

S. J. McLEAN      OTTAWA

November 25, 1909.

Dear Sir:

Your letter of the 18th instant, addressed to me at the University of Toronto has been forwarded to me.

I note your inquiry concerning the working of the Canadian law for the investigation of industrial disputes, popularly known as the Lemieux Act.

My experience was in connection with a couple of investigations in the Cobalt silver mining district. I think from my experience that the law has a steadying effect on both parties concerned by compelling people to hesitate and think over the situation carefully before engaging in strike. It does a good deal to prevent such disturbance. I think also that the appeal to public opinion through the finding of the board of investigation in a particular case has also a beneficial effect.

Regarding your question as to what changes are desirable. The question of having a permanent board has been suggested from time to time. I think however that for the present, the system of boards appointed for the particular dispute is better. There might be a danger with a permanent board that the procedure would not be as elastic as at present. It is true that under the present system two members of the board enter into the discussion with a more or less biased point of view owing to the fact that they are chosen by the respective parties in interest. At the same time this has a certain advantage, because if the labor representative and the representative of the employer or employers can be got to come together on a common standing ground the moral effect is much greater than if one were concerned with the award of a permanent board whose members were not in very close touch with the particular industry or industries affected.

With regard to the third question, as to whether the Act might well be extended to apply to all employments, I think that the policy of the Act whereby the investigations are limited to industries which are in the nature of public utilities is justifiable.

W. L. Mackenzie King Papers

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