

Domestic servants in Mexico City are paid as follows:
women cooks -- 25 to 40 pesos per month; maids -- from 15 to
25 pesos; washwomen -- 1.00 to 1.50 pesos per day.

Standard of Living in Mexico

In the discussion of agricultural wages a comparison was made between the wages paid to farm labor in Mexico and the cost of living measured in terms of the prices of the principal articles of diet. The clear implication of the figures presented was that the standard of living has at all times been of the lowest type. Now that the statistics of wages in other lines of activity have been set forth we may return to the question: What sort of a life is it possible to lead on the wages now being paid in Mexico?

In order to answer this question it would be desirable to have a number of accurately made case studies of families in the various laboring groups. Unfortunately, up to the present time no studies of this type have been made for Mexico. It is possible, however, to throw some light upon the subject under consideration by reviewing briefly certain investigations of a more general nature made in recent years by departments of the government and by private individuals.

In 1928 the Department of Labor attempted to estimate on the basis of statistics gathered in various states the daily wage necessary for what was called a "Minimum of Comfort Standard of Living" i.e. the wage which theoretically a typical family should receive in order to satisfy the minimum requirements of health and decency. As may be noted in Tables Nos. 17

STANDARD OF LIVING TABLE - 1928¹

ESTIMATE OF AVERAGE DAILY EXPENDITURES FOR "MINIMUM OF COMFORT" STANDARD FOR LABORER'S FAMILY (5 MEMBERS).

Commodities	STATES								
	Naya rit	Tam auli pas	Oaxa ca	Tab asco	Yuca tan	Sono ra	Chia pas	Coa huila	Federal District
Corn	.14	.11	.14	.10	.16	.14	.15	.14	.12
White Bread	.22	.22	.28	.24	.27	.21	.26	.21	.16
Beans	.06	.05	.07	.06	.08	.07	.06	.06	.05
Rice	.05	.07	.07	.06	.08	.07	.10	.08	.05
Meat	.53	.49	.58	.53	.64	.52	.57	.50	.52
Lard	.11	.11	.09	.07	.13	.10	.06	.11	.11
Salt	.01	.01	.01	.01	.01	.01	.01	.01	.01
Chili	.02	.06	.04	.05	.03	.05	.03	.05	.06
Coffee	.04	.03	.03	.03	.05	.04	.02	.04	.04
Milk	.42	.29	.39	.36	.52	.34	.35	.23	.34
Sugar	.08	.08	.09	.07	.07	.10	.07	.08	.06
Vegetables	.06	.23	.06	.06	.06	.06	.06	.06	.06
Fuel	.08	.16	.13	.13	.10	.11	.12	.13	.16
Muslin	.28	.25	.22	.22	.35	.23	.25	.25	.26
Wool Cloth	.15	.16	.14	.14	.12	.19	.13	.15	.12
Calico	.03	.02	.02	.02	.05	.02	.03	.03	.02
Shoes ²	.25	.25	.12	.17	.12	.22	.12	.22	.18
Hat	.02	.04	.04	.02	.04	.03	.03	.04	.05
Sarape ³	.05	.06	.06	.04	.04	.06	.05	.06	.02
Shawl	.02	.02	.02	.02	.02	.02	.02	.02	.02
Man's Suit	.12	.08	.11	.16	.16	.20	.11	.20	.16
Rent	.15	.21	.08	.23	.18	.28	.16	.14	.55
Oil (light)	.03	.02	.03	.04	.04	.02	.04	.02	.02
Bath	.06	.12	.06	.12	.07	.10	.05	.06	.15
Soap	.06	.06	.06	.07	.06	.06	.05	.08	.05
Total	3.04	3.20	2.94	3.02	3.45	3.24	2.90	2.97	3.36

1. Dept. of Labor, Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Labor.

2. This item means generally "guaraches" or the native Mexican sandals.

3. This item means the blanket generally used by Mexican natives as a coat in the daytime and a blanket at night.

and 18 (which contain the summary results of the studies in question) a distinction was made between a so-called "typical laborer's family of five members" and an "employee's family of four members."

For the first mentioned the theoretical daily wage necessary for a minimum of comfort standard of living varied from 2.90 pesos in the state of Chiapas to 3.45 pesos in the state of Yucatan. An examination of the individual items in the summary schedules indicates that "minimum of subsistence" would probably be a better term to designate the standard of living possible to maintain on the basis of the daily wage given than the phrase used. In the schedule for laboring families, for example, only 16.50 pesos per month is allowed for rent and no provision whatsoever is made for such things as health, amusement, savings, education, furniture, etc.

In the case of the employee's family of four members the estimates are somewhat higher and vary from 4.94 pesos in Nuevo Leon to 6.13 pesos in Yucatan. Here again, although a somewhat larger amount is allowed in the budget for food and clothing, and, although 3.90 pesos is ear marked for "honest diversion", apparently no expenditures are contemplated for doctor's bills, education, religion, furniture, or savings.

The reader by comparing these estimates of the daily income theoretically necessary for a "minimum of comfort (subsistence) standard of living" with the actual wages received in Mexico at the present can draw his own conclusions and point his own morals. To make this process of comparison easier Tables Nos. 19 and 20 are inserted at this point giving

GENERAL WAGE TABLEAVERAGE DAILY (8 HRS.) WAGES FOR MANUAL LABOR BY STATES - 1927¹

States	Wages in Pesos	
	Minimum ²	Maximum ²
Aguascalientes	1.13	1.20
Campeche	2.08	2.61
Coahuila	1.29	1.74
Colima	1.14	1.51
Chiapas	.82	1.05
Chihuahua	1.53	1.97
Durango	1.11	1.60
Guanaajuato	.70	1.03
Guerrero	.75	1.53
Hidalgo	1.03	1.43
Jalisco	.88	1.18
Mexico	.78	1.20
Morelos	1.18	1.47
Nayarit	1.26	1.78
Nuevo Leon	1.12	1.41
Oaxaca	1.02	1.13
Puebla	.86	1.57
Querétaro	.77	.66
San Luis Potosí	.94	1.64
Sinaloa	1.36	1.95
Sonora	2.49	4.19
Tabasco	1.55	2.86
Tamaulipas	1.17	1.72
Tlaxcala	.94	1.19
Veracruz	1.27	1.87
Yucatán	1.55	1.86
Zacatecas	1.01	1.48
Federal District	1.19	1.95
Lower California	3.19	3.21
Quintana Roo	3.11	3.43
Average	1.29	1.76

1. These statistics collected by the Dept. of Labor, Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Labor. They are entitled "Cuadro General que Muestra el Promedio del Salario de Miseria que Prevalece en el País." A note explains that the "Salario de Miseria" (Wages of Poverty) are actually lower than they appear in this chart due to the fact that many villages did not return statistics. The figures are for all classes of work, but for the most part they represent wages paid to farm laborers and other manual workers.

2. These columns are headed "Fijo" (Fixed) and "Destajo" (Piece-work) and represent the difference between wages paid to regular employees and those hired for only short periods.

GENERAL WAGE TABLEAVERAGE MONTHLY WAGES PAID VARIOUS CLASSES OF WORKERS BY STATES - 1925¹

States	Carpenters	Plasterers	Shoemakers	Other Workers	Mine Peons	Farm Hands
Aguascalientes	35.00	30.00	35.00	21.00	22.50	21.00
Lower California,N	270.00	216.00	225.00	202.00	--	90.00
Lower California,S	95.00	85.00	75.00	80.00	56.00	45.00
Campeche	82.00	75.00	80.00	80.00	--	38.00
Colima	65.00	49.00	56.00	52.00	--	30.00
Coahuila	100.00	80.00	70.00	40.00	36.00	36.00
Chiapas	49.00	55.00	72.00	40.00	--	24.00
Durango	64.00	48.00	72.00	45.00	36.00	30.00
Federal District	104.00	72.00	84.00	80.00	42.00	36.00
Guerrero	42.00	26.00	27.00	43.00	16.00	12.00
Guanajuato	60.00	48.00	75.00	30.00	24.00	15.00
Hidalgo	53.00	45.00	60.00	36.00	30.00	30.00
Jalisco	45.00	50.00	52.00	45.00	24.00	22.50
Mexico	60.00	60.00	60.00	60.00	24.00	24.00
Michoacan	60.00	45.00	60.00	45.00	30.00	22.50
Morelos	34.00	45.00	42.00	36.00	--	19.00
Nayarit	52.00	48.00	57.00	54.00	--	23.00
Nuevo Leon	90.00	60.00	90.00	60.00	24.00	24.00
Oaxaca	39.00	36.00	40.00	32.00	30.00	21.00
Puebla	75.00	48.00	60.00	60.00	--	18.00
Queretaro	45.00	35.00	40.00	30.00	25.00	20.00
San Luis Potosi	50.00	59.00	45.00	45.00	24.00	15.00
Sinaloa	96.00	48.00	60.00	54.00	42.00	28.00
Sonora	72.00	76.00	68.00	94.00	76.00	51.00
Tabasco	68.00	62.00	53.00	62.00	--	34.00
Tamaulipas	96.00	124.00	113.00	92.00	--	37.00
Tlaxcala	45.00	40.00	48.00	45.00	--	18.00
Veracruz	90.00	60.00	90.00	52.00	--	24.00
Yucatan	77.00	50.00	45.00	57.00	--	40.00
Zacatecas	37.00	33.00	39.00	34.00	27.00	15.00

1. Statistics collected by Dept. of National Statistics, 1925; quoted in J. Silva Herzog, "El Salario Mnimo y la Economa Nacional", El Economista, Oct. 1, 1928.

additional information on wages (see pp. 40-41).

In any country the most revealing index of the standard of living is that derived from a study of the purchasing power of wages in terms of food. Studies of this type are usually made by stating in terms of calories the actual amount of food consumed by typical average families in the various classes of the population and then comparing this with the theoretical number of calories necessary for the sustaining of life in a reasonable state of health and well being. Thus, for example, according to Hervé-Mangon, the number of calories ~~are~~ required each day in order to "maintain the organic equilibrium" are:

For moderate work.....	4,200	calories
For ordinary work.....	4,800	"
For heavy work.....	6,000	"

(These figures, of course, represent only the average standard requirements. Allowances must be made for differences in climate, season, individual constitution, etc.) By comparing the actual number of calories consumed by any given individual with these standard requirements it is possible to determine whether or not the individual in question is receiving enough food.

In the last few years two studies of the type here indicated have been made **for** Mexico. The first of these studies was published in 1925 by the Department of National Statistics. Figures were gathered in six of the most densely populated states of the Republic (Jalisco, México, Michoacán, Puebla, Veracruz, and the Federal District) on the following points:

the actual wages received by typical families in various working groups; the amount and distribution by items of diet of money spent each month by typical families; the retail prices of the major items of diet. On the basis of these statistics a comparison was made for each of the working classes studied between the actual number of calories consumed by the average family and the theoretical number of calories required by that family. The results of this investigation show conclusively that the vast majority of the families studied were definitely undernourished and unable with the wages and salaries which they received to buy enough food to meet the ordinary requirements of health.²³

A second study of food consumption in Mexico, also made by the Department of National Statistics, bears out in striking fashion the conclusions noted in the above paragraph. In this study, as in the previous one, an effort was made to set up a theoretical standard of the number of calories "indispensable for the maintenance of life" in average families for various classes of the working population. Using these standards as a base (i.e. equal to 100) index numbers were calculated for the actual number of calories consumed by families in each of the several different classes of workers in question. Table No.21 shows the results of this study in selected states. It is interesting to note that this investigation indicates not only an increasing deficiency in the number of calories consumed as one passes from the "higher" to the "lower" classes of workers, but, also, a marked difference in the variety of items in the diet. Thus

INDEX NUMBERS OF CALORIC CONSUMPTION BY CLASSES OF WORKERS
IN VARIOUS STATES¹
(Families of 3 to 5 individuals)

Classification of Families	Index Number of Actual Caloric Consumption			
	Aguascalientes	Oaxaca	Chihuahua	Mexico
Teachers ²	109.25	134.80	137.86	104.08
Public Employees ³				
Class A	111.71	152.74	162.87	124.53
Class B	108.11	126.65	159.22	94.82
Class C	91.24	119.77	105.12	85.80
Private Employees ⁴				
Class A	109.25	150.59	163.17	102.52
Class B	91.97	128.94	130.02	76.01
Class C	88.61	120.02	83.64	88.11
Skilled Laborers ⁵				
Mechanics	87.41	109.40	119.26	86.45
Carpenters	56.14	96.48	109.40	57.06
Bricklayers	59.01	97.84	89.56	92.63
Shoemakers	62.23	96.03	104.89	70.74
Others	56.13	93.25	89.56	93.65
Unskilled Laborers ⁶				
Muckers	54.92	79.11	63.91	54.77
Mine Workers	42.66	72.25	36.68	54.20
Agricultural Workers	42.66	88.85	68.83	77.88

¹ Herzog, Silva -- Unpublished manuscript of study made for Departamento de Estadística Nacional, 1924, and 1925.

² Estimated number of calories indispensable for the maintenance of life -- 360,000 equals 100.

³ Estimated number of calories indispensable for the maintenance of life -- 360,000 equals 100.

⁴ Estimated number of calories indispensable for the maintenance of life -- 360,000 equals 100.

⁵ Estimated number of calories indispensable for the maintenance of life -- 456,000 equals 100.

⁶ Estimated number of calories indispensable for the maintenance of life -- 600,000 equals 100.

in practically all of the states studied such items as meat, eggs, and milk fail to appear at all in the diet of the lowest classes.²⁴

Whereas the above summarized investigations cannot be taken as final proof of the fact that a large part of the population of Mexico is condemned by the present wage scales to an existence which falls far short of offering even the minimum desiderata of health and well being, at least they create a strong suspicion that this may be the case. And when one adds in other types of direct and indirect evidence of the poverty of the average working class family in Mexico this suspicion tends to become conviction.

Consider, for example, the matter of Mexican health. The best available study of ill health and disease in Mexico was made in 1916 by an engineer, Alberto J. Pani. In a book entitled La Higiene en México, Pani demonstrated:

That the coefficient of mortality (the number of deaths per thousand inhabitants) of Mexico City was 42.3, or nearly three times the average mortality coefficient of American cities (16.1) having similar population.

That Mexico City's mortality is nearly two and one-half times greater than the average of European cities (17.53).

That it is even greater than the mortality coefficients of the Asiatic and African cities of Madras and Cairo (39.51 and 40.15 respectively), even though in the former cholera is endemic.²⁵

To these figures for 1916 may be added the following statistics taken from a book recently published by Ernest

Gruening:²⁶

To give an approximate idea of the mortality from disease in Mexico and furnish some basis of comparative measurement, Mexico City data for 1926, the most recent available, are used. No mortality data for Mexico at large and for other Mexican cities exist. The comparison is arbitrarily made with (1) St. Louis, Mo., since it is an inland city of approximately the same size as Mexico City; (2) Washington, D.C., since it is likewise the national capital, and (3) the United States, since the corresponding data are not all available for the cities. (See Table No. 22.)

A comparison with the pre-Revolutionary decade is also instructive. It should be borne in mind that medical science has made vast strides in twenty years and that, excepting cancer and syphilis, the mortality from disease (in the United States) is declining. The following table shows the deaths in Mexico City from twenty diseases in the nine years 1904-12 and 1926. (No allowance is made for the increase in the capital's population.) (See Table No. 23.)

Only two significant changes are registered: The decline in smallpox and typhus, both of which may be ascribed to the preventive measures by the Department of Health, respectively vaccination, and delousing and disinfection, which has been followed assiduously in typhus cases.

The drop in scarlet fever mortality is not significant. In the United States the mortality has been steadily decreasing since the first statistics, but it is a disease

MEXICAN MORTALITY STATISTICS¹
Deaths in Mexico City from the commoner diseases -- 1926
(Figures indicate deaths per 100,000)

Disease	Mexico City	United States (1924)	St.Louis (1924)	Washington, D.D. (1924)
Cancer.....	60.5	91.9	133.3	115.2
Cerebro-Spinal Meningitis.....	6.	.8	not recorded	
Diarroeha and Enteritis (2 yrs. and older).....	261.7	7.	not recorded	
Diarroeha and Enteritis (under 2 years).....	417.7	27.8	23.5	25.5
Diphtheria.....	4.	9.4	9.7	6.
Dysentery.....	10.	3.	not recorded	
Erysipelas.....	11.8	2.5	not recorded	
Influenza.....	8.	19.5	12.8	12.5
Leprosy.....	.83	.0000015	0.0	0.0
Malaria.....	8.5	2.5	1.1	0.2
Measles.....	2.7	8.6	2.6 ²	0.4
Pneumonia.....	422.8 ²	57.2 ²	153.8 ²	118.7 ²
Puerperal Infection	16.3	5.8	not recorded	
Scarlet Fever.....	1.7	3.1	9.5	6.0
Smallpox.....	2.7	1.3	0.0	0.0
Syphilis.....	59.1	8.3	not recorded	
Tuberculosis (Pulmonary).....	168.2	78.7	71.0	106.8
Typhoid.....	8.5	6.7 ³	3.7 ³	3.9 ³
Typhus.....	4.7	.0000009	0.0	0.0
Whooping Cough.....	16.7	8.3	4.3	3.1

¹ The Mexican figures were arrived at from the mortality tables in the last three trimensual numbers of 1926 and the first of 1927 of the Boletín del Departamento de Salubridad, adding the totals of deaths for each disease in each quarterly period. The rate per hundred thousand is calculated on a population of 600,000, a generous estimate, since the department's statistics are for the municipality of Mexico, and do not include the adjacent municipalities of the Federal District. The population of Mexico City was 471,000 in 1911. (La Higiene en México, A.J.Pani, Cuad.I.) The Mexican mortality per 100,000 errs therefore on the side of understatement. The U.S. data are derived from the 1924 report of the U.S. Census Bureau. The figures for the country at large are based on the "registration area", which in 1924 included 88.5 per cent. of the total population.

² The Mexican data for "broncho-pneumonia" and "pneumonia" were combined for comparison as the U.S. data lump all pneumonia deaths. The Mexican data were lacking in the first quarter of 1926 and were averaged from the remaining three quarters.

³ Includes paratyphoid.

<u>Disease</u>	<u>Average 1904-12</u>	<u>1926</u>
Cancer.....	234.2	363.
Cerebro-Spinal Meningitis.....	23.9	36.
Diarroeha and Enteritis (2 yrs. and older).....	2130.3	1570.
Diarroeha and Enteritis (under 2 years).....	2190.1	2506.
Diphtheria.....	79.7	24.
Dysentery.....	48.7	60.
Erysipelas.....	112.1	71.
Influenza.....	100.8	48.
Leprosy.....	5.9	5.
Malaria.....	35.7	51.
Measles.....	136.8	16.
Pneumonia.....	2452.2	2536.
Puerperal Infection.....	82.7	92.
Scarlet Fever.....	124.2	10.
Smallpox.. ..	345.4	16.
Syphilis.....	148.4	355.
Tuberculosis (Pulmonary).....	1170.8	1009.
Typhoid.....	32.4	51.
Typhus.....	642.	28.
Whooping Cough.....	133.7	100.

(Tables Nos. 22 and 23 quoted from Gruening, Ernest, Mexico and Its Heritage, pp.548-549.)

whose incidence runs an irregular curve with sudden "highs" brought about by epidemics. The mortality in Mexico City from scarlet fever was as low as 8 in 1905. The same may be said of measles, which rose to more than 500 deaths in 1925 and dropped to 16 in 1926. It will be seen that no material progress has been made against the gastro-intestinal diseases -- which depends on change of diet, and involves economic and habit factors beyond the reach of a Department of Health in one year!"

Undoubtedly much of the ill health and disease in Mexico is due purely to ignorance, but one wonders if the best of hygienic education would serve to improve conditions as long as whole families in large sections of the working population are forced to live and have their being on less than two pesos per day. Poverty and disease have ever gone hand in hand -- and Mexico is no exception to this rule.

This section on wages and the standard of living in Mexico may be summarized as follows:

From the earliest times wages in Mexico have been low as compared with the prices of the basic necessities of life.

Although in recent years money wages have increased in almost all lines of work, due to a corresponding rise in the cost of living, real wages have not only failed to increase but in many cases have undoubtedly decreased.

The standard of living, therefore, which a very

large part of the laboring population of Mexico is able to maintain on the wages now being paid is of the lowest type and many families must exist at a level where it is impossible to provide even the minimum requisites necessary for the maintenance of health.

THE LABOR MOVEMENT IN MEXICO

Historical Development

The movement toward the organization of labor in Mexico has developed along the lines made familiar by the history of the industrial revolution in other countries. Before Díaz Mexico presented very much the aspect of mediaeval Europe: an agricultural country predominantly feudal in character. The overwhelming majority of the people were peasants, or peons, bound to the soil by a system of debt slavery. Isolated and scattered among the large landed estates (haciendas) the agricultural workers had developed little or no class consciousness and even the idea of the organization of labor into groups or unions for mutual protection was practically unknown.

With Díaz came the industrial revolution. Railroads broke through the barriers of mountains and deserts and isolation gave place to communication. Factories were established and began to attract workers to the urban centers. The machine quickened the life of the nation. The stage was set for a labor movement in Mexico.

Appropriately enough, the first labor unions in Mexico were organized by railway workers. Undoubtedly, the impetus came from association with the Americans employed by the Mexican railroads who were affiliated with the railway brotherhoods in the United States. The first three attempts at organization -- in 1887, 1889, and 1898 -- failed and it was not until 1904 that the Grand League

of Railroad Workers was formed at Jalapa and succeeded in establishing itself in the principal railway centers.

In the decade before the downfall of Díaz in 1911 social ideas and theories were gradually filtering into Mexico from the outside world. Spaniards and Argentine exiles began to spread the writings of Bakunin; Henry George progressivism and the doctrines of the I.W.W.'s were brought from the United States; and French socialism was spread through the activities of liberal newspapermen. ²⁷ As a result of this intellectual foment, soon the example of the railway workers was followed and attempts were made to organize unions in other fields.

In 1906, for example, the Grand Circle of Free Workers (Gran Círculo de Obreros Libres) was launched in the cotton mills of Atlixco and Orizaba. In less than a year, however, this group came to grief. A strike was called in the factories of Río Blanco, Nogales, Santa Rosa, and Atlixco. President Díaz "arbitrated" this strike and issued an order that the men should go back to work. Rioting followed in Río Blanco and an attack was made on one of the company stores. At once the federal troops were called out and it is said the workers were shot down in such numbers that "their bodies had to be run out on flat cars and dumped in the sea." ²⁸

The policy of force and repression in dealing with labor unions was followed by Díaz in many other instances. The Cananea copper mines strike in 1906 ended in bloodshed and violence. The strike headed by the Grand League of Railroad Workers in 1908 was quickly called off when it was learned that the government intended to ~~call~~ ^{order} out the troops to break it.

During President Díaz' administration, labor received practically no legal protection. The only provisions on the

statute books affecting labor were those contained in the Penal Code of 1872. This Code provided that workers must be paid in money (i.e. not in time checks negotiable at the company store), and prohibited the employers from maintaining private jails, but there is abundant evidence that these provisions were not enforced. On the other hand, operating directly against the interest of the workers, article 925 of the Code condemned the strike as an offence against industry and commerce:

"There shall be imposed from eight days to three months arrest and a fine of 25 to 500 pesos, or one of these two penalties, on those creating a disturbance or riot, or employing in other manner physical or moral violence, with the object of increasing the salaries or wages of workers, or impeding free exercise of industry and labor."

Despite the repressive methods of the government and the lack of legal sanction and protection, the membership of labor unions in Mexico in the year 1908 was estimated at 16,000, not including members of branches of American organizations of railroad workers. The principal unions, with estimated membership, were as follows:

The Grand League of Railroad Workers.....	10,000
The Mechanics Union.....	500
The Boiler-Makers Union.....	800
The Cigar-makers Union.....	1,500
The Carpenters Union.....	1,500
The Shop Blacksmith's Union.....	800
The Steel and Solder Unions.....	500

The reader, however, should not be misled by even these small numbers. The Mexican labor movement prior to 1910 was still amorphous and undirected. Organized expression was made difficult not only by the "iron hand" policy of the government, but also by the lack of confidence in the labor leaders and the distrust of the rank and file in centralized power. Quarrels and schisms were frequent and there was a lack of sustained interest and enthusiasm. The few unions in the field had neither power, importance, nor

inter-relationships.

The Madero revolution of 1910 let loose all the social forces which had been denied expression in the preceding thirty years. Although the actual concrete gains made by the workers under the Madero regime were small, the friendly attitude of the new President and the invigorating effect of the revolution itself served to give the labor movement a new impetus and opened up the way for the developments which took place later on. One of Madero's first acts (Dec. 13, 1911) was to establish a Department of Labor in the Ministry of Fomento (Development). Encouraged by Madero's attitude, and stimulated by foreign (Spanish) labor leaders, a number of new labor unions or sindicatos were formed. Among others may be mentioned the Confederation of Graphic Arts and the Union of Stonemasons in Mexico City; the Confederation of Workers in Torreón; the Confederation of Worker's Unions in Vera Cruz; and the Stevedores Union in Tampico.

One of the most important steps taken at this time was the founding in Mexico City of the House of the World Worker (Casa del Obrero Mundial) in July 1912. The organization was established primarily for the purpose of propaganda and education. Classes were held for workers, lectures were given, and a newspaper called "Light" was published. The program of the Casa was a mixture of syndicalism and anarchism; "direct action" was advocated and political action discountenanced. The members of the group and the workers in general were fed on a diet of Kropotkin's "The Conquest of Bread," Nordau's "The Conventional Lies of Civilization," and the writings of Bakunin.

The assassination of Madero and the accession of the reactionary Victoriano Huerta to power resulted in a temporary setback for the nascent labor movement. Labor leaders were imprisoned, newspapers were suppressed, and public demonstrations were for-

bidden. Finally, in May 1914, the Casa del Obrero Mundial was ordered closed and some of the leading spirits in this group were deported.

31

Soch, however, Huerta was, in turn, forced out of power and the Mexican labor movement entered into a new stage of its development. Taking advantage of the social and political disorder which followed the downfall of Huerta, the labor unions strengthened their organization and, after the Carranza-Villa split, Mexican labor, as a disciplined force took a definite share in the determination of events. Indeed it was largely through the help of the red labor battalions -- batallones rojos -- recruited and led by labor leaders that Carranza was able to become the de facto President of Mexico in the latter part of 1915. Carranza paid for this help in promises which eventually bore fruit in Article 123 of the 1917 constitution.

During the troublous times when he was still trying to consolidate his position as "First Chief of the Revolution," in addition to his agreement (February 1915) with labor which led to the formation of the "red battalions," Carranza made several other bids for the support of the radical agrarian and labor groups. On January 6, 1915 was issued the famous decree inaugurating land reform and authorizing the restoration of communal land to the Indian villages. A few months later the Casa del Obrero Mundial was reopened in the luxurious quarters of the aristocratic "Jockey Club." Encouragement was given to the development of the labor movement in Yucatan and a branch of the Casa was established in that state. Finally, Carranza turned over to labor the management of the Mexican Telephone and Telegraph Co. and various printing presses and newspapers which had been confiscated by the government.

Once Carranza felt himself thoroughly entrenched in power, however, his attitude toward labor began to suffer marked changes; at first merely vacillating and contradictory, in the latter years of his rule he turned definitely against labor and began to use machine guns and imprisonment for the suppression of strikes in quite the best Díaz manner. In January 1916 the batallones rojos were ordered dissolved; the Casa Mundial was expelled from the "Jockey Club"; labor publications were suspended; and the governors of various states were commanded to suppress radical and disolvente ideas. The climax of Carranza's anti-labor activities came in July of 1916. In this month, in desperation over the condition brought about by the complete breakdown of the monetary system and the continued disorganization of the industrial and economic life of the country, a general strike was declared in the Federal District. Carranza forthwith put the leaders of the strike in jail and issued a decree making it a criminal offense -- punishable by death -- for any workman to participate in a strike.

But Carranza had waited too long. Despite these persecutions and repressive measures the labor movement grew steadily stronger and better organized. In March of 1916 the first national labor congress was held in Vera Cruz. At this meeting was formed the Confederación del Trabajo de la Región Mexicana. A program based on the principles of direct action and rational thought was announced and a permanent committee appointed. Rather badly directed and somewhat premature, this organization is significant largely because of its cooperation with the Casa Mundial and the American Federation of Labor in effecting the early withdrawal of the Pershing Expeditionary Force from Mexico.

Two years later (March 1918) a second national labor congress was held in the city of Saltillo. At this congress a new organization was launched which was known as the Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana, and which under the more familiar title of the CROM was destined to play a very important part in the history of the labor movement in Mexico. (For the history and present status of the CROM see below section dealing with "Existing Labor Organizations in Mexico.")

The high point in the history of the labor movement under the Carranza regime was attained when the leaders of the movement managed to insert the now famous Article 123 in the Constitution of 1917. This article which has been called the magna carta of Mexican labor will be discussed in some detail in the following pages. Meanwhile, in order to bring this historial sketch up to date it remains to comment briefly on the position of labor under Adolfo de la Huerta, Obregón, and Calles.

Repelled by the reactionary policies of Carranza, General Alvaro Obregón, supported by the workers and the agrarians, took the field against the government and as the head and moving spirit of the so-called Revindicating Revolution was swept into power in May 1920. Prompt recognition of the services of labor in actively backing the revolution came in the extremely friendly attitude of the interim president Adolfo de la Huerta. In his six months' term he settled forty-three strikes, all in favor of the workers.

More substantial gains were forthcoming when Obregon himself took over the reins of government on December 1, 1920. Several prominent labor leaders were appointed to important official positions. Among these were Luis N. Morones, who was made manager of the National Factories (which manufacture most of the supplies for

the army), and General Celestino Gasca, who was made governor of the Federal District. Both by these appointments and by numerous state laws teeth were put into labor provisions of the 1917 Constitution. Also, during the four years of President Obregon's administration the organization of the workers into unions proceeded with great rapidity. According to its official figures, the CROM grew from 100,000 members in 1920 to over 1,000,000 members in 1924. (But see below p. 63)

President Plutarco Elias Calles entered office in 1924 supported by and completely in sympathy with the labor movement in so far as this movement may be identified with the CROM. Luis N. Morones, leader of the CROM, was appointed Minister of Industry, Commerce, and Labor. Other CROM leaders were given important governmental posts. Calles supported Morones and the CROM not only against the "capitalists," but also against rival labor organizations; the CROM on its side mustered its strength behind the government whenever it was needed (as, for example, at the time of the incipient Catholic rebellion in August, 1926). In short, during the Calles regime labor definitely came into its own. This happy state of affairs, however, was not to last. In the last few months of Calles' administration, the CROM fell upon evil days. But this is another story which can be better told in the next section.

Existing Labor Organizations in Mexico

Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana. As has already been noted, the Regional Confederation of Labor, generally known by the initials of its Spanish title as the CROM, came into being at the second national labor congress held at Saltillo, Coahuila, in March of 1918. The organization of the CROM was undoubtedly a result of

the natural evolution of the labor movement in Mexico. However, it is interesting to note that one of the immediate reasons for the creation of the CROM was President Carranza's hope that he would find in this new group a foil to the radical syndicalist Casa del

32

Obrero Mundial.

Despite the influence of anarchistic and other radical theories (see above p.51) on the Mexican labor movement during the early stages of its development, the general philosophy of the CROM is neither anarchistic nor communistic. If the reader will consult the summary statement of the doctrines of the CROM which is given in Appendix B of this monograph, he will note that the theories which have actuated the CROM are more akin to what is known as "state socialism" than to any other brand of social philosophy. (It should be noted in passing, however, that the term "socialism" is very loosely used in Mexico and in most cases should not be interpreted in the Marxian sense, but rather as meaning something tending toward the improvement of the conditions of the working class.)

There is ample evidence both in the public statements and the actual policies followed by President Calles and Secretary Morones (leader of the CROM and Minister of Industry, Commerce and Labor under Calles) that they are in sympathy with the doctrines of state socialism. For example, President Calles organized the Federal Petroleum Control Administration to drill for oil in the Federal zones. The Bank of Mexico was founded by Calles as a sole bank of issue with government funds and under the direct control of the government. While President Calles nominally returned (January 6, 1926) the National Railways to the stock company which owns them, the government controls the majority of the voting stock and exercises direct jurisdiction over the railway system. Under the

anti-trust law promulgated by General Calles, boards were established with far reaching powers, including the authority to fix prices in time of scarcity. The government, also, extended the operations of the National Factories, which manufacture clothing, shoes and ammunition for the national army. At the beginning of his administration, President Calles created the National Navigation Lines, owned and operated directly by the government. (These lines, however, required such a heavy subsidy that they have since -- January, 1928 -- been leased to the Stevedores' Union of Tampico.) The Calles government also had a hand in organizing the Cooperative of Henequen Producers which controls the henequen industry of Yucatan and Campeche.

Uncritical and uninformed commentators on the development of the Mexican labor movement have greatly exaggerated the communistic tendencies of the CROM. Whereas it is true that some of the leaders of the CROM have on occasion given expression to Communistic ideas, as a matter of fact relations have never been good between Moscow and either the CROM or the Mexican government. The Mexican labor movement has developed along practical and opportunist lines rather than in accordance with any academic theory and there is reason to believe that in the eyes of Moscow the CROM is a very bourgeois organization. Furthermore, the affiliation of the CROM with the American Federation of Labor would in itself be enough to prevent any rapprochement between the Soviet and the Mexican organizations. The following statement by an authorized spokesman for the CROM summarizes the story of the CROM vs. the Red International:

".....the authorized Mexican representative, Eulalio Martínez, who in 1921 was sent especially to Russia by the C.R.O.M. to become acquainted with Russian affairs and to take to Moscow a true picture of the growing labor movement in Mexico, was not trusted to any extent. Only when in 1922 the representative

of the Soviet Red Cross in the United States, Mr. Dubrowski, came to Mexico and was given by the Mexican leaders every opportunity to become acquainted with the labor situation and observe the various phases of Mexican activity, did the report to Moscow of the good impressions he took away with him cause a change of attitude. But again, at a crucial moment, the "Pavda" published some articles against the C.R.O.M. and its leaders, and when Morones presented himself at the Russian legation in Berlin with the intention of visiting Russia, a visa was refused him, only to be forwarded to him in Mexico several months later.

"There is little reason, therefore, to wonder that Moscow was badly misinformed about Mexico, not only politically and socially, but generally. Knowing practically nothing about the ideals and organization of the C.R.O.M., and holding against it the fact of the Mexican Federation's friendship with the American Federation of Labor, Moscow was distrustful of the sincerity of the Mexican labor movement.

"Mexican Labor, however, appreciates that the Union of Soviet Socialistic Republics is the only workers' Republic outside of Mexico and for this reason it has always insisted that, no matter what are the social, political, and theoretical differences between the two, some direct contact must be maintained. Mexican labor insisted on the Mexican government's recognition of the Soviet Republic, and on the installation of a Mexican legation in Moscow and a Soviet legation in Mexico City, and so in the summer of 1924, Basilio Vadiglio became the first Mexican minister in Moscow while S. Pestkowski was appointed Soviet minister in Mexico. But, in spite of the fact that the Soviet legation was established by the wishes of Mexican Labor and that it is the only Russian legation on the Western Hemisphere, relations between the two groups are not good." 33

The only relations which have been maintained by the CROM with the labor movements of other countries have been those growing out of its affiliation with the American Federation of Labor and the Pan-American Federation of Labor. Reference has already been made (p.55) to the activities of the Mexican labor organizations on the occasion of the entrance of the Pershing Expedition into Mexico in March 1916. At that time a conference was held between the Casa del Obrero Mundial with representatives of the American Federation of Labor. As an outcome of this conference a protest was issued in the name of the two participating groups against the Punitive Expedition. At this meeting, also, plans were discussed for

organizing a Pan-American Union of Workers. It was not, however, until 1918, at a convention held in Laredo, Texas, that the Pan-American Federation of Labor was formally organized with Samuel Gompers as president and Luis N. Morones as vice-president. Between 1916 and 1918 negotiations had been carried on with the labor groups in various other American countries and at the 1918 meeting representatives of Canada, Guatemala, Porto Rico, Nicaragua, Salvador, Cuba, and Colombia were present.

Some Mexicans have criticized the liason between the A.F.of L. and the CROM on the grounds that it is merely a device for extending the influence of the United States, but experience has shown that the close relations between the two labor organizations have been of the greatest possible service to the Mexican government on several occasions. In addition to the pressure brought to bear in obtaining the withdrawal of the Pershing expedition, there might also be mentioned the influence which the A.F.of L. threw on the side of General Obregon during the de la Huerta revolution in 1923 and the services rendered to the Calles government by American labor during the critical days of 1926 and 1927.

The structure and method of organization of the CROM have been outlined by one of the members of the Executive Committee as follows:

"The CROM is organized in the following manner: the unit is the sindicato which unites the laborers of similar occupation or of the same plant under the name of a union, syndicate, league or society. The association of the unions of one place or of a region of homogeneous production forms a Local Federation. The local federations in turn form the State Federation corresponding to one of the political entities of the Republic of Mexico.

"In addition to the State Federations the CROM at the present time has four National Federations of Industries: of Graphic Arts; of Ports; of Railroads; and of Theaters. All of these various federations (state and industrial) taken together form the CROM.

"The CROM allows liberty of action to the local unions in all matters which do not transcend the provinces of the local organizations or of the general organization. According to their importance, problems pass to the Local Federation, to the State Federation (or to the National Federation when such exists), and, finally, to the Central Committee of the CROM. The last mentioned body is charged with the execution of all agreements reached in the general assembly of the CROM; with seeing that the provisions of the constitution are complied with; and with dictating whatever measures the general interest may demand at any given moment.

"The general assembly of the CROM, called the 'Convention', is formed by delegates sent directly from all of the member unions and federations. Only the Convention has the right to reform the constitution of the CROM and its decisions in general constitute the program of action until the next reunion.

"The convention also has the right to nominate the Central Committee. This committee is composed of a General Secretary, a Secretary of Agriculture, a Secretary of Textile Mills, a Secretary of Transportation, and seven Chiefs of Departments...

"The funds of the CROM are provided from dues of two centavos per week which every individual member of the confederation must pay." 34

From the foregoing statement it would appear that the CROM is controlled in the last analysis by the so-called Central Committee. As a matter of fact, however, this control is only nominal and the real power rests with what is known as the Grupo Acción (Group of Action). The Grupo Acción is a sort of small inner clique formed of the outstanding leaders and dominated by Luis N. Morones. The members of the Grupo are not elected -- they are "selected." No secret is made of the fact that the CROM is actually ruled by the Grupo Acción and that the democratic machinery which has been set up is largely for show purposes. The enemies of the CROM cite this concentration of power in the hands of a few leaders as the greatest fault of the organization; the apologists for the CROM answer this charge by pointing to the history of the labor movement in Mexico and claiming that "such a combination of directing minds as are represented in the Grupo Acción is a necessity."

That the CROM has been (until recently) the most powerful labor organization in Mexico no one will deny. However, just what the strength of the CROM is (or was) measured in terms of membership it is hard to discover. The CROM itself claims in its official statistics that the organization grew from 7,000 members in 1918 to 2,250,000 in 1927.³⁶ About 50 or 60 per cent of the total membership of the CROM was said to consist of agricultural workers or peasants. In citing these official statistics of the CROM it must be noted, however, that in the opinion of many observers the claims of the CROM are greatly exaggerated. While two and a half million names may be inscribed on the rosters of the CROM it is extremely doubtful if more than one-fifth of that number pay dues. President Portes Gil in a recent public statement has even gone so far as to say that "the declarations which the CROM has made to the effect that its membership totals two and one half millions are absurd, for the total membership of the CROM barely amounts to 140,000."³⁷

Nominally the CROM is not a political organization, but in point of fact, through the agency of its alter ego, the Partido Laborista (Mexican Labor Party) the CROM has engaged in political activities during the entire course of its existence. The Partido Laborista was first formed by the Grupo Acción in December of 1919,³⁸ for the purpose of supporting the campaign of General Obregon against Carranza. Since that time the party has held conventions at stated intervals and has participated in national, state and municipal elections. The leaders of the Partido and the leaders of the CROM have always been the same individuals; for all practical purposes the two organizations are identical. The CROM has publicly announced that it regards the Partido Laborista as simply another arm of the

CROM and as an agency for "intervening in the formation of social legislation and for participating in the orientation of the administrative activities of the government."³⁹

The success of the Labor Party in the field of politics may be measured by the fact that in 1927 the Party had in power one cabinet member out of seven (Morones), eleven out of fifty-eight senators, forty deputies out of 272, and two governors out of twenty-eight. In addition the Party controlled the Mexico City municipal government and that of a number of surrounding towns in the Federal District.⁴⁰

The CROM reached the high point of its development and attained its greatest power during the first two years of President Calles' administration. For the past two years and more, however, the CROM has been gradually losing ground and at the present time (June, 1929) it would appear that the power of the organization has been definitely curtailed, if not completely destroyed, in both the political and economic fields. The reasons for the decline and fall of the CROM may be briefly summarized as follows:⁴¹

1. The CROM has never been able to attract and control the basic proletarian forces of the country -- the peasants. The National Agrarian Party, led by Díaz Soto y Gama, an ex-Zapatista, and by Urelío Manrique, the ex-governor of San Luis Potosí, was from its foundation in 1920, with the exception of short intervals, bitterly opposed to the CROM. The radical and communistic National Peasant's League (launched in the early part of Calles' administration and organized by Ursulo Galvan) was also openly hostile. Through the efforts of these two organizations the peasant organizations affiliated with the CROM one by one withdrew. In this aliena-

ation of the peasant groups from the CROM the National Agrarian Party and the National Peasant's League were aided by the natural conflict of interests between the industrial city proletariat and the agricultural workers. Mexican cities, with the growth of large scale industries have been modernizing themselves with remarkable speed and labor has to some extent participated in the benefits of this process. The rural areas, however, despite the distribution of land, have lagged behind and the peasant tends to sink rather than to rise in the social scale.

2. The CROM by following the policy of destroying the independent unions which for one reason or another did not wish to become a part of its organization, created many enemies for itself. The outstanding case has been that of the railroad workers. In 1926 the CROM seized upon the first opportunity to smash a rail strike and split the independent organization, and since that time the railway workers have fought the CROM tooth and nail.

3. The CROM and the Mexican Labor Party made the mistake of aligning themselves against Obregon. The split between Obregon and the CROM became public in the early part of Obregon's last campaign for the presidency. In May, 1928, Morones announced that his organization was withdrawing from politics (this in the face of the fact that only a few months before the Labor Party had endorsed Obregon's candidacy) and warned Obregon not to interfere with the worker's organizations. Obregon, sure of the support of the agrarian organizations and leaders (whom he had been carefully cultivating), immediately had a law passed which ousted the CROM from its control of the municipal government of Mexico City and then followed this up by procuring the defeat of the labor leader Celestino Gasco in his contest for the governorship of the state of Guanajuato.

(The following report [New York Times, 7-26-28] of an interview with one of the Mexican agrarian leaders throws an interesting sidelight on the Morones-Obregon split:

(Raphael Mallen, one of the Agrarian leaders, asked to explain the Morones-Obregon feud and the dislike of the Agrarians for the Laborites, replied:

("Morones wanted to be President and wanted to be a political power. That started it. Morones organized the city workers. Obregon organized the farmers. These groups do not have common interests and they became opposing groups.

("The Agrarians regard Morones as the mouthpiece in Mexico of the American Federation of Labor, the Mexican viceroy of Gompers and Green, and therefore a disloyal Mexican.

("Obregon did not have connections with farmer organizations outside of Mexico. He was not a traitor. He represented Mexicans only.

("That is why Obregon's farmer followers opposed and oppose Morones town workers.")

4. By the abuse of the power derived from its semi-official position under Calles, the CROM heightened the natural antagonism between the employers and labor organizations. Punitive tactics, often of the most unjust and unfair type, were used in dealing with the employers and owners of industrial enterprises. All this, plus the well founded suspicion that the labor leaders were more concerned with lining their own pockets than in protecting the rights of the workers, created in the Mexican business and industrial world in general still another source of bitter opposition to the CROM.

5. The behavior of its leaders on the occasion of the assassination of General Obregon had the effect of lowering the prestige of the CROM both with the country at large and with the workers themselves. The death of Obregon let loose a perfect deluge of attacks on the CROM by the followers of the Sonora chieftain and the leaders of the CROM were publicly charged with responsibility for the murder. (This charge, however, was later

proved to be unfounded). Morones, Moneda, Treviño, promptly resigned their government positions and went into temporary hiding. To the members of the CROM and to the general public this move smacked of "quitting under fire" and cowardice, and the standing of the CROM suffered accordingly.

6. In the last few months another, and for the time being at least, apparently decisive blow has been given the CROM. The story of this coup de grace has been summarized by one of the most acute commentators on Mexican labor affairs as follows:

"The leaders [of the CROM] seized the first opportunity [i.e. after the events which transpired on the occasion of Obregon's assassination] to rehabilitate themselves. This was impossible until Calles had turned over his office to a new President. Calles undoubtedly chose Portes Gil as his successor as the most acceptable coalition candidate, a man mildly identified with the Obregon party, a product of "the revolution," known to be sympathetic toward the workers and the peasants and therefore, though not favoring the CROM, unlikely to take overt action against it. But within seven days after Portes Gil took office the coalition fell apart. The administration and the CROM came to blows. The CROM leaders made a grandstand play to come back into their own.

"The event was the ninth annual convention of the CROM, and the pivot was Calles. The ex-President in his famous message of September 1, 1928, had pointed out the road to political stability as being democracy, a rule of institutions and laws, instead of caudillos or military chiefs. Such a change in Mexican political practices was a break with the practices of both the regime of Obregon and Calles's own administration. Calles though he had consistently stressed legality and indeed was responsible for the creation of the greatest body of legal machinery since the Reform Laws of 1859, in practice threw legality overboard in dealing with the Catholics; and he tramped on freedom of the press -- certainly one of the necessary bases of such a proposed transition to a democratic and institutional political system. The culmination of this illegal process at the very close of Calles's period was the official attack upon the leading conservative daily, the Excelsior, which had been guilty of nothing more heinous than a faithful reporting of the crudities of the trial of the assassin Toral.

"In spite of his democratic salaam, Calles undoubtedly realized that Mexican politics would fall into fragments unless some strenuous effort was made to hold the government to the general trend of the revolutionary period. Immediately upon leaving

office, he therefore set out to organize the Grand Revolutionary Party (GPRN) and, through this vehicle, to become the power behind the throne. The new party was obviously an attempt to divide the Obregón military and bureaucratic elements and throw those most personally loyal to the side of the new Government and the Calles candidate. At the same time, Calles evidently hoped to rehabilitate the CROM and make it the bridge between the new party, composed of military and bureaucratic elements, and the more popular aspirations of the country. His appearance in the CROM convention heartened the faltering leaders of the organization and undoubtedly swept them beyond the limits of common sense.

"In a moment of exultation they forced the leading personalities to unmask and define their positions. But it was an unpropitious moment. Portes Gil had already indicated his lukewarmness to the CROM. While still in the Cabinet of Calles, he had called a mixed convention of employers and workers to discuss a proposed labor law. Whereas Calles, shortly before this, in a decree creating an industrial council, had excluded all labor representation except that of the official CROM, Portes Gil now gave the CROM but twenty odd delegates out of a hundred labor representatives in the mixed convention. The CROM determined to make Portes Gil show his colors. In the ninth annual convention, convened a few days after the seating of Portes Gil, the organization called upon him to suppress a revue at the Lyric Theater, which was satirizing Morones and recounting his opulent living, the pocketing of nearly a million pesos destined for the flood sufferers of León, the purchase of the luxurious Hotel Mancera for 800,000 pesos, and the orgies in this country palace in Tlalpam. At the bottom, the CROM's demand was aimed against the independent theater workers' union, which had recently seceded. Portes Gil promptly declared that he intended to guarantee liberty of speech in the theater and elsewhere. (His previous attack at Calles' behest on the Excelsior belied this statement; and he has since arbitrarily ruled a theater production off the boards.)

"The CROM thereupon broke with the Government, ordered all appointed CROM administrative officials, state and federal, to resign, withdrew its delegates from the mixed labor-law convention, and removed the sessions of the ninth convention from the government-owned Hidalgo Theater. Morones talked of calling out the workers of the country -- a veiled threat of revolution. At the same time a bitter attack was launched on General Pérez Treviño, Governor of Coahuila, who had been elected some time before with PLM support, but had promptly broken his pact and driven the CROM out of his state. The crisis was stirred up from another source. The agrarian leader, Antonio Villareal, called upon Calles to define his position, charging him with obscuring the political ideology by remaining in two fundamentally contrary and warring organizations -- the new GPRN (of which Pérez Treviño was one of the executives) and the CROM. Simultaneously the agrarian leaders Manrique and Soto y Gama launched bitter attacks against Calles and the CROM in the Chamber of Deputies.

"As a result Calles was obliged abruptly to withdraw from all political activities. His alternative would have been to immerse himself completely, coming out definitely for the CROM or his god-child, the GPRN. Fealty to the CROM would have meant a rupture with Portes Gil seven days after installing him in office -- a ridiculous position. And even had Calles clung to the GPRN, he would ultimately have been driven into opposition with the administration, at present intent upon consolidating a new bureaucratic group.

"Calles's withdrawal from politics reanimated the enemies of the CROM. The Chamber of Deputies indulged in a recapitulation of the abuses of the CROM, the centavo assessment on every liter of milk, on every kilo of charcoal sold, the 10 per cent assessed every CROM and PLM member employed by the government -- funds turned over to the inner Grupo Acción, but never accounted for in any of the official financial statements of either of the two organizations. Where, asks the union of Slaughter House Workers, are the 200,000 pesos handed over to CROM officials to construct workers' houses? Where are the half million pesos of the savings and loan fund of the workers of the government printing establishments? The funds of the workers of the factories of the Consolidated and Model, the funds of the street-car workers, and of numerous cooperatives? Where are the funds destined for the aeroplane flight? The totals run up into millions.

"And so the CROM has crumbled overnight. Desertion has been cropping up on every hand. The linotypers called upon the CROM leaders to resign, and thereupon seceded. The street-car workers, originally brought into the CROM by governmental coercion, announced that they were tired of the tyrannies of the Grupo Acción. A monster labor demonstration filed before the home of Portes Gil to thank him for freeing them from the exactions of the CROM.

"Undoubtedly the CROM needed a house-cleaning; it needed to be freed from the incubus of its corrupt leadership; it needed to be cut off from all official patronage. But as a result of this attempt to eliminate corrupt leaders, the whole organization is going by the boards. Today Mexico is without an effective national labor organization."

It should, perhaps, be added that in Mexico appearances are likely to be more deceiving than in some other places. There can be little doubt that for the moment the CROM's stock on any market would be quoted at about zero. It is true that practically all of the CROM leaders are now out of political power; it is true that each morning the newspapers ^{report} announce some new defection from the ranks of the organization, and that President Portes Gil himself has announced

that his government will assist in the formation of a new national labor organization which will be free from the "curse of ambitious and unprincipaled leaders."⁴³ However, none of these things necessarily mean that the CROM is done for once and for all. Morones is still alive and is said to be still a very good friend of Calles. Celestino Gasca was appointed to one of the most important positions in the army which under the leadership of Calles put down the recent rebellion. The next turn of the political wheel in Mexico may bring Morones once again into a position of political power. If this should come to pass one may expect to see the unions, now so anxious to declare their independence, scrambling to climb on the bandwagon.

The Confederation of Transportation and Communication, formerly known as the Confederation of Railway Societies of the Mexican Republic, is the most important labor organization in Mexico outside of the CROM. Due to the fact that the Mexican railroads were largely built and were for many years operated by Americans, the railway labor organizations in Mexico have naturally tended to follow the pattern of the American unions. Accordingly, the CTC is organized into brotherhoods which maintain the same mutualistic character as those in the United States.

No reliable statistics exist which indicate the present strength of the CTC. In the early part of 1926 it was estimated that the membership was around 28,000. However, in that year the CTC (or as it was then known, the Confederation of Railway Societies of the Mexican Republic) fell afoul of the CROM and lost a number of its members. The CROM had been making strenuous efforts to bring the railway unions into its organizations, but always without success. Morones, who was at that time the Minister of Industry, Commerce and Labor, apparently decided to "break" the railway workers' union. A

strike called by the Mexican Mechanics Union (affiliated with the CTC) was promptly declared illegal. When the CTC attempted to help the Mexican Mechanics Union by calling a general strike, this also was declared illegal and the Ministry of Commerce, Labor and Industry announced that it would not enter into any further official relations with the CTC. As noted above, these moves on the part of Morones greatly weakened the CTC to the benefit of the CROM. Although the CTC was not destroyed, a number of the members were successfully intimidated into joining the CROM. The CROM organization of railroad workers is known as the National Railway Federation and in 1926 claimed 8,000 members.

The Ligas de Resistencia, originally organized by General Salvador Alvarado and the labor-leader (later Governor) Felipe Carillo, are independent Mexican labor unions of a special type found only in the states of Yucatan and Campeche. These unions which were first started in 1915 (?) have grown very rapidly (a membership of 80,000 was claimed in 1925) and for all practical purposes dominate the political and economic life of the state of Yucatan. The Ligas, as a matter of fact, function in a somewhat broader manner than the ordinary labor union. "The Liga," wrote Felipe Carillo in 1924, "is more than a political part; it is more than a social organization; it is more than an educational institution; it is more than an instrument for government. It is all of these combined. It is an instrument that is rejuvenating the Maya Indian and giving him the power to carry out a far-reaching social program." ⁴⁴ The leagues are organized along both industrial and trade lines. The strongest unions are those of the transport and dock workers engaged in the handling of Yucatan's most important crop, henequen.

Another important labor group in Mexico is known as the General Confederation of Workers (Confederación General de Trabajadores). This is the most radical organization in Mexico and at one time was a serious rival of the CROM. In 1926 the CGT was estimated to have about 15,000 members, including workers in some textile factories, in the oil fields, bakeries, mines, etc. The CGT does not believe in political action. "Its philosophy might be termed syndicalist and its members call themselves Los Rojos (the reds) in contrast to the CROM who in Mexico are denominated as Los Amarillos (the yellows). In back of the formation and continuance of this organization are personal and political rivalries. Political candidates have sought its support to offset the power of the CROM, but in the fact of administrative unfriendliness for several years and lack of effective leadership [its membership] has dwindled..."⁴⁵

A National Catholic Confederation of Labor was organized in 1922 in opposition to the other types of unionism growing up out of the revolution. According to their own figures the Catholics claimed in 1927 a membership of 100,000 workers organized in 310 unions. Whatever may have been its actual strength at any given time, it would appear to be true that the Catholic movement has had little or no effect on the labor movement as a whole in Mexico. In the last two years, due to the church-state conflict, the Catholic unions have practically disappeared.

In addition to the groups which have been mentioned in the foregoing paragraphs note should also be taken of existence in Mexico of such semi-labor organizations as the Communist Party and the Anti-Imperialist League. The former published a newspaper known as the Machete and claims to be affiliated with the Communist International.

The influence of the group is restricted. The Anti-Imperialist League, is likewise of little importance. Its sole purpose is to attack the foreign policy of the United States whenever possible. Finally, there are also in Mexico a number of independent local, company, and "political" unions. The last mentioned are usually rather ephemeral organizations created for purely political purposes by the governor of some state.

LEGAL STATUS OF LABOR IN MEXICO

National Labor Legislation

Article 123 of the 1917 Mexican Constitution has been called the "most noteworthy constitutional document that has been developed by the Mexican revolution." This article, which treats "Of Labor and Social Welfare," and provides the legal basis for labor legislation both state and national, was introduced into the 1917 constitution through the efforts of a small group of liberals and labor leaders. President Carranza apparently did not contemplate anything so radical or so far-reaching (his proposal to the convention was merely that the Constitution of 1857 be amended to permit Congress to legislate in labor matters) and it would appear that the labor clauses were inserted in the 1917 document only with his very reluctant consent.

Article 123 in the explicitness of its provisions really transcends the limits of an ordinary constitutional provision. Detailed regulations are laid down concerning wages, hours of labor, settlement of disputes between employers and employees, compensation for accidents, and housing and working conditions. The reader is referred to Appendix C for a translation of the complete article.

State Legislation

Article 11 of the transitory provisions of the Constitution of 1917 reads as follows:

"Until such time as the Congress of the Union and the state legislatures shall legislate on the agrarian and labor problems, the bases established by this Constitution for the said laws shall be put into force throughout the republic."

On the authority of this provision and by virtue of the first paragraph of Article 123, which states that "the Congress and the state legislatures shall make laws relative to labor with due regard for the needs of each region of the Republic," all but four states have passed laws of some kind. However, due to the haste with which most of these laws were drafted and in view of the fact that up to the present date no national labor law has yet been passed which might serve as a model, most of the state laws are full of contradictions, often unjust, and, with few exceptions, wholly inadequate. Indeed, this is not surprising when one stops to consider that there are a number of conflicts in the various provisions of the Constitution itself. For example, the right to strike is recognized under all circumstances, while at the same time Fractions 20 and 21 of Article 123 provide for compulsory arbitration. Fractions 17 and 19 authorize a paro, or suspension of labor contracts, under certain circumstances approved by the government. Labor contracts vary in different states, but most of them provide that in case of an authorized paro, it will only be necessary to pay the workmen from two to four weeks' wages. On the other hand, fraction 22 of Article 123 provides that in case of unjustified discharge of employees, employers must pay three months' wages.

While the National Congress has not been able to agree on labor

legislation, nevertheless, labor jurisprudence is being built up in the form of decrees issued by the President, and by administrative and judicial decisions in connection with labor provisions of the Constitution. A law creating boards of conciliation and arbitration was passed by Congress on November 27, 1917. The existing "Regulations" of this law, which prescribe in detail the organization of the boards and their manner of operation, were promulgated by executive decree on March 20, 1926. These Regulations provide for a central board of conciliation and arbitration at Mexico City, and municipal boards of conciliation and arbitration in each municipality of the Federal District, except Mexico City. Labor disputes will go first to a board of conciliation and arbitration, and in case the parties are unable to agree, will then pass to the Central Board of Arbitration, which is specifically authorized by the law to act as a board of arbitration and to pass judgment in accordance with law or equity. The decree also provides that the decision of the Central Board shall be enforced at once by the Governor of the Federal District. In practice, the decisions are enforced immediately, so as to give no time for the courts to issue writs of amparo. Under existing decisions of the Supreme Court, the Board of Arbitration at Mexico City, as well as in the States, has authority to seize the property of employers and sell it to cover damages awarded by the Board. The boards also close up factories refusing to accept its decisions.

The Central Board is composed of three members: the president, who is appointed by the Governor of the Federal District and represents the Government; the other two representatives are chosen by labor organizations and by employers. On November 1 of each year, the Governor of the Federal District issues a call for workers and employers to meet to select panels of representatives for each of the

principal trades or industries. In practice, the representatives of the government have generally taken the labor point of view, but during the past few years the President of the Central Board at Mexico City has maintained a fairly impartial attitude.

Federal Boards of Conciliation and Arbitration

In addition to the state laws and the various decrees regulating conditions of labor and the settlement of labor disputes in the federal district mentioned above, there has also been created (by executive decree of September 25, 1927) a Federal Board of Conciliation and Arbitration. This board has jurisdiction over cases involving: (a) Federal zones; (b) Industries established under Federal concessions or contracts; (c) Conflicts involving two or more states, or one state and the Federal zone; and, (d) Industries in which the representatives of the majority of owners and workers have signed a written agreement accepting the jurisdiction of the Federal board. According to the provisions of this law the Board will have jurisdiction over railways, oil and mining companies, and public utilities. The establishing of this board has produced a certain amount of confusion inasmuch as the failure of Congress to pass a federal labor law leaves the Board without any jurisprudence on which it can base its decisions. In practice what is happening is that the Board is creating its own jurisprudence by the cumulative effect of the decisions which it hands down.

The Attempts to Pass a Federal Law

From the foregoing it is apparent that the whole matter of labor legislation in Mexico at the present time is in a rather chaotic state. Realizing this, labor leaders and others have made numerous

efforts to get the national congress to pass a general federal labor law. For it is obvious that without such a law the "rights of labor" guaranteed in the 1917 Constitution cannot be achieved and that the present state of affairs is working definite harm to the interests of employers and employees alike.

One of the main concerns of President Portes Gil has been that of bringing some order into the matter of labor legislation by having Congress promulgate during his term of office a federal labor law. In pursuance of this object President Gil on December 11, 1928, called a conference of the representatives of both labor and capitalist groups for the purpose of discussing a projected Federal Code of Labor. At this conference, which held daily sessions during the course of several weeks, opportunity was given for all parties to present their respective points of view and a proposed law which had been previously drafted by the Ministry of Commerce Industry and Labor was discussed and argued paragraph by paragraph. The next step is for the President to submit the proposed law to the national Congress. Announcement has been made that a special session of Congress will be called for this purpose in the near future. (In view of the fact that this proposed law has not yet been passed and that many changes will doubtless be made when it is submitted to Congress, no attempt is made to summarize its provisions. However, anyone interested in the matter can obtain a copy of the law as it now stands by writing the American Chamber of Commerce in Mexico City.)

In a later study of this series an effort will be made to review in some detail the history of the "class struggle" in Mexico since 1917. However, it may be said in passing that the excesses of the labor groups which characterized the first years of the "new freedom" granted to labor by Article 123 of the 1917 Constitution have been greatly curtailed in the last few years. The number of strikes has

greatly declined (see Appendix D) and the number of cases decided in favor of the employers by the conciliation and arbitration boards have steadily increased (see Appendix E). Undoubtedly there have been many cases in the past in which labor has used its newly acquired power in Mexico to work injustice on the employers. Without in any way attempting to excuse or belittle these tactics on the part of labor, it is only fair to say that some of the responsibility must lie with those employers both pre- and post-revolutionary who have consistently refused to cooperate with the workers. Also, it must be remembered that the unstable political conditions in Mexico have given rise in the minds of the employers to a philosophy of "getting what you can while the getting is good." Needless to say, this is hardly a satisfactory basis for the establishing of lasting and mutually helpful relations between labor and capital. Finally, the lack of adequate and uniform labor legislation and the arbitrary and capricious manner in which such laws as do exist have been enforced, have needlessly complicated the whole question of the relation of employers and employees and have definitely postponed the day in Mexico when the two groups can work together in harmony.