

Fair Wages Branch.—The Fair Wages Branch of the Department of Labour is charged with the preparation of fair wages conditions and schedules of minimum wage rates, which are inserted in Dominion Government contracts and must be adhered to by contractors in the execution of such works. The number of fair wages schedules prepared, from the adoption of the Fair Wages Resolutions in 1900 up to the end of the fiscal year 1931-32, was 5,870. The number of fair wages schedules and clauses furnished during the fiscal year 1931-32 was 272.

The fair wages policy of the Government of Canada was originally based on a resolution adopted by the House of Commons in 1900 and expressed in an Order in Council adopted on June 7, 1922, and amended on April 9, 1924. As drawn up by Order in Council it was applied to contracts for building and construction operations, also to contracts for the manufacture of certain classes of Government supplies. The policy required that the current wage rates and working hours of the district should be observed in the case of all workmen employed, or if there were no current rates or hours in existence, then fair and reasonable conditions in both respects. Contracts for railway construction to which the Dominion Government has granted financial aid, either by way of subsidy or guarantee, are likewise subject to fair wages conditions. The policy has, moreover, been extended within recent years to cover contracts for works carried out by the several Harbour Commissions and aided by grant of public funds.

An Order in Council passed on Dec. 3, 1929, provided for the payment of current wage rates to workmen employed in the construction, alteration, extension, maintenance and operation of works for the utilization of water powers under licence from the Dominion Government. The Fair Wages Clause was also inserted in an agreement made by the Dominion Government with a paper company for the cutting of pulpwood in Manitoba, under which the company agreed to pay to those employed in the industry wage rates not less than those generally accepted as current in each trade or occupation in similar industries, and to maintain conditions of labour not less favourable than those prevailing in similar industries in the district.

On May 30, 1930, an Act of Parliament was adopted, known as the Fair Wages and Eight Hour Day Act, 1930, which provides for the payment of current wage rates to all persons employed on contracts made with the Government of Canada for works of construction, remodelling, repair or demolition, provided that the wages in all cases shall be fair and reasonable. This Statute also directed that the working hours of persons while so employed shall not exceed eight hours a day. It was further declared that the foregoing conditions are to be applied to all workmen employed by the Government itself on the construction, remodelling, repair or demolition of any work.

On Mar. 27, 1930, an Order in Council was passed providing that, except in cases where the work of employees was intermittent in character, or the application of the rule was not deemed to be practicable, or in the public interest, the hours of work of any Dominion Government employees who had up to that time been required to work more than eight hours daily should be reduced to eight hours a day, with a half holiday on Saturday.

The Department of Labour is frequently consulted by other Departments of the Government regarding the wage rates to be observed in connection with work undertaken on the day labour plan.