

*Canada Labour Code*

Labour Relations Centre at Queen's University said that 50 per cent of the settlements were reached through conciliation or mediation, 5 per cent through arbitration and 11 per cent after a strike. Only one third of the settlements were reached through direct negotiation between labour and management. These statistics clearly show that very few labour and management negotiators still know how to settle their differences at the negotiating table without the help or the intervention of a third party and without the decisive tools of a strike or a lockout.

Not so long ago, the services of a conciliator or a mediator were rarely needed. Nowadays, their intervention in collective bargaining has become commonplace. We must certainly not underestimate their contribution to maintaining peace in labour relations, but the fact that their services are increasingly called upon points to a weakness in the collective bargaining system. The renewal of collective agreements must not necessarily aim at wage increases, even if this is an interesting part of the negotiations. There is also the improvement of working conditions in the plant, in the office, on the road or on the worksite, the number of working hours, accident prevention through the implementation of safety rules, fair work distribution, proper and timely representations to government authorities using the strongest possible means of persuasion to obtain a well-balanced labour legislation which is not prompted by the fear of an impending election, but is in the interest of the next generation.

It is rather difficult to demand that governments launch all sorts of major building programs even though many projects could be implemented, especially senior citizens' residences and slum clearance.

All that is done while maintaining a financial system which does not reflect the real wealth. Our huge current production could be increased fourfold if there were real means for distributing goods. It is quite normal for people today, as it was before and as it will be in the future, to be looking for some means of escaping misery, which in our opinion is caused by an economic and financial system which is unbalanced and brings about a very unjust distribution of wealth.

To remedy the situation, we Social Crediters propose a reform of the financial system which would permit the practical application of the principle of distributive economy for abundant goods. For those who consider themselves to be scholars, this formula is too simple. They need sophisticated formulas, so complicated that they have to face unbelievable situations where workers willing to work find out they are on strike. Yet, every accomplishment in the world was done through work. Nobody can deny that. It would undoubtedly be interesting to hear the explanations given by strikemongers and those who seem unable to reach an agreement. Can the benefits arising or derived from a strike be described? Good workers, who often have a family to care for, are justified in demanding a little more happiness for themselves and their families, but this should be possible without strikes, where they might be playing into the enemy's hands who is using them to promote subversive interests.

[Mr. Dionne (Kamouraska).]

As we already wrote, unionism is still a democratic means of ensuring the protection of workers as long as it is directed by responsible leaders and that the means used are fair to both parties, when you must bring the management of the business or the various services to recognize their social responsibilities. We have the right to join forces to defend our interests as long as we do not violate the rights of others. This is very important. It is time to determine when the social and economic interests of the people must prevail over the right to strike. When everything is paralysed and air, land and sea transportation is at a standstill, I wonder if the right to strike is justified. This is when we need an appropriate and flexible legislation that would eliminate this situation and would prevent us from having to adopt other legislation to withdraw what has already been given. We operate in a very strange fashion.

I know it is difficult to solve all those problems in our confused financial system, but the situation is so serious that we could at least establish as soon as possible a real labour court made up of representatives of labour, management and government and after a study of the situation in every industry or service, set a salary scale adequate and proportionate to workers' needs and the capacity of the enterprise instead of waiting for conflicts before making decisions.

We might easily understand that workers are asking for working and salary conditions allowing them to have a decent standard of living but, however, it should be possible in Canada to establish living conditions acceptable to all well disposed workers. We have the feeling today that employee strikes have become the regular negotiation process as the possibility of a strike is raised in every collective bargaining. Yet, that principle is entirely wrong. A strike should be used only as a last resort when all other conciliation means have failed. When at the expense of human dignity management continues to exploit the wage earner or forces him to accept poor working conditions, fortunately that kind of employer has been largely reduced in our country, but when the situation exists, a strike can be justified. The employer has no right to determine on his own behalf the salary and working conditions of his employees, any more than the union has to impose its own views unilaterally. If the employer can, figures in hand, show that present and projected conditions forbid any rise in expenses beyond a given percentage if his business is to remain healthy, the union has no right to demand more and even if a strike were legal, it still would be immoral.

I have here two photocopies of press articles about Toussaint & Frères, an industry in the county of Kamouraska-L'Islet. The windows have been boarded up from the beginning of the labour dispute, and there is not much left in the Toussaint & Frères plant since the company has emptied its buildings. Faced with labour demands, the employers decided they could not carry on operating under those conditions and as they had the opportunity to transfer their machinery somewhere else, that is what they have done with the result that now some 50 workers are jobless, although some of them had been on the payroll for 18 years and others for ten, 12 or 15 years.