

Industrial Relations and Social Security

Maritime Trade Union Course

The second annual convention of the Maritime Labour Institute was held at Dalhousie University from May 7th to the 10th. The Labour Institute is sponsored jointly by Maritime Province units of The Canadian Congress of Labour, the Trades and Labour Congress and Dalhousie University. The convention took the form of a course on matters of interest to trade union officials. Papers were presented by leaders in the Canadian and American labour movements, representatives of the Federal Government and of the International Labour Office. Sixty delegates from New Brunswick and Nova Scotia were in attendance.

Hon. J. A. MacQuarrie, Attorney General of Nova Scotia, welcomed the conference delegates on behalf of the Provincial Government. The best wishes of the federal Labour Department were extended by Mr. Bernard Wilson, Secretary of the National Labour Relations Board.

Mr. Wilson presented to the convention a paper prepared by Mr. A. J. MacNamara, Deputy Minister of Labour and Director of National Selective Service. Mr. MacNamara's paper contained an interesting review of the war-time labour and price control policies of the Dominion government, and certain observations as to the post-war plans of the government particularly in the labour field. Referring to the role of National Selective Service in the post-war period, he stated that there is a general feeling that the compulsory features of the regulations will disappear rapidly now that the European war is over. "There are two reasons for this," he continued, "first of all, the same need for war material and hence for compulsory direction of workers to war industries will not exist. The second reason is that in a democracy like ours, while citizens will submit themselves willingly to government direction and compulsion in war-time, they

hate like anything to be pushed around at any other time."

The Deputy Minister stated that the consensus of opinion among leaders of business and labour is in favour of the continuation of the labour-management committee principle in the post-war period.

Prof. B. Higgins of the International Labour Office spoke on "Jobs in the Post-War." Prof. Higgins expressed his belief that full employment is an entirely feasible objective in the post-war period. His concept of "full employment" makes allowance for a small measure of transitional unemployment; frictional unemployment is inevitable in a dynamic economy. The speaker insisted that any real full employment program must provide for adequate wage rates and hours of work.

While our major objective is the assurance that everyone desiring work shall have a job, it is not our sole aim, he stated. The optimum utilization of all our resources is essential. In the sphere of private enterprise, this implies an attack on the Canadian monopoly structure. As far as public spending is concerned, it means that there must be no boondoggling projects.

In Prof. Higgins' opinion, the basic problem after the war will be the maintenance of a sufficient over-all demand for goods and services to ensure the total employment of our labour force. To this end every effort must be made to see to it that the Canadian government's prediction of a post-war export trade of one and three-quarter billion dollars is realized. Private investment must be stimulated by a reduction of certain types of business taxation. It will probably be necessary for the government to carry out a large scale public investment program. Finally, insofar as consumer demand is concerned, the government's social security plans ought to do much to promote an adequate volume of spending on consumption goods.

An interesting paper on "Post-War Housing" was read by Mr. D. P. Reay, of Halifax. Mr. Reay stressed the need for increased efficiency in the building industry. While construction can be stimulated by the provision of money at low interest rates and by direct subsidization by the State, employment of far more efficient techniques is the only real answer to the problem, he stated. Precutting and prefabrication point the way to decreased costs in the future. Through the use of such methods complete integration of the building industry is now a distinct possibility, the speaker concluded.

Mr. Nelson H. Cruikshank, Director of the American Federation of Labour Social Insurance Activities in the United States addressed the convention on "Labour's Social Security Goals." "An adequate social security program must be an integral part of our economy," he said. The aim of such a system would be to underwrite the inevitable risks with which working people are confronted.

Social measures covering illness and off the job accidents are altogether inadequate in both Canada and the United States, Mr. Cruikshank asserted. Voluntary hospitalization plans are all to the good, but do not provide a sufficient substitute for an all inclusive Health Insurance Act.

The speaker discussed the operation of unemployment compensation measures in the United States. He emphasized the advantage of a federal unemployment insurance act, such as the Canadian, as compared with the great deficiencies of the American state-operated systems.

Mr. Cruikshank concluded by saying that labour in the United States desires a unified system of unemployment insurance, health insurance, a considerable extension of existing old age and survivors' insurance legislation, and a federally operated employment service.

Mr. Bert Hough of Ambridge, Penn., Director of District No. 20, United Steel

Workers of America, gave an interesting talk on the development of labour relations in the United States over the last decade. This discussion formed a background for a critical appraisal of the operations of Joint Labour-Management Production Committees during the war.

A provocative paper entitled "Human Aspects of Industrial Relations" was presented by Major-General G. B. Chisholm, C.B.E., M.D., Deputy Minister of Health. The human factor is basic in industrial relations, Dr. Chisholm said. Unless management and labour give full attention to the human element, all efforts to ensure satisfactory labour relations will fail.

Modern mass production techniques have created special problems of a psychological nature in industry. With the passing of the handicrafts it is necessary to provide for the satisfaction of the emotional needs of workers by planned activities outside their regular occupations. The necessity for careful job selection and personnel management cannot be over-stressed, he concluded.

"Let the People Know" was the topic of an interesting address by Mr. David Petegorsky of the Wartime Information Board. He urged the labour movement to make full use of vastly improved techniques of communication and education to bring to union workers the kind of information they require both as trade unionists and as citizens. He felt that unions are not sufficiently conscious of the difficult public relations job that has to be done to dissolve the mist of suspicion that surrounds labour action in the public mind.

Democracy is in essence that type of society in which everyone has an opportunity of sharing in the decisions which govern his life, Mr. Petegorsky stated. But the making of decisions implies the availability of information on which to base them. Such information is now so complex in character that only through full use of our improved methods of communication can it be made accessible to the people.

Mr. J. C. McGuire, National Secretary-Treasurer, Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Employees, spoke on "Negotiating a Collective Agreement." He said that collective bargaining is a step towards a real partnership of management and labour. The success achieved by labour-management production committees rests on a solid foundation of mutual respect and tolerance. In the speaker's opinion, production committees are here to stay.

Through the collective bargaining process many a worker has learned of the problems that face management, and has developed new respect for "the other side," Mr. McGuire stated. Each party, employer and employee, has become familiar with the interests of the other, and has found that there are many matters of mutual concern about which much can be done through cooperative action.

Whole communities prosper or decline according to the effectiveness of labour's efforts in collective bargaining. This process is not a selfish effort on the part of the workers to better their lot at the expense of the rest of the community, the speaker emphasized.

He concluded by saying, "the most disarming force in contractual negotiations is perfect frankness and honesty of purpose. When these are coupled with gentlemanly conduct and strict adherence to sound principles, the negotiations will be raised to a higher plane than would otherwise be the case, and will invariably command a more favourable attitude on the part of management."

Mr. Bernard Wilson, Secretary of the National Labour Relations Board, addressed the convention on "The Functions of the National Labour Relations Board." The purpose of the Board is to obtain the collaboration of employers and employees for the advancement of the enterprises in which they are engaged, particularly war industries. Under the Order-in-Council constituting the Board, employers and employees are urged to discuss freely matters of mutual interest

and to settle disputes by peaceful means. Mr. Wilson said that freedom to organize for the conduct of negotiations is assured and procedure established to facilitate such negotiations.

Concluding the successful session of the Institute the Chairman, Prof. L. Richter, referred to the deep interest which organized labour has taken in its educational perfection. The Chairman also gave a brief report on the past activities of the Institute and the plans for the future. The library services, of which wide use is being made by the unions, will be extended and collections of books placed in union offices throughout the province. Regional conferences will be held in various industrial centres and speakers provided by the Institute sent to the local groups. The Institute's monthly bulletin, *Labour and Learning*, which appears in an edition of one thousand, will be enlarged and its contents in the next few months devoted to specific post-war problems. The first piece of research on Maritime labour problems will soon be published, dealing with the recent history of labour unions in the Maritimes.

Planning Industrial Location in Britain

A Bill now before the British Parliament, known as the Distribution of industry Bill, aims to achieve a "balanced distribution of industry and labor." This Bill is described in the April issue of *Labor and Industry in Britain*.

The Bill falls into two main parts. In the first the Government describes the steps to be taken to secure a greater variety of industry in the "special areas," now to be treated as "development areas." The second part of the Bill deals with general industrial location, with Government control where "such control appears to be desirable for economic, social or strategic reasons." In effect, however, Government action will be mainly consultative. It will prevent building in certain congested areas, and provides that industrialists wishing to build a factory of more than 3,000 square feet

will have to inform the Board of Trade in advance.

The Board of Trade is authorized to acquire land in development areas so that premises for industrial undertakings may be provided. The Board may also erect factories and other buildings for industrial undertakings on this land, determine their disposal, and make loans to nonprofit trading or industrial estate companies to further the provision of industrial premises in development areas.

The Ministers of the Crown responsible for basic services on which development, particularly of industry, depends, are empowered to make grants or loans toward the cost of improving services inadequate for the needs of development areas. Financial assistance through annual grants and loans may also be given to the capital requirements of industrial undertakings in development areas.

The Board of Trade may acquire derelict lands in development areas, and bring it into use and make grants towards the cost of such work where it is undertaken by a local authority or non-profit company.

The Board must be notified of all proposals to erect industrial buildings with a floor space exceeding 3,000 square feet. In certain areas the erection or extension of industrial buildings over 3,000 square feet is prohibited without permission of the Board of Trade. This clause may be applied by Order of the Board to an area in which provision of further industrial premises would be seriously detrimental to the proper distribution

of industry. Any such Order requires approval by both Houses of Parliament.

When the President of the British Board of Trade moved the second reading of the Bill in the Commons, he said that unless the Government obtained the powers indicated in the Bill and used them with determination and wisdom, there would be a relapse into severe unemployment in certain areas, even if the plans for high development were successful throughout the rest of the country.

In each development area, he said there would be a Distribution of Industry Committee, presided over by the Regional Controller of the Board of Trade. The first step would be to draw up a list of sites for new industrial buildings. These sites would be approved or rejected by the Regional Town Planning Officers in the light of planning. Others would be rejected by the Ministry of Health as unsuitable for housing purposes. The remaining sites on the list would then be used either for direct governmental building or trading estates building, or would be indicated to industrialists interested in building in that area.

On the wider proposals for influencing industrial location, the Minister said notification of plans to the Board of Trade would enable consultation to take place before the industrialist's plans had been finalized. There was no power of compulsion, but, he said, the habit of consultation which had grown up during the war and borne such valuable fruit should remain and be permanent after the war.