

"Participating In The Job"

That is What the Workman Wants, Not Participation in Management, Says American Expert in Lecture Course at Toronto University

(By J. W. MACMILLAN.)

The Social Service Department of the University of Toronto is rendering good service to the industries of the city. Its course in Employment Managership was well attended, and opened the eyes of many to the reality and sharpness of the problems of personnel in a working force, and to the feasibility of solving them. Its public lecture course has obtained a fine start from the lectures of E. T. Devine and John A. Fitch, both experts of the first rank in social reconstruction. Dr. Devine, as became the head of the New York School of Philanthropy, dealt with the general question of social amelioration. Mr. Fitch, from his wide experience as an investigator and reporter of industrial disputes, kept to a more particular topic in his discussion of "Industrial Unrest."

"I have headed this article with a phrase from a quotation he used: 'The worker does not want to participate in the management, he wants to participate in the job.' This statement was the climax and conclusion of the lecture, towards which all that preceded pointed and led up. If true, it should disarm a good deal of the dread which many feel in these days of numerous and ill-considered strikes. It suggests that the worker is not after all a revolutionist, and that his prompt use of his weapon of industrial combat is not so much in offence as in defence.

Mr. Fitch began by pointing out that there always is and always will be industrial unrest. The changing conditions of our economic order necessitate it. The insatiable desires of human nature compel it. Thus, to some extent, it is constantly to be looked for, and may be a symptom of health rather than disease in the body of industry. At the same time it cannot be denied that the unrest of the present day is unpleasantly acrid and testy. It cannot be diagnosed as the wholesome indications of progress. There are alarming features about it which make it necessary that we should try to understand it and see if some remedy should not be applied.

Restlessness of Labor.

It is not alone in strikes that the prevailing unrest is exhibited. The restlessness of labor in employment is as sure a testimony to the disturbed condition of the wage-earners as their outbreaks when they "down tools." The prevalent huge labor turnover shows how great is the agitation throughout the whole body of workers. A plant that hires in a twelvemonth only as many as it normally employs is an exception. Two hundred per cent is common enough, and the lecturer cited one instance where the turnover amounted to one hundred per cent a week. Thus the spectacle of manufacturing is not one of stable and contented groups but of a stream of men and women flowing through one establishment after another without settling down in any.

This restlessness is further shown in the unsteadiness of effort even while on any payroll. To come late to work, to take a day or two off each week, to slow down the rate of production, —all have become common. The heart of the worker is not in his work. His dissatisfaction shows itself in small matters as well as in great.

Wages are not the difficulty. While admitting that, in this era of soaring prices, wages should rise rapidly, it is yet apparent that high wages will not still the unrest. For it is not the low paid workers that are impatient, while the highly paid workers are tranquil. Very often the high-

est paid are those who show most plainly their restlessness.

Nor are the hours of labor at the heart of the problem. The same comparison may be made as in respect of wages. If anything it is in the trades where long hours prevail that there is most stability, and the workers who are the shortest time on the job are most perturbed.

Tool-User or Machine-Tender.

Mr. Fitch held that the unrest could not be cured till the worker had obtained an intelligent interest in his job, and that the tendency of modern factory conditions was to lessen his understanding of and pride in his work. This is, of course, a commonplace of industrial history. The tool had a tendency to make more of the tool-user, but the machine has the tendency to make less of the machine-tender. The tool is an instrument which develops skill, and requires intelligent manipulation by its possessor. But the machine ever more and more gathers into its intricate anatomy the element of skill and makes the person attached to it more and more of an attendant. In the modern specialization of industry a worker often repeats hour after hour, day after day, year after year, one monotonous motion, the meaning of which he may not know.

One illustration given was of a boy driving wooden pegs into a piece of metal. Mr. Fitch, being shown through the factory by the safety-expert, noticed this boy sitting beside a running belt which carried past him a succession of precisely similar pieces of iron, each evidently destined to make one small portion of some large article. Into each piece of iron the boy hammered a small wooden peg. Mr. Fitch asked his guide what was the meaning of this operation. He replied,

"I don't know, but we will ask the boy."

The boy on being asked, said that he did not know what use the peg was in the hole. Then the guide said,

"I'll ask the foreman about it."

But neither did the foreman know. Thus the boy had been doing something which he not only did not know the meaning of but which he could not find out the meaning of. Who would be surprised if he failed to be interested in his job and, when the first rumor reached him of bigger pay or a softer job, or if some enticement to go fishing or see a baseball match came his way, what wonder if he did not turn up at the factory?

Mr. Fitch, however, laid more emphasis upon the need of the worker having some share in the decisions which governed his employment. In spite of everything else, he is a human in his makeup, and one of a race distinguished by the volume and intensity of its desires. His heart and his soul cry out for self-determination. His manhood urges him to be more than an automaton, a thing bound to a bigger thing made of iron and wood, which controls his actions. He instinctively asserts the right to live in his contribution to the work and progress of the world.

The Co-Operative Spirit.

Mr. Fitch gave a striking illustration drawn from the conduct of a big working force in one of the munition plants near Chicago. It had been completely unionized before the war, and when the appeal for vastly increased output came with the gathering fierceness of the war, the workmen, through their elected union leaders, offered to the management to throw off all the accustomed

checks upon production if they were promised that no change affecting their interests should be made without consulting them. The management not only agreed to this proposal but asked for a committee of the men to assist it in the government of the plant. After a time, when the co-operation of the managing and working forces had proved successful, the committee of the men were asked to help in making the estimates for tenders. It chanced that one tender, thus decided upon, was put in at so low a rate that the execution of the order meant a loss. Then the men proposed that they should work half of their noon hour, in addition to the usual working day, in order that their estimate should be justified.

How many an employer to-day would do anything short of ruining his business to produce such a spirit in his employees? There is no man on this continent who deserves a hearing on this problem more than Mr. Fitch. He has seen at first hand all the big strikes of recent years. He was on the ground in the Colorado Fuel and Iron strike, which took the form of actual battle, with rifles and machine-guns, on several occasions. He has gone into the midst of the coal strikes and the steel strikes. He spent months in Britain recently studying labor conditions there. And he has written of what he has seen in such a way as to win the confidence of the sober and moderate men on both sides of these heated disputes. The large audience in the Physics Building last Thursday were impressed by his utterance, as evidently the result of careful investigation, patient thought, and much goodwill to all concerned.

News of the Week.

A returned soldier was tried in Ottawa for selling the stock from his farm which had been set up by the Soldiers Civil Re-establishment Board. He was allowed to go on suspended sentence.

The Province of Manitoba proposes undertaking the reclamation of a block of land, comprising 800,000 acres, lying between the Saskatchewan river, the Carrot river, and the Sepanck Channel, at a proposed expenditure of \$1,500,000.

Chief Factor James Thompson, for forty years with the Hudson Bay Company and one of the oldest officers, has intimated that he wishes to retire from the active management of the land commission and fur trade commissioner.

The Farmers of Ontario showed their determination to get into the Federal Arena when R. H. Halbert, President of the United Farmers of Ontario, was elected to the House of Commons in the bye-election held in north Ontario last week.

The Quebec Legislature recently proposed to grant a month salary bonus to the provincial civil servants but this was refused by the recently formed Association of Civil Servants and they are asking the government for a bonus of from \$200 to \$300 and also a revision of the salaries in all classes of the service.

The Bank of Nova Scotia.

Notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of the Shareholders of this Bank will be held in the Banking House, Hollis Street, Halifax, on Wednesday, the 28th January next, at eleven o'clock a.m., for the purpose of receiving a statement of the affairs of the Bank, for the election of Directors and for other business.

By order of the Board,

H. A. RICHARDSON,

General Manager.

Halifax, N.S., December 15th, 1919.