

Some important factors must be taken into account when working conditions have to be established. One must not lose sight of the fact that the employee is a human being and not a machine, that he seeks security and stability. He generally wants his working place to be well organized and managed and it is only right that he be treated in all fairness. The employee also wants to be informed about the state of his company's business, which makes him sure that he can expect a fair income.

Those are basic realities about the human being, that an active labour relations service must try to understand and correct, if required. In order to do so, we shall have to come to grips with a difficult problem because this is a purely abstract matter which covers the attitude of people, their motivations, interests, fears, personal problems and what is most flexible, the human being. However, if everyone tries to understand his role, it is highly possible that all those concerned will reach agreement as they would all like to.

Following industrialization, workers have practically become proletarians and they were forced to sacrifice to big undertakings their legitimate desire to be their own masters, as yesterday's economy allowed them to be.

Therefore it seems that modern industry should provide workers with some compensation for the sacrifices they endure and for the alienation of their freedom.

Workers have less security than they had before. Technology, automation and competition between producers constantly threaten them with unemployment, its miseries and privations. The worker therefore feels dispossessed, and becomes bitter, specially when he realizes that big industry subordinates the fate of the worker to efficiency, that is to the return on its capital.

The word "dialogue" is very much in fashion in our modern society. It means that people with differing opinions have the opportunity of exchanging views with others. Still, the real problem lies with persuading each one of the parties to listen to the ideas of the other, then to revise and question his own. Perhaps we should adopt as a slogan to speak less and listen more! When everyone speaks at once and no one listens, there is no communication, only noise.

In this chamber the rules state that only one member may have the floor at a time. However, this does not always establish a communication of ideas. In a corporation, we see that if the boss does not listen to the workers, the workers will not listen to the boss. If university administrators do not listen to the students, the students will not listen to the administrators.

And if the government does not listen to the representatives of industry, industry will not listen to the government's representatives. Often it happens that the government and labour do not speak the same language, especially when talking about the government's wage policy and the workers.

These are terms that many people use with different connotations. I recently came upon an editorial written by Mr. Jean-Paul Desbiens in the March 31, 1971 issue of

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La Presse; this article is quite appropriate to the circumstances. It says:

The need for rationalization leads on the one hand to centralization and, on the other, to longer and longer collective agreements. Contrarily to living beings, collective agreements never discharge any waste. Moreover, negotiators—whichever side of the table they may sit on—tend to develop the habit of endlessly polishing old clauses while inventing new ones. All parties argue about where a comma should be placed and run the risk of forgetting the basic aim of collective agreements, namely to humanize labour relations.

In fact, relations become more and more entangled in formality and pettifoggery. Instead of mapping a safety zone for everybody, collective agreements become a mine field.

Nobody realizes how beneficial it would be to administer a good purgative to the old collective agreements. After all, collective agreements are not unlike pharmacies: about three quarters of the pills could well go down the drain without the citizens being affected in their health.

It is unfortunate to note sometimes that people who should be interested in maintaining good relations are not as anxious to fulfill their responsibilities as they are to claim their rights. Many problems would automatically be solved if people were more concerned about putting into practice that good old law of compensation which says that well-done work should be rewarded. With the new production methods used in this age of automation, a good number of workers are prone to demand high pay for little work, with the result that in the different administrative services, there are function-holders who are not "functioning". Some could be compared to the big books in a library, the higher ones being often the ones that are used less.

I cannot help quoting the conclusions of a humorous observer, published in a newspaper, where he gave the best way of testing the reactions of an inanimate civil servant. The article was published on September 7, 1969 under the title "Dead or Asleep" and I quote:

As many service directors in the Public Service find it hard to know whether some public servants are dead or merely asleep, they issued the following memorandum: "Any public servant found seated after his death shall be summarily struck off strength in accordance with Rule 3043, paragraph P, section 8. On account of the great sensitiveness of our employees and of the great resemblance between death and their usual position, the inquiry must be made quietly so as not to wake up the employee, should he be merely asleep. If, after the inquiry, there is any doubt about the employee's condition, hand him a cheque. Should there be no reaction, it means he is dead. In some cases, the stretching hand instinct is so great that a *post mortem* spasm could occur. Be careful not to be misled.

To those who are under the impression that all problems, such as salary adjustments, unemployment insurance benefits and others can be solved through a computer, allow me to quote in conclusion the point of view of a contemporary observer:

A modern computer is an electronic wonder that makes extremely complicated mathematical operations in one ten-thousandth of a second and sends its results ten days too late.

I wish also to add that I support the passing of Bill C-228, as it is a step toward improvement and I have good reasons to believe that its study in committee will contribute to the clarification of its content.