

Let us examine the developments of the post-war years in terms of these three broad criteria. In so doing, we might keep in mind that Canadian experience with large-scale collective bargaining is still relatively brief.

The rise of trade unionism in Canada has been as recent as the rise in industrialization. At the start of the century, we had only a few thousand union members. Even up to the Second World War, labour organization in Canada was largely confined to the railroads, the coal mines, and the construction trades.

During the late 'thirties and the war years, however, unions made rapid progress in the manufacturing industries, and began to attain the influential position in our economic life they hold today. Government wartime labour relations regulations, as I shall indicate later, had an important bearing on industrial relations at this time and during the postwar period.

Effective labour representation, as measured in the number of workmen bargaining, had begun to reach significant proportions by 1945. Already union membership had reached 700,000 or double the number at the beginning of the war.

The number of collective agreements had increased several times over the pre-war level. But the total number of workers under these agreements still fell far short of the million and a quarter figure which has now been reached.

Faced with this new situation in 1945, the existence of more powerful labour unions, Canadian businessmen also had other matters to think about in readjusting production to meet peacetime needs. In some cases, there had to be sharp contraction of wartime programmes, while in others it meant expansion to meet quickly a large backlog of consumer demand.

It is hardly surprising that the earliest post-war years were not noteworthy for peaceful industrial relations. On the one hand, labour unions, some of which were ready to test their newly-gained strength, were feeling the effects of higher living costs without a corresponding increase in wages; while on the other hand management was still uncertain about what the post-war world held in store.

Since then, we have had an interesting half dozen years during which, in the midst of two industrial re-orientations labour and management have been learning how to work and live with one another.

Today, few sections of Canadian industry are without some form of collective bargaining. Agriculture, trade, finance and service are the only industrial groups without a fairly large percentage of their paid workers under agreement.

The experience in other industries is by no means universal but, with more than one in three paid workers from all industry under agreement, our economy is heavily influenced by decisions made in collective bargaining.

As I suggested earlier, collective bargaining must be regarded from three points of view, as it affects labour, management and the public.