

I think that many persons in management are now of the view that these psychological considerations have a rich potential value to management as well as to labour. Personnel officers are keenly interested in human relations and in the factors that make for satisfaction on the job, and hence for good production.

Surely one of these factors is the self-confidence arising from the worker's knowledge of where he stands - of the privileges and responsibilities stipulated in his union contract, of his seniority standing, his prospects for advancement, and his right to have grievances given due consideration.

The public hears much of the conflicts that arise in union-management relations. Certainly, these conflicts exist. But how easy it is to over-emphasize their importance. Long before there were unions, labour and management were disagreeing over wages and working conditions. Management had grievances to deal with before the advent of the shop steward.

The really significant thing about labour-management relations, since the arrival of collective bargaining, it seems to me, is the development of orderly procedures for dealing with problems.

Certainly the union member of today may put forward more grievances than did his non-union predecessor. But this is largely because grievances - some of which may have existed for a long time - are now being brought to light and dealt with. And today the collective agreement means much in codifying the policy on which management must make its decisions on individual cases and explain its policy.

The collective agreement sets forth certain rules of conduct by which both parties are committed to abide as long as the contract is in force. At regular intervals - usually once a year - these rules are re-examined, both parties indicate the changes they believe should be made, and the contract is renegotiated.

This system means much in enabling management to give the fullest possible consideration to individual needs, even while dealing with a large labour force. Obviously, it requires not only good will but also plain hard work from both labour and management to make it operate effectively.

Certainly it can be misused. Undoubtedly there are a number of employers and a number of unions who have done less than their best to make collective bargaining work as an effective means of serving the interests of both parties -- not to mention the important third party, the public.

The experience of the post-war years, however, has been that the parties are showing an increasing awareness that, since they have to live together, ways and means can be found to make life tolerable for both.

An observer of the contemporary labour relations scene cannot help but be struck by two healthy developments. First, the advances in working conditions represent continuing results of joint decisions by management and labour. No dictatorial decision has shaped the trends but they have grown out of the meeting of the different points of view that are brought to bear on mutual problems.