

Now, what has the Federal Department of Labour done and what can it do to assist labour and management in making these sometimes difficult decisions?

At its very beginning, the Department was instructed by Parliament to do two main things: to provide conciliation services and to supply information on labour questions.

It is through our conciliation work, of course, that we find ourselves most in the public eye. Essentially, however, our procedures boil down to one purpose: to make sure that labour and management talk things out fully before either one takes any participate action; the idea is as simple as that.

We have found that, as collective bargaining has grown in stature, the demands on us for factual information on wages, hours and other employment conditions have increased. Circulation of our publications is at an all-time high. I refer to paid circulation! Furthermore, we handle a host of enquiries from day to day, supplying the information needed by labour and management in their negotiations.

We have considered our duty to be to assist the two parties to work together in such a manner that industry will function to the greatest advantage of all the people in Canada.

Our labour legislation was generally accepted by labour and management groups and the public. Its existence reflects the prevalent view that it is beneficial in the long run to have legislative authority for the orderly settlement of industrial disputes and to give workers the right to select their own bargaining agents.

We believe the legislation has helped to strike an impartial balance between labour and management, and that it is making some contribution to sound industrial relations.

The ideal labour-management relationship certainly is not one of complete and perpetual agreement. There will always be differences in view-points, and these must be recognized and discussed. But, they cannot be discussed with any degree of satisfaction unless both sides feel secure in their relationship, and each feels it is dealing with a party that will adhere to the agreement when it is reached. Mutual respect and mutual confidence must exist here.

There is evidence that progress is being made in this direction.

On the one hand, we have seen management taking a greatly increased interest in techniques of dealing with its employees - through the collective agreement and through study of human relations.

On the other hand, we have seen unions, as they acquired experience and a feeling of security give increasing recognition to the problems of the economy as a whole, the problems of their industry and of their employer, as well as their own.

This is taking time, just as it has taken time for other groups to appreciate the needs of the country as a whole.