

Editorial

AN UNDERSTANDING NECESSARY

IT is no doubt true that some of our capitalists have been rapacious beyond belief, and it is equally true that the impossible demands of some organizations of workmen are wildly absurd. In peace times if production is sufficient to supply all the real needs of mankind, there may be something in the clamor for a forty-hour week, but when the world is in need of supplies, it is inhuman to demand shorter hours of labor. And really this cry is not always honest. What some of the men are after is forty hours at the regular rate and overtime at an increased rate. They do not help matters by seeking an increase in this indirect way. Far better is it to come to a clear and unmistakable understanding and to arrive at a decision that will stabilize conditions and prices. The present uncertainty is altogether unsatisfactory and breeds incessant trouble.

A WORKING ILLUSTRATION

AS an illustration of the impossibility of continuing to operate under present conditions a gentleman engaged in one of the building trades furnished from his own experience the following information. He was not complaining about prices paid to workers, for he took the ground that his prices to builders depended upon the wages he had to pay his men. All he complained about was that because of the uncertainty of prices he could not make a contract with builders, and because the men had by agreement entered into a pact to limit the output per hour, he never could tell when a piece of work would be completed. The salary paid to men before the war was less than fifty cents, now they ask eighty cents, and on actual measurement they do just sixty per cent. as much work per hour as formerly. The manufacturers at this rate would be paying two and two-thirds times the old price for turning out his goods.

A NATIONAL CONFERENCE

NOW, a genuine conference of workers and employers, not to arbitrate disputes, but to consider the whole problem, would probably adjust nearly all difficulties that have arisen. It goes without saying that prices must be higher than formerly, and this applies to wages and to commodities and to everything else. Even the preacher must not be overlooked. One poor fellow last month told under his breath how he came downstairs early in the morning and ate his breakfast alone, so that the children would not know he was going without butter on his bread. Even a preacher deserves recognition in the scheme of readjustment. Little is to be gained by strikes and lockouts. They produce ill-will but get no permanent results. Something, however, will result from a genuine show-down. If profiteers have to disgorge so much the better. If a few agitators have to be deported it will be something gained. We can't fight this thing out. We must reason it out. Unless we have peace and good-will our country will be no good for any of us. Just as the extreme nationalism of Germany cursed a whole world, so an emphasis of class distinctions, which is another name for selfishness, will destroy the life within the nation. We must come together.

HAVE FAITH

IT is surely in every way better to believe that we can solve our problems by reasonable discussion than to go on the assumption that we must disagree and fight forever. It is better to be optimistic than pessimistic. There is nothing in trying to effect a solution of our problems if we do not believe they can be solved. In days of peace Canadians can do quite as well as in days of war. We have helped to clean up Europe. We shall not find it impossible to right matters at home. Let us have faith.

LIVING TOGETHER

AWISE man who visited Western Canada a short time ago said that the one problem for any people is that of acquiring the art of living together. In the olden days this was simple because all the people had so much in common. Borrowing and co-operation were a necessary and lovely feature of rural and village life. Quilting-bees, husking-bees, paring-bees, barn-raising, threshing bees, were everyday affairs. Joys and sorrows were shared. There were no artificial social distinctions and little ostentatious display of wealth. This same thing is found even yet in outlying districts and in the poorer communities in great cities. Yet, it is only too clear that with the division of labor men have grown apart. Not knowing one another's business they become estranged in sympathy. The countryman knows not the worker in the city, his trials and his hardships, and the dweller in the city is unaware of the hardships of the man who tills the soil, and perhaps fails to understand the joy of his independence. So, too, the office man, with his

clean clothes understands not the toiler who passes along in his greasy overalls, and the latter cannot imagine how brain-fag is more benumbing and deadening than the severest manual labor. Nor does it end with this. Modern conditions have broken up family life. Girls do not live with their mothers. Boys are no longer companions of their fathers. We have largely forgot the art of living together, and this is unfortunate in every way.

Some of the means that may be employed to restore the old friendships are good books, social gatherings, school entertainments, community singing, and such experiences as we have passed through these last few years, when we joined heart and soul in a common lofty purpose. The opening of city parks, public playgrounds and auditoriums, the use of schools as social centres, the encouragement of forums and debating societies, the taking over of dance halls and other resorts of the kind so as to bring them all under municipal control, are all means that may be employed. No price is too great to pay for community good feeling, good feeling is the result of understanding and sympathetic co-operation. The fostering of class distinctions, whether social, racial, industrial or religious is fraught with evil. We must learn to live together, for it is the way to happiness and to the larger life. Those who value this suggestion will place a high value on the church service and on the old-fashioned party and the soiree and the agricultural fair, for they bring together all classes and promote a kindly general feeling. This is necessary to community and national welfare.

THE MERRY-GO-ROUND

THE present industrial unrest antedates the war. We can all recall the murmurings and threatenings of 1914. When millions of men left their work to take up arms, when as many more left their callings to serve in the munition factories, when world production of the great necessities of life was cut in two, it was inevitable that prices should increase. The standard of value was a bushel of wheat, which jumped from eighty or ninety cents to \$2.24. Other commodities have since increased in almost like proportion. Such a simple thing as a dish towel has increased to five or ten times the old price. Clothing has doubled, food in most cases, has more than doubled, and the building of houses, even when material can be obtained, is practically prohibitive. Naturally there is a demand for greater wages, to which is added a plea for shorter hours. When manufacturers agree to the demand for higher salaries, they must increase the prices of their goods. When the producers raise the price, the wholesalers and retailers naturally do the same. Indeed, they have to double their old profits because of the increased cost of living. And so the wage-earners out of their increased wages have to pay increased prices for all the necessities of life. Probably the only classes who have had no sensible increase in income since 1914 are the preachers, and perhaps their first cousins the school teachers. It is reported that the average increase in the case of the former is about 10 per cent., and in the case of the latter 15 per cent. But the cost of living has risen between 70 and 90 per cent.

Now if everybody charged double and had received double things would be just as they were before the war. But the relative prices have not held all around. Some men have grown wealthy over night and others have found it impossible to live. Nobody seems to know the facts, and everybody seems to have a grievance. The farmers complain of the financiers and townspeople complain about the farmers. Laborers complain of employers, and employers charge workmen with being unreasonable. And so it goes. Naturally there is unrest, and it is clear that the jockeying for position can not go on forever. There must be an adjustment some day, and the sooner the better.

WHAT ENGLAND HAS DONE

THE very same conditions obtain in other lands, and it is pleasing to note that old England has again shown the way. Mr. W. P. Crozier, writing in the Dearborn Independent makes the following comment upon the proceedings of the National Industrial Conference of employers and workers, called together by Mr. Lloyd-George to advise the British Government on the industrial situation.

"The committee, however, had a further problem to study. The industrial troubles since the armistice which have been widespread and constant, had made it obvious that we lacked the central, national machinery for probing into the causes of unrest and suggesting the necessary remedies. There is a multiplicity of trade unions, of differing conditions and of disputes with no co-ordinating, unifying body which could speak for both capital and labor, take in all the bearings of a particular problem and, where practicable, attempt to frame a national policy. Parliament does not meet this need; it is remarkable how all parties in these great economic questions agree in quietly leaving parliament aside as of no account. The committee, therefore, proposes that a permanent national industrial council should be formed with two

hundred members elected by employers' organizations and two hundred by the trade unions. The council would have a standing committee consisting of twenty-five members chosen from either side. This is the body which would advise the government—an expert industrial parliament sitting side by side with the parliament at Westminster and advising the government on all national industrial questions. Robt. Williams, of the transport workers, recently demanded an industrial body which would 'speak with purpose and authority to an effete parliament.' It is this function that the new council is intended to fulfill."

The solution in England is further classified by the report of an American Commission appointed by the Department of Labor. This report summarizes conditions in England in the following paragraphs, which contain a world of meaning for both employers and workmen on this side of the water.

"Employers in Great Britain generally recognize the desirability of bargaining collectively with labor.

"Employers nearly all agree that collective bargaining should always be undertaken between associations of employers and the regularly established, well-organized trade unions. While many manufacturers welcome organizations of workmen in their factories (shop or works committees), they want to limit the activities of such bodies to purely local grievances, and decidedly desire that the committee members come under the discipline of their unions.

"Most employers freely recognize the right of labor to organize; they regard organization as greatly contributing to the stability of industry. Some large manufacturers declare that they wish to see every workman within the unions, so that they must all come under organization control. Others feel that 100 per cent. organization might lead to dangerous types of universal strikes and lockouts. The more conservative employers appear to make no effort to help along organizations of labor, merely dealing with such organizations when they appear on the scene.

"Employees in Great Britain are divided in sentiment shading from those who want to maintain the trade unions along the regularly established so-called 'constitutional' lines to ultra-radical socialists.

"Employees are nearly a unit, however, in expressing opposition to the use of force. The most radical who desire 'now' a complete overturning of the present social structure, usually admit on close questioning that 'now' may mean many years. They want to 'start' now. Practically none appear to approve of a sudden change as in Russia.

"Employees of the ultra-radical type look askance at collective bargaining and organizations of labor and capital. They freely express the view that they do not wish harmony between employees and employers, since harmony would help to continue the present system of society.

"Employees of the more conservative type (and to your commissioners they appear to represent the vast majority of British workmen) are largely in accord with employers in the desire (1) to head off labor unrest at this period; (2) to strengthen the unions by holding members under control; (3) to increase production for the sake of the nation, workmen included—with no restriction on output except as it affects the health of the worker; (4) to leave control of business policies in the hands of those managing the business.

"Government officials appear to be uniformly of the opinion that the Government should function in labor unrest only as an absolutely last unavoidable resort. On the other hand, they maintain the right of the Government to step in when necessary in order to protect public interests against minorities which try to force their terms upon the people.

Here then is a strange thing. While we in Canada who call ourselves progressive, are fighting away, every class for itself, often refusing to confer or arbitrate, these old conservatives, as we sometimes style them, have got together and are actually finding a way out of their difficulties.

THE TREES

ANYONE who has spent a part of his life in Eastern Canada, will remember the elms, maples and beech trees that ornamented the landscape. These are only a small fraction of the original forest, and one can scarcely realize the value of the wood that was cut down or destroyed by fires in order to make the little clearings which gradually widened into fields and farms. The problem in the early days was to destroy. To-day it is to save and to reproduce. In Western Canada we have the same problem, but here we have not the good hardwoods of the Eastern provinces. Yet every farmer should be doing something to clothe the land with trees, and every town should make the planting of suitable shade trees and shrubbery a part of its programme. Forestation is to be encouraged not only because it contributes to beauty but because it affects climatic conditions and helps to solve the serious problem of fuel. We have squandered so much of our wooded inheritance that it becomes us now to make amends when possible.