

which, to my mind, includes a workable system of collective bargaining in the private sector.

It has been argued that public servants should be permitted to strike because they'll go on strike regardless of the law. Earlier this month, an official of the Canadian Union of Public Employees said, "Maybe it's time we defied that stupid law." He was referring to an Ontario law that prohibits employees of homes for the aged from striking; unresolved disputes are referred to arbitration by an independent third party.

Laws are to be observed, and we don't change laws simply because they are broken—we punish for the violation. That is the way it is supposed to work in a civilized society. But unions and union conduct often appear to fall under other unwritten rules. Failure to enforce our existing labour laws must shoulder much of the blame for the suspect position in which collective bargaining and use of the strike weapon find themselves.

Bargaining and use of the strike weapon are coming under fire in another way. There is a widely held presumption in industrial relations that all is in good order, and that the public interest is best served if management and labour resolve their own problems by themselves as they see fit. This presupposes that the first priority is a private and peaceful settlement. Concern for the longer-range impact of the settlement on the rest of the economy and society is effectively submerged in this self-interest approach by the parties.

In the view of U.S. economist John Kenneth Galbraith, as expressed in an address he delivered in Ottawa in the fall of 1969, conflict in the heartland of the industrial system has been extensively absorbed by the system where differences are resolved by raising the price of labour and by raising the price of the product. In a buoyant economy, this usually leaves both the employer and employee better off than before. But, Prof. Galbraith says, this simply exports tensions from the industrial heartland to the public sector, and to those other areas of society where incomes respond slowly to the inflation that has been created.

Galbraith went on: "Does this analysis not mean that, even at the cost of more trouble, even anguish, in the industrial heartland, we should

stop this export of inflation and tension to the rest of the economy? I believe this is so. And I believe it must come. It means some system of wage and price restraint wherever strong unions bargain with strong employers in a strong market." I noted in a recent newspaper article that Galbraith made the same point earlier this week in an appearance before the U.S. House Banking Committee. If he is right, then the strike in major industry is doomed to a trip to the garbage can.

The disadvantaged

Although we habitually think of labour disputes as being between unions and managements—and this is true in the direct sense—nonetheless, the real social fight is between the big powerful unions, which can dictate inflationary settlements for their members, and the poor and disadvantaged people and those such as old age pensioners who suffer greatly from spiralling prices—a point effectively made by Prof. Edward Neufeld at the University of Toronto in an address last December. (L. G., May 1970, p. 340).

Some managements are beginning to accept the challenge that they must create a healthy climate in which the workplace of each employee can be more career-oriented than job-oriented and, hence, much more relevant and meaningful for him as an individual. Few union leaders admit that some of their own problems stem from the fact that many employees, particularly the youthful ones—their union members—consider work as a drudge and a drag.

This should not be surprising. Union leaders are convinced that collective bargaining is the total answer. Of course, collective bargaining was not designed with the purpose in mind that the individual's attitude to his work was important, or that this attitude or lack of it would have such an apparent impact on labour relations. If anything, bargaining probably does much to hinder development of healthy job attitudes. Perhaps this is why simply piling on more money does not avoid or settle strikes as it usually did in the past.

It is little wonder that there is a crisis of confidence in our present industrial relations system. One would suspect that those of us on both sides of the bargaining table who want to see a workable system survive would be devoting our attention and efforts to solutions.