

SOCIAL CONDITIONS

WORKMEN AND EMPLOYERS

Organized *associations of workmen* for the promotion of common interests are of a very late date in Iceland, and it was not till 1894 that the first society of this kind came into being, when the Sailors' Union was formed by deep-sea fishermen. During the first ten years the movement made but slow progress and was exclusively confined to Reykjavík. In 1897 the Printers' Trade Union was formed, followed, in 1906, by the combination of unskilled workers. Since then development has been more rapid, and in 1916 was established the Federation of Labour Unions (*Althýðusamband Íslands*), which at present comprises 22 organizations of unskilled workers, 5 Sailors' Unions, 3 trade unions, and 6 socialist bodies (political), 36 unions in all with a total of about 5600 members (4900 males and 700 females),

Until quite recently, there have been no permanent *employers' organizations* except among ship owners, the first being formed in 1894 by owners of decked fishing vessels. But this society was dissolved when the smacks began to be replaced by steam trawlers, and in 1916 was formed the Steam Trawler Owner Association (*Félag íslenzkra botnvörpuskipaeigenda*) which is the most important employers' organization in the country. A few employers' organizations have been started (e. g. owners of printing establishments, bakeries, long-liners etc.), but as yet there is no general federation of Icelandic employers.

Strikes and lock-outs have been very rare in Iceland. But after prices began to increase during the Great War, these weapons have a few times been resorted to in wage disputes. The central authorities have taken no action in connexion with these quarrels, except that a bill was passed by Althingi in 1915 forbidding State officials to strike. On rare occasions, too, the government has tried mediation in labour disputes; but as these have during the last few years grown more frequent and violent in character, another bill was passed in