

Industrial Relations and Social Security

Maritime Labor Institute Formed Following Trade Union Courses

FRANCES WEEKES.

A NEW venture in Canadian trade union education has recently been undertaken in Halifax by Dalhousie University, through its Institute of Public Affairs, in the inauguration of the Maritime Labor Institute.

Formation of the Labor Institute was the result of action taken by Maritime trade union officials attending the first course in Labor Relations, held at Dalhousie University during the week of March 27, 1944. This course, which brought together more than 65 delegates, representing all major unions in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, was organized by the Institute of Public Affairs in conjunction with a Trade Union Advisory Committee, and with financial assistance from the Nova Scotia Department of Labor. It had also received the endorsement of the Canadian Congress of Labor and the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada.

A number of distinguished experts from Canada and the United States addressed the delegates on various phases of labor problems. Boris Shishkin, of Washington, Chief Economist of the American Federation of Labor, spoke on the question of *Wage Determination*. Pat Conroy, Secretary-Treasurer of the Canadian Congress of Labor, discussed *The Functions and Responsibilities of Trade Unions*, and B. S. Keirstead, of McGill University, addressed the group on *The Impact of the War On the Maritime Economy*. F. A. Magoun, of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, spoke on *Human Relations in Industry*, and L. Richter, of Dalhousie University, on *Social Security*. G. A. McAllister, of the Dalhousie Institute of Public Affairs, dealt with *New Regulations Affecting Labor*. To each topic was allotted a

whole day. After the opening address each morning the students split into four groups which discussed the subject among themselves and formulated a number of questions. These were submitted in writing to the speaker as well as to the other groups and formed the back-ground for the further discussion which extended as a rule over the whole afternoon.

The Committee responsible for arrangements for the course was under the chairmanship of Professor L. Richter, of Dalhousie University, joint Vice-Chairmen were Hugh Henderson, Vice-President of the Halifax District Council, Trades and Labor Congress of Canada, and Pat Shea, President of the Halifax District Council of the Canadian Congress of Labor, G. A. McAllister, was Secretary.

Desire for the continuation of the work commenced during the course led to the inauguration of the Maritime Labor Institute as a permanent organization affiliated with the Dalhousie University Institute of Public Affairs. In a resolution passed by the union delegates it was declared to be the purpose of the Institute:

- (a) to continue and expand the functions of the Trade Union Advisory Committee which had been in charge of the preparation for the cause.
- (b) to organize and conduct courses on matters of interest to trade unions;
- (c) to maintain and make available a library of information on matters pertinent to trade unions;
- (d) to engage in research on all matters pertaining to labor; and
- (e) to further in any way the education of labor with respect to economic and social matters.

Delegates were welcomed at the opening session of the course by Hon. L. D. Currie, Nova Scotia Minister of Mines and Labor and by Dr. Carleton Stanley, President of Dalhousie University. Mr. Conroy, chief

speaker for the first day, stressed the fact that labor could only fulfill its function by assuming full partnership in Canadian society. According to Mr. Conroy, labor must acquire sound knowledge not merely to do its own job or better its own position, but also in order to make a contribution to the improvement of society. The speaker regarded the development of character in the union movement as of first importance, for without it no lasting results could be achieved. With the growth of character in the unions, labor would develop a long-term perspective and become part of the fabric of society. A first essential, according to Mr. Conroy, was that labor established itself in public affairs.

F. A. Magoun, Professor of Human Relations at M.I.T. in Boston, stressed the need for developing attitudes which would make cooperation between management and labor possible. Cooperation can result only if four fundamental conditions exist, according to Professor Magoun. The parties concerned must have self respect; a continuing and healthy understanding of how their own desires and performance affect and are affected by the desires and performance of others; confidence in the availability of and the effectiveness of good method in working out acceptable solutions for the inevitable disagreements that arise; and acceptance of responsibility for results. Conflicts may arise through lack of understanding, insincerity, and holding on to emotional grievances from the past.

Dr. L. Richter, during his discussion of *Social Security*, made public for the first time the results of research on the effect of health insurance on the existing system of medical care. This research was carried on at Dalhousie University by the Institute of Public Affairs with the assistance of the Rockefeller Founda-

tion. He also discussed principles of social security and current trends in Canadian legislation in this field.

George A. McAllister, presented an extensive analysis of the Wartime Wages Control Order and the Wartime Labor Relations Regulations, which he described as "cornerstones of the government's national wartime policy". He stressed the fact that the curtailment of industrial unrest by the new labor code would depend on the wisdom of administration by the Wartime Labour Relations Board. With reference to wage control, Mr. McAllister emphasized the importance of the Order in relation to the necessity for wage and price stabilization, the adjustment of inequalities, and the national effort to avoid inflation.

Boris Shishkin dealt at length with principles and problems involved in wage determination. He stressed the importance of research in enabling labor's representatives to have a thorough knowledge of national and international factors affecting conditions in a particular industry at a particular time. The speaker emphasized that workers' standard of living is far more dependent upon monthly and yearly earnings than upon hourly wage rates. Full employment should therefore be the main goal for labor as well as for the nation as a whole.

Professor Keirstead spoke at the last day of the course and pictured the economic back-ground for the labor problems discussed at the previous session. He examined the question how much of the economic gains made in the Maritime Provinces during the war was likely to be retained in the post-war years. He reviewed various industries in the Maritime Provinces and assessed their prospects for further development. The situation of the Nova Scotia Coal and Steel Industry, in that connection, came up for a thorough review.