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General Review of the Industrial Situation

The Labor Situation, Strikes, Prices, etc.

Some recovery from the losses recorded in the preceding month was indicated in reports from employers of labor at the beginning of February. The situation was slightly better than at the same date of last year and very much more favorable than at the commencement of February, 1923.

At the beginning of February the percentage of unemployment among members of trade unions stood at 7.5 as compared with 7.2 per cent. at the beginning of January and 7.8 per cent. at the beginning of February, 1923.

The offices of the Employment Service of Canada reported a slight increase in the business of the offices during the month of January, as compared with the preceding month while it was approximately the same as in January, 1923.

The following is a survey of employment at the end of February, 1924, as reported by the superintendents of the offices of the Employment Service of Canada.

The seasonal slackness in the construction group in the maritime provinces showed little betterment from the preceding period, no new work having been undertaken as yet. Optimism prevails, however, for renewed activities for the coming spring. Farming operations were not yet under way and few calls for workers were received. The demand in the logging group remained much as previously reported, and the camps, particularly in northern New Brunswick, were well supplied with workers. The mining industry was quiet, while manufacturing as yet showed little advancement.

In Quebec, the characteristic seasonal lull in employment conditions was reported. Contractors very shown in the building and construction groups, with only a few vacancies offered for inside workers and finishers. In the larger centres a number of men were employed casually shovelling snow after the recent storms. The logging camps were supplied with sufficient workers for the winter cut, and, apart from a few small orders, little demand was felt in this group. A revival in manufacturing industries was anticipated, especially in the metal trades and clothing industries.

In Ontario the continuance of winter conditions retarded business and delayed the opening up of employment during the month. Building and construction activities were at a standstill, with a good outlook for improvement as soon as the weather permits. Casual employment was afforded to increasing numbers of men due to the heavy storms, large gangs of workers for clearing railway lines and cutting surface drains being supplied without difficulty. Ice-cutting continued to employ large numbers of men at various points. Enquiries for general farm help were increasing in number and further expansion was expected with the approach of warmer weather. A slight curtailment of orders was reported in the logging group. At the end of February camps were well supplied with men, with few outstanding orders. The calls for tiemakers were met with difficulty, a shortage of experienced workers being evident. It is probable that requirements in this group will decline slightly until the spring demand for river drivers. The reports indicate that a vast improvement may be expected in industrial conditions, an increasing number of vacancies being afforded in the metal and clothing industries. The demand for women domestic help was very heavy with an unequal supply.

Prospects are good for employment on farms in Manitoba, an increasing number of inquiries for workers being shown. Work in all branches of construction both railway and building is of a normal nature with few permanent jobs open, the calls being mainly for casual and unskilled laborers. A steady demand for bushmen and loggers was shown, but due to the scarcity of men and the lateness of the season, the openings are not so easily filled. In the Women's Section there is still a large demand for workers for city and country, a slight improvement being noted in the number of placements in permanent work.

With the approach of spring the agricultural group in Saskatchewan is showing a slight expansion. Quietness characterized the building and construction groups, only a few calls for carpenters and laborers being received. The continued demand for men in the logging group was met satisfactorily from Regina, Saskatoon and Prince Albert. Increasing requests for women household workers for rural districts formed a considerable part of the business of the Women's Division.

While little construction work was under way in Alberta, indications point to a fairly active season. In the meantime, municipal public works continued to provide work for many. A noticeable, though slight, increase is evident in the demand in the agricultural group, with a further expansion anticipated for next month. Experienced loggers were found with difficulty to satisfy the small number of orders received at Edmonton and Lethbridge.

A slight improvement in the number of calls for farm workers was reported in British Columbia, the situation remaining approximately the same. The anticipated improvement in conditions in the building and construction group is slow in coming, and, with the exception of a few small bridge construction jobs and municipal relief works, little employment was afforded in this group. While logging operations continue fairly active in the northern sections of the province, the demand has fallen off somewhat. Difficulty is experienced in supplying tiemakers and sawyers in some localities. The demand in the domestic group remains about the same, the orders for permanent household workers being considerably in excess of the supply. Day work and casual employment for women was supplied to an increasing number.

Employers' Reports

At the beginning of February considerable revival from the losses recorded on the first of January was indicated in reports from employers received by the Dominion Bureau of Statistics. The improvement repeats that shown at the same time of year in 1923 and 1922, the recovery being more extensive than in the former year, but the losses that preceded it had not been so large as on February 1, 1923. The tendency in manufacturing was distinctly favorable; logging and mining also showed expansion. On the other hand, transportation, construction and trade recorded curtailment of a seasonal nature. Quebec, Ontario and British Columbia reported increased activity, while in the maritime and prairie provinces employment declined. In Ontario some 14,000 persons were added to the payrolls of the reporting firms, chiefly in the manufacturing division. The improvement in Quebec and British Columbia was also registered largely in factories; in addition, the latter recorded gains in mining. In the maritime provinces employment in iron and steel showed a decrease, partly as a result of a trade dispute in the allied coal mining industry. Seasonal dullness in construction also affected the situation. Railway transportation in the prairie provinces showed the decline incidental to this time of year, indicating reaction from the heightened activity attendant upon the movement of grain. Employment in Montreal, Hamilton and Winnipeg was in greater volume than at the beginning of January, while continued curtailment of operations was reported in Toronto, Ottawa, and Vancouver. Tobacco, railway car shops, shipyards, rolling and forging mills and other iron and steel works in Montreal recorded considerable recovery, but trade, construction and textile works continued to show contractions. A

large share of the decrease in Toronto was registered in retail stores, although the street railways also afforded less employment. On the other hand, textile, confectionery, printing and iron and steel plants reported increased activity. The largest reductions in Ottawa occurred in stores and in construction. Textile, iron and steel works in Hamilton recorded considerable additions to staffs. The improvement in Winnipeg was of a general character; the largest increases were reported in textiles. Varying conditions in different industries resulted in a very small reduction in employment in Vancouver. Construction and trade in that city were rather slack, while manufacturing as a whole showed improvement. Practically all branches of manufacturing reported some recovery from the contractions recorded early in January. The resumption of work in many iron and steel plants caused the reinstatement of nearly 5,000 workers. The most extensive increases within this division were registered in automobile and railway carshops and in shipyards, but nearly all branches shared in the revival. In textiles approximately 4,000 persons were added to the payrolls of the reporting concerns; the largest increases occurred in garment and knitting factories. Expansion on a somewhat smaller scale was indicated in sawmills, furniture, boot, shoe, pulp, paper, rubber, tobacco, hotel, non-ferrous metal, meat packing and slaughtering establishments. The trend of employment in logging continued to be favorable; mining and railway construction also recorded substantial improvement. On the other hand, transportation, building and highway construction afforded less employment than in the preceding month, and retail stores showed considerable reductions in payroll following the Christmas season.

An article elsewhere in this issue gives in some detail the employment situation as at the beginning of February, 1924.

Trade Union Reports

Slightly more unemployment than in December was registered at the end of January by the 1,522 unions from which returns were received. An aggregate membership of 156,272 persons was reported by these unions, 11,768 of whom were out of work, a percentage of 7.5 as compared with percentages of 7.2 at the end of December and with 7.8 on January 31, 1923. (Unemployment as used here has reference to involuntary idleness due to economic causes. Persons engaged in work other than their own trades or who are idle because of illness or as a direct result of strikes or lockouts are not considered as unemployed. As the number of unions making returns varies from month to month with consequent variation in membership upon which the percentage of unemployment is based it should be understood that such figures have reference only to the organizations reporting.) In Nova Scotia, Ontario, Manitoba and Saskatchewan less work was afforded than in December. In Ontario the greater part of the inactivity was due to unemployment in the manufacturing industries and in the building trades. A better situation was shown in the remaining provinces. In comparison with January of last year all provinces except Nova Scotia, Quebec and Ontario reported more employment. During January some improvement over December was shown by the 425 unions in the manufacturing industries from which returns were tabulated. Bakers, garment and iron and steel workers were more active, but cigar makers, furniture, pulp and paper, textile and glass workers and printing tradesmen were not so fully engaged. Slightly less activity was shown in the manufacturing industries than in January of last year. Coal miners in Nova Scotia were not so busy but in Alberta slightly more employment was registered and in British Columbia no miners were reported idle. Reports tabulated from 179 unions in the building trades with a membership of 17,938 persons showed that 26.3 per cent. of the members were out of work as compared with 21.7 per cent. at the end of December, 1923. Bricklayers, masons and plasterers, carpenters and joiners, granite and stone cutters, plumbers and steamfitters, tile layers, lathers and roofers, hod carriers and building laborers and steam shovel and dredgemen all reported more idleness, but bridge and structural iron workers, electrical workers and painters, decorators and paperhangers showed some improvement. In comparison with the returns for January, 1923, bricklayers, masons and plasterers, granite and stone cutters, tile layers, lathers and roofers, steam shovel and dredgemen and plumbers and steamfitters all registered slightly less activity. The situation among transportation workers was not quite so favorable due to lessened employment for steam railway employes. In the shipping and stevedoring and street and electric railway divisions, however, more employment was afforded. Transportation workers were better employed than in January, 1923. Fishermen reported considerable idleness. Retail clerks were busier. Hotel and restaurant and theatre and stage employes were more active, but employment for stationary engineers and barbers was not so good.

Employment Office Reports

During the month of January, 1924, the offices of the Employment Service of Canada made 31,409 references to employment and effected a total of 29,868 placements. Of these, the number of placements in regular employment was 15,237, of which 12,459 were of men and 2,778 of women, and 14,631 in casual work. Applications for work registered at the offices numbered 44,613, of which 35,173 were from men and 9,440 from women. The number of vacancies notified by employers to the Service was 26,587 for men and 6,984 for women—a total of 33,571. In comparison with the preceding month this represents an increase in the number of vacancies and placements, mostly in casual work, while an increased registration of applications characteristic of the month was shown. A report in detail of the work of the offices for the month of January, 1924, will be found elsewhere in this issue.

Building Permits and Contracts Awarded

According to the Dominion Bureau of Statistics, the value of building permits issued in 36 cities during January, 1924, showed a decline to \$4,921,088 from \$6,906,650 in the previous month and from \$4,057,013 in January, 1923.

According to the MacLean Building Review, issued by MacLean Building Reports, Limited, the value of the contracts awarded in Canada during February, 1924, amounted to \$21,249,000, compared with \$6,538,600 in January last, and \$13,311,800 in February, 1923. Residential building accounted for 10.5 per cent. of the February total, amounting to \$2,217,800; business building amounted to \$5,519,200, or 25.9 per cent.; industrial building to \$415,000, or 2 per cent.; and public works and utilities to \$13,097,000, or 61.6 per cent. The activity was distributed amongst the groups as follows: Ontario 80.4 per cent.; Quebec, 12.7 per cent.; western provinces, 4.6 per cent.; and the maritime provinces, 2.3 per cent. The amounts to be spent being \$17,983,200 in Ontario, \$2,697,200 in Quebec, \$498,000 in the maritime provinces, \$731,900 in British Columbia, and \$238,700 in the prairie provinces.

Production Reports

The Dominion Bureau of Statistics reports that the production of pig iron in Canada during January, 1924, showed an advance of 7 per cent. over the December output of 59,622 tons to 63,702 tons, and represented a marked increase over the outputs in January of the last three years. The output of basic pig iron was

39,388 tons; foundry iron mounted to 14,466 tons and malleable iron to 9,848 tons. There were five furnaces in blast at the end of January, of which two were at Hamilton, Ontario, two at Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, and one at Sydney, Nova Scotia. Two furnaces were ignited at Sydney, Nova Scotia, during the month and one was blown in at Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. There were 2,910 tons of ferro-alloys produced during the month.

The production of steel ingots and castings amounted to 41,309 tons in January as compared with 41,248 tons in December. The January production was 48,900 tons in 1923, 35,000 tons in 1922, and 40,900 tons in 1921. The output of steel ingots amounted to 38,596 tons, and steel castings to 2,703 tons.

A report from the Department's correspondent at Cobalt states that fourteen cars of silver ore were shipped during February from the Cobalt camp, containing approximately 975,792 pounds of ore, as compared with ten cars of silver ore containing 746,737 pounds in January. The Nipissing mine shipped 552 bars containing 403,624.87 ounces of silver, and The Mining Corporation of Canada shipped 53 bars containing 51,159.72 ounces of silver, making a total of 405 bars containing 456,784.59 ounces of silver shipped during the month of February, as compared with 211 bars containing 212,441.52 ounces for January.

A report from the British Columbia Forestry Branch shows that 179,216,115 feet, board measure, of timber was scaled in the province during January. The total includes Douglas fir, 100,656,869 feet; red cedar, 31,226,029 feet; spruce, 13,384,321 feet; hemlock, 20,083,196 feet; balsam, 3,405,987 feet; yellow pine, 1,356,144 feet; white pine, 1,288,541 feet; jack pine, 1,947,011 feet; larch, 3,000,935 feet; cotton wood, 211,237 feet; birch and cypress, 28,402 feet; and other species, 2,654,440 feet.

The gross earnings of the Canadian National Railways, including affiliated lines in the United States, according to a preliminary statement issued, amounted to \$18,328,491 in January, 1924, as compared with \$18,765,458 for January, 1923.

The gross earnings of the Canadian Pacific Railway for January were given in a preliminary statement as \$13,392,432 in comparison with \$13,148,911 in January, 1923.

Foreign Trade

A summary of Canadian trade prepared by the Department of Customs and Excise shows that in January, 1924, the merchandise entered for consumption amounted to \$66,468,060 as compared with \$68,085,845 in January, 1923. There was an increase of \$4,916,225 in the value of domestic merchandise exported, which amounted to \$69,575,167 in January, 1924, as compared with \$64,658,942 in the corresponding month of the previous year. For the ten months ending January the grand total of Canadian trade was \$1,641,285,624 in 1924 as compared with \$1,454,208,770 in 1923. The chief imports in January, 1924, were fibres, textiles and textile products amounting to \$16,566,348; iron and its products amounting to \$10,408,188; non-metallic minerals and products amounting to \$10,301,177; agricultural and vegetable products mainly foods amounting to \$7,122,228; and agricultural and vegetable products other than foods amounting to \$6,572,428. The chief exports during the same month were in the group of agricultural and vegetable products, mainly foods, which amounted to \$21,804,983, the next being wood, wood products and paper, amounting to \$18,258,274, followed by animals and animal products to the value of \$10,085,683. During the ten months of the fiscal year ending January, 1924, exports of agricultural and vegetable products, mainly foods, were valued at \$344,348,824; exports of wood, wood products and paper amounted to \$226,282,086; and exports of animals and animal products to \$121,603,242.

Strikes

Time loss due to industrial disputes reported to the Department during February was less than during January, 1924, but greater than during February, 1923. There were in existence at some time or other during the month 16 disputes, involving 11,518 employes and a time loss of 101,968 working days, as compared with 14 strikes in January, involving 12,793 employes and a time loss of 186,078 working days. In February, 1923, there were recorded 20 disputes involving 3,950 work-people and a time loss of 46,030 working days. Three new strikes commenced during February with a time loss of 2,497 working days. Two of the strikes commencing prior to February and all of the strikes commencing during February terminated during the month. At the end of the month, therefore, there were 11 strikes involving 812 workpeople.

Prices

Retail food prices were little changed from the levels reached in January. The cost per week of a list of twenty-nine staple foods for an average family of five in terms of the average retail prices in some sixty cities was \$10.75 at the beginning of February as compared with \$10.78 for January; \$10.53 for February, 1923; \$10.61 for February, 1922; \$14.08 for February, 1921; \$16.92 for June, 1920 (the peak); \$15.77 for February, 1920; \$12.54 for February, 1918; and \$7.75 for February, 1914. Prices of fresh eggs were substantially lower while there were smaller declines in cooking eggs, lard, fresh pork, bacon, sugar and prunes. Advances occurred in the prices of butter, cheese, potatoes, evaporated apples, tea and coffee. Including the cost of fuel and rent with that of foods the total budget averaged \$21.18 for February, as compared with \$21.23 for January; \$21.17 for February, 1923; \$21.07 for February, 1922; \$24.85 for February, 1921; \$26.92 for June, 1920 (the peak); \$24.71 for February, 1920; \$19.80 for February, 1918; and \$14.54 for February, 1914. Fuel averaged slightly lower while rents were unchanged.

The movement of wholesale prices as indicated by the index number of the Dominion Bureau of Statistics was very slight, the figure for February being 156.6 as compared with 156.7 for January; 152.6 for February, 1923; 153.5 for February, 1922; 191.1 for February, 1921; 256.9 for May, 1920 (the peak); 238.3 for February, 1920; and 290.5 for February, 1919. In the grouping according to the chief component material the Vegetable Products group, the Non-Ferrous Metal group, and the Non-Metallic Minerals group were each higher while the Animals group, the Textiles group, the Wood group and the Iron group were each lower. The Chemicals group was unchanged from the January level.

The index number based upon prices of 271 commodities in 1890-1899 as 100, published by the Department of Labor since 1910, advanced to 224.9 for February as compared with 222.7 for January; 224.2 for February, 1923; 229.5 for February, 1922; 270.1 for February, 1921; 256.6 for May, 1920 (the peak); 343.5 for February, 1919; 263.5 for February, 1918; and 136.8 for February, 1914. The groups showing advances were grains, animals and meats, fruits and vegetables, hides, leather and boots, metals, fuel and lighting, paints and oils, and drugs and chemicals; while the groups showing declines were dairy products, fish, textiles, and raw furs.

The special index of fifty commodities selected from the 271 in the departmental list advanced slightly to 155.1 for February as compared with 154.4 for January; 155.2 for February, 1923; 148.4 for February, 1922; 152.2 for February, 1921; 260.1 for May; 1920 (the peak); 227.0 for February, 1920; and 102.9 for February, 1914.

Better Education For Workers

Quebec Labor Presents Legislative Program—Suggest Persons Attend School Till 21 Years of Age

The Quebec provincial executive committee of the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada recently presented a program of desired legislation to the Quebec provincial government. Gustave Franco, of Montreal, chairman of the Quebec provincial executive committee of the congress, was the spokesman. The delegation was received by Premier Taschereau and several other members of the cabinet most cordially and every consideration of their demands were promised. The list of demands and subjects for consideration included as follows:

1. Legislation emanating from the recommendations of the league of nations and international labor conference: 8-hour day, etc.
2. Sunday labor and one day rest in seven, dealing with the provincial revised statutes and law dealing with restaurant employes, this being the item of most importance on the whole agenda.
3. Education.

(a) All textbooks to be issued by the government upon the recommendations of the boards of education, and to be sold at cost price, pending their free distribution to scholars.

(c) All textbooks to be uniform throughout the province, it being one of the principal requirements for proper education.

(d) All courses in the provincial government schools, technical and others, to be given free of charge.

(e) That all persons under the age of 21, working in factories, workshops or any other places of employment, who are not able to read and write one of the two official languages of this country fluently, be compelled to attend an evening class.

(f) The laws governing education to be amended by the provincial government, to provide for a minimum salary for school teachers in keeping with the cost of living, and to permit the prosecution of school commissions which pay less than said minimum salary.

(g) A minister of education to be appointed, whose duties should consist in supervising the proper administration of school commissions, the enforcement of the program of education adopted by the provincial, Catholic and Protestant boards of education and all other and regulations pertaining to education.

4. Abolition of private employment bureaus.

5. Fair wage act and providing necessary machinery to enforce it, reference being made to carpenters' case now in appeal.

6. Surcapitalization and sale of bonds under false pretenses.

7. Appointment of the commission on minimum wage for women.

8. Housing crisis and control of articles of necessities. Commission to deal with these subjects was suggested.

9. Hygienic measures dealing with the removal of old wallpapers, abolition or control of spraying machines for painting, sanitary inspection of barber shops.

10. Daylight saving. Uniform control requested.

11. Control and establishment of cold storages.

The delegation included, besides Chairman Franco, Messrs. Pelletier, Fleury and Roberts, of the provincial executive, and Georges R. Brunet, of the pressmen, P. Griffard, R. Gervais, A. Bastien and J. Martel for the building trades.

Visits Canada on Labor's Behalf

Dr. A. W. Riddle Works on Behalf of Geneva Office

Halifax, N. S.—Dr. A. W. Riddle, Toronto, a representative of the International labor office, Geneva, Switzerland, is in Nova Scotia with regard to the work of the labor division of the League of Nations.

Dr. Riddle proposes to travel west as far as Edmonton and will have conferences with the various provincial governments en route. He has conferred with the Nova Scotia Government here.