

The Effects of War Upon Labor

British captains of industry have learned their lesson—Scientific management of labour has been applied, with the result that men work shorter hours under better conditions

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Soon after the outbreak of war the newly constituted Ministry of Munitions appointed Sir George Newman to investigate the labor situation with special reference to the health and efficiency of workmen. Since that time Sir George Newman's Committee has issued somewhat more than ten reports, which are of deep interest not only to labor, but to the leaders of industry as well. These documents deal exhaustively with such important problems as Sunday labor, canteens for workers, the employment of women, industrial fatigue, and its causes, industrial diseases, ventilation and lighting, and many other subjects. Only a decade ago the manufacturers of this continent interested themselves, for the first time, in these vital questions, which had long occupied the minds of German bureaucrats and managers of industry, and the study of which had done so much for German labor. British manufacturers and traders, however, gave little heed to these problems until the outbreak of war. Indeed, it may be said that only the impact of war itself could have broken through the wall of English conservatism.

DISPARAGEMENT.

It has become the fashion in some quarters in the United Kingdom, and quite generally in the United States and among European nations—notably Germany—to disparage British export policies and manufacturing methods. Much was said of German science and American efficiency; and the implication was that Great Britain had grown effete and had passed the zenith of her industrial power. Much of the criticism was absurd, much erroneous, but—there was in it also a modicum of truth. The United Kingdom owned and controlled more than half the merchant marine of the world at the outbreak of war; it did the world's biggest banking business; it possessed the largest areas of new and unexploited land; it had the greatest foreign trade; it conducted the largest international insurance business; and, above all, it was the world's chief banker, having in August, 1914, investments everywhere throughout the world, in civilized and uncivilized countries, to the extent of \$20,000,000,000. And yet, with all these demarkable achievements to its credit, with its industries, commerce and shipping organized on the grand scale, there was something lacking in the nation's industrial life. Although English workmen were the best paid and the best fed in Europe, it was recognized that British industry was not, relatively speaking, holding its own. While the wealth of the country expanded yearly, and economic conditions improved for the working classes, it was known among managers of industry and commerce, that Germany and the United States were beating British competitors, in certain special lines, in the neutral markets of the world. While free-trade England was quite conversant with the fact that English industry could not be supreme everywhere, it was disturbing to realize that, in a fair field with no favor, strong British industries were losing ground. It is safe to say that these untoward conditions have been remedied as a result of the war; and that at the close of the struggle British industry will be so efficient as to prove formidable to all rivals—whether from the United States with its wonderful natural resources, or from Germany with its scientific equipment and management.

The reports and investigations of Sir George Newman and his Committee have made a profound impression upon the leaders of industry and commerce in the United Kingdom. As already remarked, the shock of war has crumbled to dust the walls of British conservatism. Scientific management has been unqualifiedly endorsed. This is true even among those great, long-established concerns that have met with much success in the past. It is admitted on all sides that the long working day, and the high speed at which workers were driven, do not yield the maximum output. There is nothing original here, and no new lesson has been taught; for these facts have been understood in the United States for almost a decade past. The advance in the United Kingdom is found, rather in the full realization of the truth that long working hours and the subjecting of labor to an intense strain bring no compensating gain.

At the outbreak of hostilities it was more difficult to mobilize the industrial forces of Great Britain than its soldiers and sailors. Germany had too great a start to permit Great Britain to catch up overnight. Munition factories by the score were needed, new and more efficient machinery not only for the making of the implements of war but for making the machines for war work and what was even harder to secure, technically trained men and—a stock of new ideas to meet an unparalleled situation. At the outset manufacturers met the demands of the government for war material by making their men work harder, and for longer hours; and by denying them, by one expedient or another, access to the public house. The result was inevitable and disastrous. The managers of industry in the United Kingdom had given no thought, as a body, to the causes and results of industrial fatigue; of waste and repetition in ordinary industrial processes; and of the bearing of fatigue upon the efficiency of labor. The result of this ignorance was increasing pressure on workmen, the growth of fatigue, irritation against their masters, and finally bitter industrial disputes and strikes. It is only necessary to recall the coal strikes in Wales which threatened to paralyze the industrial life of the nation—strikes caused in the main by the stupidity, and as the miners, at least, thought, by the greed of the owners—to demonstrate how futile this speeding up process was.

WHEN PEACE COMES.

But British captains of industry learned their lesson, and learned it well. Scientific management of labor has been applied, with a result that men work shorter hours under better conditions, and therefore turn out a better quality and a greater total of output. As soon as peace returns this highly trained and efficient labor force, augmented by a disciplined army from the front, with new tools and more efficient machinery at its command, with a highly developed national organization for the control of domestic and foreign traffic and shipping, will give the keenest possible competition to every industrial nation in the world. It may be fairly said that the United Kingdom is now socially and economically better organized for commercial and industrial purposes than even the United States; and that the Republic will have to make up a good deal of leeway to reach the point of efficiency attained in Great Britain. Be it remembered, in this connection, that the United Kingdom is paying at least one-third of the cost of the war from current income, by means of taxation; and that her enormous foreign investments have not been diminished by one penny. True, the United States has discharged the greater part of its indebtedness to the United Kingdom; but on the other hand, the latter country has advanced not less than \$5,000,000,000 to its colonies and Allies since the outbreak of war. With the wonderful economic equipment of Great Britain, therefore, with its enlarged shipbuilding facilities and its unrelinquished hold on the markets of its colonies, the United States, South America and the Near and Far East, it is safe to assert that the nation will come out of the struggle with its resources almost unimpaired and its opportunities for trade expansion widened.

That there will be a period of industrial readjustment, however, at the close of the war is inevitable; and it remains to inquire how labor will be affected in the new situation. Much advice is given labor today, both in Canada and the United States, concerning the necessity of saving, and especially of not injuring the financial security of those industries upon which the wages of labor depend. Workmen, however, start for the factory too early in the morning and return home too tired at night to give this advice much consideration. It is only fair to add that many Canadian manufacturers have come out strongly in favor of paying Canadian labor a living wage, and that they are quite reconciled to war prices in the labor market. The president of the Canadian Manufacturers Association, at the convention held in Winnipeg a month or two since, took precisely this ground in dealing with the labor situation. Unfortunately, however, both in the United States and Canada, there is a tendency in the capitalistic press to lecture labor upon its greed and impossible demands. It is said that the wages paid in some trades

are extortionate, and that the cutting down of hours of work imperils the stability of manufacturing on this continent. Everyone will recall the diatribes against labor uttered at the time that the Adamson Law was declared valid in the Republic. Much was said of the unfairness of American labor both with respect to its demands for shorter working hours as well as increased wages. The experience of the United Kingdom has conclusively demonstrated, nevertheless, that labor leaders have been more than right in their contention that a short working day really increases the output and helps to guarantee the quality of the workmanship.

No reliable data are available with which to test the economic position achieved by Canadian workmen since the outbreak of war. The Labor Gazette from time to time records advances in wages and better working conditions in the field of Canadian labor. But a study of the Gazette discloses the fact that no accurate estimation or computation has been made of the increase in wages accruing to Canadian workmen since the outbreak of war. In some trades wages have doubled; in others there has been a gain of 50 per cent; while in still others the increases range between 15-25 per cent. The wages of farm laborers, especially for harvest work, have increased between 50 and 100 per cent. On the whole, it would appear to be an approximately correct calculation to say that wages have increased in Canada about 25 per cent since the outbreak of war. This increase has not begun to keep pace with the increase in the cost of living.

Many factors operate at the present time to increase wages. Business is flourishing, the scale of commodity prices is high, employment is steady, and there is practically no competition from foreign labor seeking our shores. In the past, both in the United States and Canada, wages were kept down by immigration. The unskilled labor of Southern Europe flooded our lumber camps, mines and factories; and the fewer exigencies of this type of labor caused a general lowering of the rate of wages. The drawing off of hundreds of thousands of men from agriculture and industry in itself operates in keeping the level of wages high.

What will happen at the termination of war? Some manufacturers and leaders of commerce and finance insist that, with a fall in commodity prices, the wages of labor must fall also. Otherwise, it is asserted that Canadian and American industry will not be able to compete with the industries of the United Kingdom and of Europe. So far as the wages of labor are concerned, this contention is not likely to hold true of the United Kingdom, where the level of wages has risen to the American standard. The argument, therefore, reduces itself to the old "pauper labor" contention—that the industry of this continent cannot, on equal terms, compete with industries supported by cheap labor in Europe. It is our belief that the high standard of living attained by Canadian and American workmen makes their labor so efficient that it is relatively cheaper than the low-priced labor of Austria, Italy and the other countries of South Europe. Cheap labor is almost always expensive to the manufacturer, inasmuch as it is inefficient. But, from another point of view altogether, it is essential that a high standard of living for our workers be maintained. The home market is much more important than the foreign; and high wages will permit the masses to support domestic industry. It is, therefore, a short-sighted policy that would demand a heavy cut in wages to tide manufacturers over the period of readjustment.

COLD STORAGE FOR EVERYONE.

With the price of ice ridiculously high, it behooves us to look around for other and cheaper means to keep our perishable foods in an edible condition. It is a fact not generally known that (to use a non-technical phrase) evaporation causes cold. For instance, gasoline, turpentine, camphor, ether, etc., rubbed on the skin make it cold, and that which evaporates the quickest makes it coldest. Desert water bags of canvas keep their contents cool by virtue of the fact that the heat of the sun evaporates the moisture which seeps through, and a stranger in the tropics is surprised to get a drink of cold water from an earthen vessel standing in the sun. Take a galvanized or enamelled pail and set it inside of a large unglazed flower-pot (the larger the better). Plug the drain hole in the bottom of the pot. After placing the butter and milk, etc., in the pail, fill the space between pail and flower pot with cold water nearly to the top of the pail. Stand your apparatus in the sun. The hotter the sunshine the colder will be the contents. Remember that the flower-pot must be unglazed.—Merrick Anderson Co's Circular, Winnipeg.