

ROYAL COMMISSION ON INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

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The commission believes that a shorter day is most needed in industries that are fatiguing, monotonous or under trying conditions such as heat, dust, cramped position, etc., and that the number of work hours should be based scientifically upon the demands of industry, and not upon mere ability to work such hours without undue fatigue. The eight-hour day has been recognized by the peace treaty and already adopted in many industries in Canada. The commission recommends that it be established by law throughout Canada with due regard for above considerations. Such legislation should provide for a weekly rest of at least 24 hours, which should include Sunday whenever possible, and should not interfere where a shorter day is now worked, or with its extension.

Recognition of Right to Organize

The commission believe the day has passed when an employer should deny his employees the right to organize—a right claimed by employers themselves and not denied by workers. Employers gain nothing by opposition, because employees organize anyway, and refusal only leaves in their minds a rankling sense of injustice. The prudent employer will recognize such organization and deal with its duly accredited representatives. Distrust and lack of confidence have been sometimes caused because trade agreements have not been faithfully observed; charges were made on both sides to this effect. In some sections, also, local trades unions' representatives have advocated extreme measures—such men and measures being the logical outcome of unjustifiable opposition by some employers, and the sympathetic strike principle has been adopted because of the refusal of groups of employers to grant the claims of organized workers. These factors have been assigned as the chief causes of the non-observance of contracts entered into by workers in numerous cases, especially in western Canada. This policy is not recognized by the international trade unions, who believe in strict observance of agreements. It cannot be denied that trade unions generally have brought many solid advantages to workers in the form of increased wages, shorter hours and improved conditions. When employers in one line of industry are organized and their employees have a central organization, a bargain between the two groups would have the advantage, from the point of view of competition, of equalizing wages, hours and other conditions affecting costs.

The commission defines collective bargaining as the right of workers to group themselves for the purpose of selling their labor power collectively, instead of making individual agreements with the employer. For this purpose men have organized themselves into trade unions, and many of these are federated into central councils such as the Metal Trades Council, etc. Employers, in like manner, sometimes control one factory, sometimes a chain of factories, and in some instances are organized into larger associations of their industry, which again sometimes become part of federations, which local branches, such as the National Association of Building Contractors and Supplymen. Collective bargaining is negotiating for and reaching an agreement between employers or groups of employers, and employees or groups of employees, through the representatives chosen by the respective parties themselves. In the case of larger organizations of workers—for example, where a building contractor employed 19 different classes of tradesmen, all organized into different trade unions—it has been found mutually satisfactory for workers to combine their demands and present them to the employer through the medium of a building-trade federation, and thus settle at one time the conditions for the entire industry.

Many trade unions keep in their employment trained men for the purpose of negotiating their different schedules. As the employer has the right to select any representative or bring in any assistance he may desire in carrying on such negotiations, the commission think there is no logical reason why workers should be denied such right. The employer is justified in knowing that the schedule is presented to him

with the concurrence of a fair proportion of his employees, but it does not matter whether it is put before him directly by a committee of his employees, or by a direct representative of the trade union to which they belong, or through the committee of a federation of trade unions, of which their publication forms a part. Entering into agreements and bargaining collectively with trade unions does not mean recognition of the "closed shop" unless the agreements so provides. Numerous cases came before the commission where this method of collective bargaining was carried on when both union and non-union men were employed.

Proportional Representation

In view of complaints at several places that legislation enacted at the request and for the benefit of labor was not adequately enforced, nor increased cost of commodities controlled by governments, both local and federal, the commissioners believe that the system of proportional representation from grouped constituencies which has operated in Belgium and Sweden for some years would be well worth serious study by a committee of parliament.

Some means should also be adopted to meet the difficulty in regard to housing accommodation for workers, which has been made impossible by the high price of building land and material.

Restrictions on freedom of speech or the press should not be imposed unless urgently demanded in the interest of the peace of the whole community, and such restrictions should not apply to prevent criticism of legislative or governmental action.

Industrial Councils

"There is urgent necessity," the commissioners say, "for greater co-operation between employer and employed. The great obstacle to such co-operation is the suspicion and distrust with which in many cases each regards the other. It is only fair to say that in many cases the relations between particular employers and their employees were found to be harmonious. In all such cases the guiding principle was a frank recognition by each of the rights of the other. At present the worker has little or no knowledge of the difficulties which beset his employer, the cost of raw material, the working expenses, the competition which he has to meet, the risks of his capital and the margin of profit which he received; and the employer is equally ignorant of the employee's difficulties and viewpoint. This ignorance gives rise to disputes as to rates of pay, hours of labor and the hundred and one questions which could be largely solved if each side understood what the other had to contend with."

As a means of eliminating that suspicion and distrust, and for securing a permanent improvement in their relations and in the conditions of the worker, several forms of joint works committees or joint industrial councils have been adopted and are now in use in England, Canada, Australia, the United States and elsewhere.

The commission outlines and gives suggestions regarding various types of joint industrial councils. Full details of the British so-called "Whitley Plan" were distributed by the commission while on tour. It has been adopted in about 40 large British industries. Its chief features are national and district councils, composed of equal numbers of representatives of employers and employees, and also works (or plant) committees, which need not be equally divided, as decisions must be arrived at by agreement between the two parties. Under the Whitley plan, the councils are workable only when both parties—employers and workers—in the particular industry are thoroughly organized, as the councils are composed of representatives nominated by the Employers' Association and the trade unions concerned. Each council arranges its own functions, machinery and methods of working. In Toronto a joint council closely resembling a district joint council under the Whitley Plan is in actual operation, in the building trades, and similar councils for those trades are projected in Ottawa and Montreal. There is also in existence a works' committee in the Coughlan Shipyards at Vancouver, and the formation of councils in other industries is under consideration. The purpose of the

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