PRESS RELEASE
ECA MISSION TO GREECE

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GREEK LABOR MOVEMENT

ATHENS -- Following is the first of a series of weekly articles summing up achievements of American Aid in various spheres of the national recovery effort in Greece. The series will cover most of the fields in which the United States has tried to assist Greece toward national self-sufficiency, from the end of World War II to the beginning of 1962. This article concerns the field of labor and manpower.

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In July, 1946, when the American Mission for Aid to Greece (AMAG), the agency which had administered the Truman Doctrine, was officially succeeded by the Marshall Plan, the AMAG labor advisory already had opened the way to improve Greek labor and industry to cooperate, in November, 1947, on a collective bargaining agreement which formed the basis for a new national wage policy.

The wage situation throughout Greece had been chaotic before this policy was established. Few, if any, attempts had been made to comply with the previous unexecuted 'wage policy', although one was formally on the books. The new agreement, finally arrived at after negotiation between organized labor and industry, brought order to the wage picture, and was used thereafter by the Greek Government and the Marshall Plan Mission in subsequent efforts to maintain wage levels, although increased production and the raising cost of living have also resulted in approval of certain wage increases. Hopefully, continuous effort will be applied to assure continued fair collective bargaining practices within the general framework of economic stabilization.

The labor movement in Greece is comparatively new. Like the labor movements of all nations, the Greek effort has had to overcome almost every conceivable obstacle. These barriers included employers' opposition, a characteristic occasion in the development of free trade unions in all nations. There was also political influence from both left and right. And there was communist infiltration and intrigue.

But in addition to these normal manifestations, the Greek labor movement was held down by conditions peculiar to Greece, the incidents of history, a decade of war external and internal, wherein Greek workers were forced to endure first enemy occupation, second a bloody communist attempt to seize power in 1944, and thirdly, years of rebellion carried on by guerilla bands.

Labor personnel of the various American Missions, composed from American Federation of Labor (AFL) and Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) unions, have come to appreciate these conditions and how never ceased to resist at the vitality and energy of the Greek working class in surmounting the hazards of history.
American labor advisors worked closely with the General Confederation of Greek Labor (GSS) throughout the entire period. With strong support from Greek associates of all shades of opinion, and assisted by labor colleagues from other free nations who came frequently to Greece to assist in specific problems, the American labor men were instrumental in helping the Greek labor movement to a new sound, constructive and democratic role in the national life.

The labor specialists of the Mission helped resolve wage and hour controversies, recommended modern labor legislation, and assisted labor and management in planning the increased productivity which all felt was necessary to meet the demands of industry. The effect was seen in an upsurge of industrial prosperity for Greece. At the same time, the Mission labor men proved ready with tasks which as the surface were dull or routine, but which experience had proved to be indispensable to real labor progress in all lands. These routine but difficult tasks to labor progress, fulfilling a decade of director, included a comprehensive statistical system, efficient programs of apprentice training and vocational education, and a social security program which would provide real benefits to the working people who contributed to it.

SALVATION. One of the major factors restoring the development of the Greek labor movement was the task of comprehensive and reliable statistics. Mission labor experts commenced in 1948 with the GSS and the Greek Ministry of Labor in preparing and publishing "Cost of Living Expenditures -- Worker Families in Greece." This survey, first of its kind in the Balkans, entitled personal interviews with 600 selected families in six major industrial cities, the survey later was expanded to serve over cities, and a follow-up survey of the original group of families was planned in the spring of 1949.

The American Mission developed a cost of living index, and has compiled periodic statistical data and special studies in labor statistics which for the first time in Greek history were given careful and factual backing to the needs and aspirations of labor. Previously the impulse of the Greek worker came, due to lack of data, had been forced into purely emotional or political channels which often collapsed for lack of foundation. In cooperation with the Ministry of Labor, the Mission laid the groundwork for systematic collection and analysis of labor statistics and factual information, since adopted, which created a Division of Labor Statistics within the Ministry.

APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING. The war brought havoc with various programs for training young Greek workers to assume responsible and more advanced skills. Consequently, in American schools from the Bureau of Apprenticeship of the U.S. Department of Labor was engaged by the Mission to direct a comprehensive apprentice training program. He helped organize legislation which later was passed by the Greek Parliament to create apprentice training centers within the Ministry of Labor. An innovative number of young men were hard at work in factories throughout Greece, under the guidance of skilled instructors, learning the technical proficiency which will enable them to better themselves and increase the industrial potential of the nation. With systematic on-the-job training, and classes after hours, a large group of apprentices, in fact many more than the older hands, learning the technical proficiency which will enable them to better themselves and increase the industrial potential of the nation. With systematic on-the-job training, and classes after hours, a large group of young workmen are learning the technical proficiency which will enable them to better themselves and increase the industrial potential of the nation.

A key step in the program was achieved when a joint team of labor, management and government representatives went to the United States under the Marshall Plan technical assistance program to study American methods of apprentice training. On their return, this team took an active role in helping develop training procedures in Greece. Picture slides taken on their trip were an effective means of illustrating lectures, and of arousing interest in a modern program in Greece.

With funds furnished by the Mission, the Ministry of Labor obtained 19 motion picture units and four slide projectors and also bought 100 training films and numerous slides from the U.S. Office of Education to show to groups of
Greek Insurance. Appraisals of Greek insurance are registered under a standardized system initiated by the Ministry of Labor and Social Security. The appraisal system was introduced with Marshall Plan assistance. At the end of 1961, the Marshall Plan provided $23,500,000 for the rehabilitation of 35 vocational schools. The program involved the construction of new buildings, the purchase of modern equipment, and the training of teachers.

Vocational Training. Under a program sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor, vocational training institutions were established to provide education in a variety of fields, including agriculture, industry, and services. The Greek government provided $12,500,000 in foreign exchange to acquire modern equipment and supplies for the vocational training centers. The training programs were designed to meet the needs of the Greek economy and to prepare young people for the workforce.

Social Security. Under the Marshall Plan, the Greek insurance system was expanded to include social security benefits. The Greek government provided $3,000,000 to establish a system of social insurance for workers. The Greek insurance system was expanded to include pensions, unemployment benefits, and medical care. The insurance system was designed to provide a safety net for workers and to improve their quality of life.

Economic Recovery. Economic recovery in Greece was facilitated by Marshall Plan assistance. The plan was designed to provide economic aid to Greece and to help the country rebuild after the war. The plan involved the construction of new infrastructure, the expansion of the insurance system, and the establishment of vocational training programs. The plan was successful in improving the economic situation of the Greek people and in helping the country to recover from the war.

Conclusion. In conclusion, the Marshall Plan was a significant aid to Greece. It provided economic assistance, vocational training, and social security benefits to the Greek people. The plan was successful in improving the economic situation of the country and in helping it to recover from the war. The Greek government worked closely with the U.S. and other countries to implement the plan and to ensure its success.
The Greek continued to cooperate during 1951 with the IGFTU in developing international free trade unions, by participating in several inter-European meetings and conferences, and also by adopting a number of measures designed to strengthen labor organization within Greece.

One such development, pursued hard by mission labor advisors, was the organization within the Greek labor movement of the federation type of structure. Under this plan, workers in one industry, such as textile factories or flour mills, allied themselves together according to principles developed at the Tenth Panhellenic Labor Congress. Most significant recent example of this tendency was the formation of the Federation of Textile Workers which held its first convention in October, 1951. A number of smaller groups were, in various stages of organization at the same time.

As 1952 began, the Greek labor movement gave further evidence of progress in the highly successful meeting of the National Council during January. This organization, composed of the top trade union officials throughout Greece, meets annually to consider the progress of the trade union movement and to develop major policy decisions.

In the entire history of Greek unionism, it is unlikely that there has ever before occurred such a display of unity and strength as was shown during this 1952 session. There were differences of opinion among trade union leaders and organized groups conducted each other on questions of policy. But throughout the conference, these differences emphasized rather than detracted from the essential strength and unity of the trade union movement which the delegates represented. Greek unionists, who closely watched the three-day session and took part actively in all phases of opinion in which the union leaders represented, were convinced finally that the Greek labor movement had one of age, had become a powerful champion of democratic ideals, and had emerged as a major bulwark against communist influences.

Another indication of the activity and responsibility of the Greek labor movement during 1951 was the manner in which it prosecuted its work strenuously and systematically on all matters affecting the national economy. As the year ended, Greek unionists had made the labor front a major national issue. Political parties and groupings of all shades of opinion, which in years past had often paid only lip service to the needs and desires of the Greek working people, were giving serious consideration to the proposals advanced by organized labor. As 1952 ended, these programs grouped themselves around two main issues:

First, the wage-price problem. Labor was concerned with the rise of prices and living expenses, and with new changes that were being made on the side of which prices of necessities had increased. Labor maintained, along with smaller organized workers’ groups in most other western nations, that wage adjustments were necessary. Labor also maintained that prices must be frozen and held in line, so that the working people of Greece, organized or unorganized, industrial or agricultural, could obtain fair value in goods and services for their wages.

Second, Greek labor was an earnest advocate of a workers’ retiring system, whereby every worker could obtain his basic necessities of food at fixed and reasonable prices, through a government-controlled program of distribution.

The organized labor movement in Greece was vocal and insistent on both these points, and in many others which they felt affected the interests of the working class. And as 1952 began, all Greek political parties were giving careful attention to these views. This in itself represented a major achievement in the development of Greek labor in the national scene.