International Labor Movement – Making of Italian Labor Law

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Introduction

The international labor movement was one of the most significant collective efforts in modern history shaping the rights, identities, and outcomes for workers across all continents. The movement was a development of the industrial transformations of the nineteenth century. The movement was established through the shared belief that all workers could come together to improve their conditions and have a greater influence on social and economic development. The structure of the movement evolved during its time, but it remained centered around solidarity, democracy, and internationalism.

History



The beginning of the movement starts with the First International, a movement between the years of 1864 and 1889 and started as a working men's association in London. The group was formed during a meeting in St. Martin's Hall and brought together a diverse coalition of left-wing groups, trade unions, Italian republicans, and many other workers.

Following the First International was the Second International, a movement that lasted from 1889 to 1914. The Second International was also known as the Socialist International and created a new beginning for international socialist and labor movements, following the dissolution of the First International.

This movement was a centralized organization and was created as a federation of national parties and trade unions and was comprised of "Possibilists" and Marxists. The Second International was concerned with the unification of the

working classes and attitude towards collaborations with other parties towards participation in government.

Following the Second International, the International Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU) formed. This formation was an international organization of trade unions that existed between 1914 and 1939. The efforts of the organization were to maintain contacts between the workers' organizations in belligerent countries through those that were neutral. The IFTU had a key role in lobbying the League of Nations and national governments on behalf of the International Labor Organization (ILO). The federation advocated for labor standards, workers' education, and international solidarity. Following the dissolution of the IFTU, the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) appeared and aimed to unite worldwide trade unions and marked a new era in international labor relations.

Methods of International Labor Movement

The methods of the international labor movement have varied, same with its membership, reflecting pragmatic needs and ideological commitments.

The movement has relied on collective bargaining, the organized negotiation of wages, hours, and conditions between workers and employers. The spread of the collective agreements helped to consolidate reformist and moderate leadership within the movement, as regular negotiations became a reasonable route to secure benefits and resolve disputes.

Strikes and direct actions are tactics that were used during the international labor movement to pressure employers and governments to accommodate the workers' demands. International coordination of strikes has been attempted many times with varying success.

The movement's relationship with the political parties differed by country and period. In some contexts, unions and

socialist parties appeared as part of the same movement, which created a close relationship to the creation of unified labor parties. Other unions, however, chose to keep independence, focusing on industry rather than politics.



Groups like the International Secretariat of National Trade Union Centres (ISNTUC) and later the International Labor Organization provided mechanisms for international coordination and mutual support. These organizations called congress, issued declarations, and sometimes coordinated campaigns or boycotts to support unions that were in conflict elsewhere.

International Labor Organization

The International Labor Organization (ILO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations and is dedicated to promoting social justice and internationally recognized labor rights through its conventions. The organization was created as a part of the Treaty of Versailles in response to harsh labor

conditions and social injustices. The mission of the ILO is to promote workers' rights, encourage decent employment conditions, improve social protection, and strengthen communication on labor issues. The ILO was the first specialized agency associated with the United Nations since 1969 and has played a vital role in addressing issues such as child labor, forced labor, discrimination, and the rights of migrant workers.

Outcomes of the International Labor Movement – Legal Recognition and Institutionalization

The international labor movement, through its advocacy and diffusion, it influenced the legal cognition and institutionalization of trade unions and collective bargaining in Italy. This process is rooted in the Italian Constitution, and it is further shaped by national statutes, international treaties, and ongoing social dialogue.



Article 39 of the Italian Constitution was the foundation for trade union freedom in Italy. The article guarantees all

citizens the right to establish and join trade unions and ensures that they can operate without the need for governmental authorization or registration.The constitutional guarantee reflects the influence of the international labor movement, and international labor standards, particularly freedom of association and the right to organize and collectively bargain which is from the International Labor Association.

Outcomes of the International Labor Movement – Social Reforms

The international labor movement played a pivotal role in creating significant social reforms that have shaped Italy's modern welfare and democracy.

Italy established working hours because of this movement. The eight-hour workday in the early 20th century following the inflection of labor activism and strikes that demanded better working hours and conditions.

Social insurance was set up in the early 1900s and introduced programs that included health insurance and pensions. These measures provided protection for workers and their families to prevent them from being subject to the risks associated with illness, old age, and workplace accidents. The expansion of social insurance was important in reducing economic vulnerability and fostering social inclusion.

With significant expansions in Italy, they began to implement unemployment benefits during the 1960s and 1970s. These benefits were offered to support financial burdens to those that were out of work. This support helped to stabilize families and communities during economic uncertainty. This development created a shift towards a more comprehensive social welfare system in Italy.

Another social reform that was enacted following the international labor movement was workplace safety regulations.

Workplace safety in Italy evolved, specifically in response to increasing industrial accidents that called for implementation of stricter laws and enforcements. The Italian government collaborated with labor unions to created regulations to protect workers from occupational hazards. These reforms have been crucial in reducing workplace injuries and fatalities and further enhancing the security of labor.



Impact on Present-Day Italian Labor Laws and Practices

Italy’s labor legislation has been shaped by the legacy of the international labor movement and the standards set by the International Labor Organization (ILO). The Italian Constitution itself, adopted in 1948, preserves the right to work, right to organize, and protection of workers’ dignity. These are all principles that reflect the ILO’s foundational conventions on freedom of association, collective bargaining, and elimination of forced and child labor

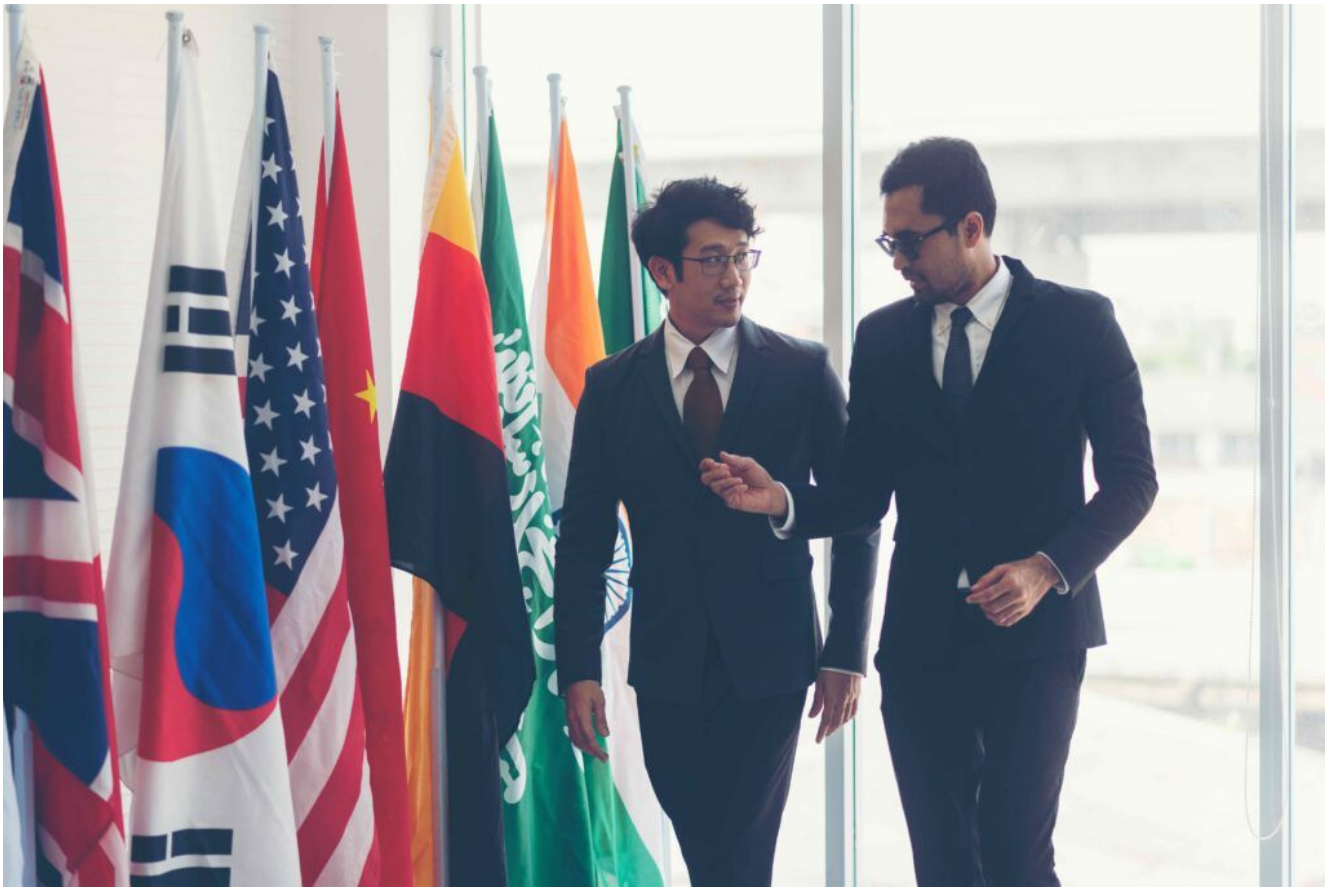
Italy has been an active participant in the International

Labor Organization since its founding and has contributed to its development and ratification of key conventions. Italian lawmakers and social partners have taken from the ILO conventions and the international labor movement to shape statutes, such as Statutory dei Lavoratori, Workers' Statue of 1970, which guarantees workplace representation, collective bargaining rights, and protections against unfair dismissal. These movements have continued to ensure that Italian workers receive workplace protection, fair wages, and have options when navigating disputes. Italy's experience shows how international labor standards can be adapted to national contexts, fostering both economic competitiveness and social justice.

Addressing New Forms of Work

There has been a recent rise in precarious work – temporary, part-time, or platform-based employment – possing challenges not only for Italy but for labor movements worldwide. Italy's response is shaped by its ongoing engagements with international labor standards. Unions in Italy have drawn on the collective experience and strategies of global federations, advocating for an extension of social protections, fair wages, and bargaining rights to workers in the short-term economy and other non-traditional sectors. Legislative reforms, such as the regulation of digital work and the introduction of Digital Nomad Visas, reflect Italy's commitment to adapting international principles to new labor market realities.

Looking Forward



Italy’s ongoing engagement with the international labor movement ensures that its labor laws and practices continue to be responsive to global trends and emerging challenges. Italian policymakers and social partners continue to look to international standards as a guide and benchmark whether it is about the impacts of automation, demographic change, or climate policy.

Through legal recognition, institutional innovation, and a steadfast commitment to international standards, Italy continues to display how global solidarity can be translated to local justice.

Italy’s labor system is not only a product of domestic history, but it continues to embody the ideals of the international labor movement. The Italian experience shows how the principles from the international labor movement – solidarity, democracy, and pursuit of social justice – can be adopted into national contexts, fostering economic competitiveness and human dignity

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