. The few positive exceptions only tend to confirm the rule.«

Albin Mohs in 1913. His assessment was made on comprehensive data from 11 European countries which he presented to the Third International Conference of Workers in Public Services in Zurich. Information supplied from Austria, Belgium, Britain, Denmark, France, Germany, The Netherlands, Luxembourg, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland had enabled a comparative study to be made. It was called »The Wage and Working Conditions in Municipal Undertakings in Various Countries«.

This survey, the first international one of its kind, was a pioneering feat despite its deficiencies. It showed member organizations where they stood. Moreover, it made plain that success depended on the strength of the trade unions, on their assertive power, which included the readiness to strike if there was no other way. Albin Mohs described how workers' pay demands were treated in Germany: »After the workers have handed in their petition or put forward their demands, after a shorter or a longer period the municipal authorities consider it. Often they postpone their deliberations. When they do declare their position, they set pay and working conditions unilaterally.« In a number of towns there were workers' committees or other kinds of representative organs of the employees but in the end they always had to submit to the dictates of the town administrations. Their negotiating rights were based on the goodwill of the employers, not on contracts.

Albin Mohs demanded collective agreements which replaced the arbitrariness of the administrations by a codetermination right for workers in determining pay and working conditions: »Above all they give us a greater guarantee that valid work norms will be abided by.« They were also a means of preventing strikes, »one could call them peace documents«.

In Sweden there were already 47 collective agreements in force in 23 towns in 1908. Frans Ludvig Nordgren, president of the Svenska Kommunalarbetareförbundet (Swedish Association of Municipal Workers) explained their structure in Zurich in 1913: »The contracts consist of two parts, general regulations and specific regulations. The general regulations concern dismissal, overtime, continued payment of wages in case of sickness and accidents, and the specific regulations deal with wages, working hours and so on. Most of the contracts are concluded for five years.«

In Germany the Association of Municipal and State Workers had been able to conclude only five collective agreements by 1913. One of them had been negotiated with the town of Jena for the gas workers. It created pay and working conditions which at the time ranked with the best of Europe. The working day for boilermen, engineers and retort workers in the Jena gas works was set at 7½ hours.

The survey prepared for the 1913 conference noted generally on working hours: »The information we have collected shows that the 10-hour day still generally prevails in all countries. There are only very few examples

Frans Ludvig Nordgren



of the eight-hour day and these are mainly in 24-hour works.

In most European towns the personnel of the water works and the sewerage departments, the street cleaners, dustmen, slaughter-house and market hall workers, those in the public works departments, park administrations and cemeteries worked 10 hours or more a day.

Since in 1913 the working week was six days, 10 hours daily meant 60 hours work a week. Brussels sewerage workers and Dortmund gas workers worked 10 hours a day, as did the street cleaners of Prague and the workers in the market halls of Paris. In Denmark, The Netherlands, Norway and Switzerland fewer hours were worked than in Austria, Belgium, France and Germany. The working day in the Copenhagen and Stavanger gas works was eight hours, nine hours in the sewerage departments of Amsterdam and Zurich. The vocational group with the fewest working hours were the retort workers in the gas works. They had an eight-hour day in 113 of the 193 towns surveyed. The longest day - 16 hours - was worked by the lantern attendants of the Nuremberg gas works. Inhumane shiftwork conditions often prevailed in power stations and water works operating around the clock. The working hours of engineers, boilermakers and control room attendants in the Dresden electricity works, for example, were: »In the first week (day shift) twice 12 and five times 10 hours, making 74 hours; in the second week (reserve shift) five times eight and once 12 hours, making 52 hours; in the third week (night shift) once 12 and five times 10 hours, making 62 hours. «

Most feared by the gas workers was the 24-hour change-over shift which was still the norm in some places in Germany. To accumulate the legally demanded minimum rest period (24 hours every second Sunday or 36 hours every third Sunday) a shift which normally worked 12 hours had to work in front of the fire for 24 hours.

Despite long working hours, overtime working had reached intolerable levels in many towns, a 1913 report said. »Some municipal authorities extend the daily working hours by overtime so as to save labour.«

Often overtime was poorly remunerated. German municipal administrations mostly paid 25% extra; for overtime at night, on Sundays and public holidays 50%. The Belgian authorities paid 50% more for overtime, Sunday and public holiday work and 100% for night work. The Briton Peter Tevenan, general secretary of the Municipal Employees ' Association reported in Zurich on the overtime rates his union had been able to negotiate: »50% more is paid for the first hour, 100% more for the second hour. Double wages are also paid for Saturday afternoons. Triple wages are paid for Sunday work.«

Many public workers were forced to do overtime because their normal earnings were simply not enough to live on. A married worker with two children would have had to earn at least nine marks a day in 1913 just to be able to feed his family adequately, renowned doctors were quoted as saying. But the daily wages of most public workers fell far short of that. Most fluctuated between 3.50 marks and 5 marks. This was why »the majority of the proletariat suffer from malnutrition and its murderous consequences« although municipal authorities made »profits running not only into the thousands but into hundreds of thousands and millions of marks«.

Gas workers generally earned more than street cleaners, French and Scandinavian workers more than their German and Belgian colleagues. But hardly a worker in public services took home more than nine marks a day. Wage calculation systems and payment intervals varied considerably. Most municipal authorities in Germany insisted on the daily wages system, many calculated on an hourly wage basis. Both systems had the advantage for them that they did not have to pay for public holidays which fell on weekdays.

On this it was observed: »To let a worker suffer because a state order regards it as expedient to fix public holidays in his working life cannot be considered right as long as these holidays become days of fasting for the worker and his family. It is the duty of all human beings to eliminate days of fasting.« This was why the trade unions incessantly demanded weekly wages, a system which had been introduced in all British public services by 1913. Monthly wages, as recommended by Herman Greulich, were rejected by most. Emil Wutzky spoke for many of them: »I don't like the monthly wage because I'm firmly convinced that it is bound to lead to a fettering of the workers and because with that we'd turn them into civil servants. The moment you did that, however, you'd be placing obstacles in the way of workers' trade union activities. The municipal workers would then think they were a cut above the others, they'd place themselves outside the general worker movement.« At the First International Conference in Stuttgart in 1907 the rigid wage scales according to which pay scales were linked to seniority of service had already been criticised. The starting wage was mostly low, rising only slowly. Hardly a worker ever reached the highest pay grade theoretically provided for. Franz Sebald, a district secretary of the German »Verband der Gemeinde- und Staatsarbeiter« said: »A rigid scale of wages will be more of a hindrance than a help to us because if such a scale exists it is difficult to get changes made.« The majority demanded periodic wage increases and smaller differentials.

Wage increases and shorter working hours were the major aims, »social amenities should always take second place«, Emil Dittmer had already maintained in Stuttgart. Herman Greulich put it more bluntly: »I don't care a fig for any other social welfare. The man who's in municipal service should get a good wage, he shouldn't wait for the hereafter but be able to live decently as long as he's working.«

German advertisement for gas-lighting



Peter Tevenan



Many were mistrustful of worker welfare. They feared that welfare entitlements made workers open to blackmail by the employers. Frans Ludvig Nordgren reported in 1913 in Zurich on Swedish experiences: »Even though in general workers are assured the right to strike, in various countries there are nevertheless ways of taking it away from them. These include the welfare amenities, for example. In Gothenburg there's a pension regulation that if a worker is absent unexcused for 36 hours he loses all his entitlements. If the worker strikes for 36 hours that means he's immediately lost his pension rights. In other words in a roundabout way the workers are completely stripped of the right to strike.«

The main criticism of worker welfare, however, was its meagreness. The comparative report prepared for the 1913 conference summed it up like this:

» What there is by way of welfare for municipal workers at present can be called really good in only relatively few cases; mostly they are just the quite inadequate beginnings of social welfare. Most widely practised is the summer vacation; the continued payment of wages during illness and for short absences and public holidays which fall on a weekday applies in fewer countries; the same applies to the payment of retirement wages and benefits for surviving dependents; family allowances or rent subsidies, as far as can be ascertained, are granted very rarely outside of Germany.«

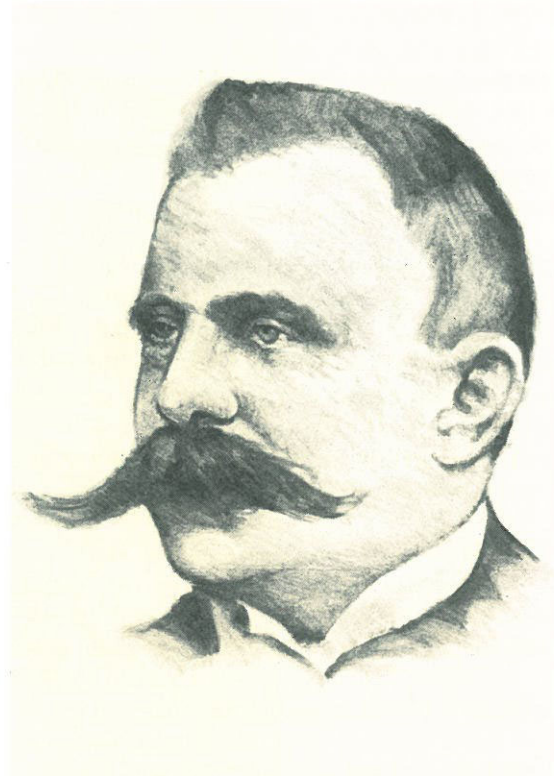
In most cases public workers were only entitled to vacations after several years' service. And even then it was only a few days as a rule. In 1913 German municipal workers had to wait longest and then got the shortest vacations.

The town of Oldenburg, for example, gave its workers a four-day vacation after seven years' service. The Brussels public workers were better off, they got 16 days' vacation after one year's service.

»If the vacation is to have any recuperative effect, the first condition is that it be spent in a healthy area and with good nutrition. For that, however, the proletariat usually do not have the means«, the comparative study on pay and conditions observed. Very few town administrations were paying a holiday bonus in 1913; the report named only Jena and Burgstadt in Germany, Zaandam in the Netherlands; in addition there was an unknown number of British towns.

»It is an irrefutable duty of the municipal authorities also to take care of their workers during illness, to help them through this time of need and distress by continuing to pay their wages.« Continued payment of wages

Franz Sebald



during illness was a trade union demand which in 1913 had been fully realized only in Schiedam, Holland and the Swiss towns of Glarus, Lucerne and Schaffhausen. There sick workers continued to be paid their full wages for the entire duration of their illness. In the three Swiss towns they gained this right upon entering service.

French town administrations paid sick municipal workers full wages for six months and half wages for a further six months. In Germany sickness not infrequently jeopardized a worker's existence. The town of Regensburg continued to pay a sick municipal worker half his wage for only three days,

in Aachen public workers were entitled to continued payment during illness only after five years' service. When they fell ill they received one day's wage per week for four weeks.

Benefits for retirement and for surviving family dependents were the most extensive in Germany in 1913. The survey lists 77 German communities which mostly granted workers an entitlement to retirement wage after 10 years' service. This benefit fluctuated initially between 25 and 30 % of the last wage, increasing annually by a sixtieth of the last wage to a maximum of 75 %. Very few achieved the maximum pension, however. Apart from this, the state pension, to which every worker was entitled from the age of 70, was wholly or partly subtracted from the municipal pension. Dutch municipal workers received 65 % of their income as retirement pay, the Belgians the equivalent of 1.20 marks a day, in both cases mostly from the age of 65.

Dutch, French, Norwegian and Swedish municipal authorities operated pension funds to which the workers contributed and from which their pensions or benefits for widows and orphans were paid.

Pensions for the widows and orphans of deceased municipal workers were paid by Belgian, Dutch, French, German and Norwegian towns. Most German towns did not levy contributions for this from their workers. In Switzerland there was the »mercy money«, a one-off payment for surviving dependents; in Sweden the widows and orphans of deceased municipal workers received nothing.

This debate was continued at the Third International Conference of the Workers in Public Services in Zurich in 1913 and a programme-like catalogue of demands was presented. It was first to be put before the affiliated unions for them to debate and then to be adopted by the Fourth International Conference. The demands included:

Louis Uytroever



recognition of the trade unions and their representatives for negotiations about pay and working conditions;

- settlement of pay and working conditions by collective agreements;
- the eight-hour day and an uninterrupted rest period of 36 hours per week;
- adequate wages - exemplary in amount, type and mode of payment - weekly wages and payment for public holidays which fell on a weekday;
- limitation of overtime and holiday work to the absolutely necessary;
- fair terms of notice, protection from dismissal in case of illness or accident, security of employment from arbitrary dismissal;
- arbitration panels with employer and worker representation under
- neutral chairmanship to deal with industrial disputes;
- the removal of all punitive regulations;
- adequate hygiene conditions, provision of working clothes, construction of hygienic building workers' huts and toilets for construction workers;
- a summer vacation on full pay, continued payment of wages for short absences, military exercises, and in case of illness and accidents.

The 1913 catalogue ended with an appeal: »The organized workers in public services are called upon to do more than hitherto to make their organizations influential factors, to strengthen them by exercising solidarity and spreading their message as well as recruiting workers who are still indifferent, to exploit their political rights to the full and to promote good representatives to safeguard their interests in parliamentary elections.«

Chronology

1864

26 September, London: Founding of the International Workingmen's Association (First International)

1869

14 to 20 July, Paris: International Worker Congress. Founding of the Second International. Decision to demonstrate in all countries on 1 May 1890 for the eight-hour day and other worker demands.

1890

1 May: Hundreds of thousands celebrate the first worldwide Labour Day.

1901

21 August, Copenhagen: During the Scandinavian Labour Congress the First International Conference of Secretaries of National Trade Union Centres meets.

1902

17 and 18 August, Stuttgart: During the Fourth Congress of the German Trade Unions, the Second International Conference of Secretaries of National Trade Union Centres meets. Germany is made the seat of a preliminary international centre.

1903

7 and 8 July, Dublin: Third International Conference of Secretaries of National Trade Union Centres. Founding of the International Secretariat of the National Trade Union Centres, with seat in Berlin. Carl Legien becomes secretary.

1905

23 and 24 June, Amsterdam: Fourth International Conference of Secretaries of National Trade Union Centres.

1906

27 May to 1 June, Mainz: Fourth Congress of the Association of German Municipal and State Workers. The association executive is instructed to seek relations with the municipal workers' organizations of other countries and to invite them to be represented at the 1907 International Socialist Congress in Stuttgart.

1907

22 March, Berlin: Association of German Municipal and State Workers sends out invitations to the First International Conference of Workers in Municipal and State Undertakings as well as to workers employed in power stations and gas and water works of all countries from 25 to 27 August in Stuttgart.

18 to 24 August, Stuttgart: International Socialist Congress.

25 to 27 August, Stuttgart: First International Conference of Workers in Public Services. Establishment of an International Secretariat under the auspices of the executive of the Association of German Municipal and State Workers, which has its offices in Berlin. The incumbent president of the German association is to assume the tasks of the international secretary.

15 and 16 September, Christiana: Fifth International Conference of Secretaries of National Trade Union Centres.

1909

30 August to 1 September, Paris: Sixth International Conference of Secretaries of National Trade Union Centres.

1910

28 August to 3 September, Copenhagen: International Socialist Congress.

4 to 6 September, Copenhagen: Second International Conference of the Workers in Public Services.

1911

10 to 12 August, Budapest: Seventh International Conference of Secretaries of National Trade Union Centres.

1913

16 to 18 September, Zurich: Eighth International Conference of Secretaries of National Trade Union Centres. International secretariat reconstituted as International Federation of Trade Unions. It remains based in Berlin. Carl Legien becomes president. In Zurich the secretaries of the national trade union centres meet jointly for the first time with the secretaries of the international trade secretariats.

23 to 25 September, Zurich: Third International Conference of Workers in Public Services.

1914

1 July, Berlin: The International Secretariat of Workers in Public Services becomes independent. Albin Mohs becomes its salaried, fulltime secretary, resigning his presidency of the Association of German Municipal and State Workers.

The International of Workers in Public Services Affiliated Organizations in 1914

Belgium:

Association des Ouvriers des Différents Services Publics de la Ville
et des Communes de l'Agglomération Bruxelloise

Bohemia:

Svaz obecnich zemskych a statnich zrizencu siedlem v Praze

Denmark:

Dansk Arbejdsmandsforbund
Kjobenhavns Kommunale Arbejderforbund

Germany:

Verband der Gemeinde- und Staatsarbeiter

England:

Municipal Employees' Association

France:

Fédération Nationale des Travailleurs Municipaux et Départementaux
de France et des Colonies

Holland:

Bond van Nederlandsche Gemeentewerklieden

Luxembourg:

Stadtische Arbeitergewerkschaft

Sweden:

Svenska Kommunalarbetareförbundet

Switzerland:

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