Monetary Times

Trade Review and Insurance Chronicle

of Canada

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PRINCIPAL CONTENTS OF THIS ISSUE

INDUSTRIAL CONTROL

THE acute industrial difficulties of the past week have increased the element of uncertainty in the industrial and financial outlook in Canada. It has become apparent that, while some of the demands of labor are far reaching, there are manufacturers on the other hand who have not given unions the recognition which is warrented by the record of organized labor. As has been pointed out the unions stand for peaceful action and latest reports from Winnipeg indicate that in that city they have not at any time considered violence. Such difficulties as the present, however, afford to revolutionary agitators the opportunity which they desire.

While there is agitation in some instances for an increased wage scale and shorter hours of labor, the general opinion is that these are already satisfactory. The excessive cost of living at the present time will gradually be relieved by declining prices. The root of the economic unrest is to be found in the fact that the part of labor in industry has hitherto been merely a negative one, the option being to work in accordance with conditions prescribed by the employer or to express dissatisfaction with those conditions by ceasing work. It is, after all, unreasonable to expect that the parties who furnish the capital to an enterprise should entirely control its operations. Labor should be given a positive voice in the management of concerns and the committee or board on which it is represented should be not merely a "welfare" committee to consider the grievances of employees, but a final authority in determining all the activities of an industry, including purchasing and sales, the conditions of labor and the introduction of new capital.

Incident to these new privileges of having a voice in determining its own conditions of labor, the accompanying responsibilities would, we are sure, be accepted automatically. The evidence received before the Dominion Commission on Industrial Relations indicates that there is no feeling in Canada that the capitalist should not receive interest on his investments nor that skilled work should not have the remuneration to which its special qualifications entitle it. It is not conceivable that any organization representing labor, which maintains that it should not have to work unless under satisfactory conditions, should demand the investment of capital unless interest were assured in accordance with market conditions and the risk attendant upon the industry concerned. This process of introducing new representatives in the direction of business enterprise must be gradual as it will take considerable time for leaders to be trained in the knowledge necessary to make them competent administrators. The development of capable trade union leaders, however, indicates that the plan is quite feasible and what is now necessary is the application of that administrative ability which has hitherto been confined to the organization of labor itself. To the actual problems of handling business as a whole.

Such a change would go far towards removing many misconceptions which now prevail, as to the possibility of obtaining shorter hours and an indefinitely increased scale of wages. We are of the opinion that large profits in a few industries have been to a considerable extent responsible for this view, and that if the profits of all Canadian concerns were thoroughly known to labor leaders it would become at once apparent that the divisible margin is very small. One case was mentioned before the Dominion Commission at its session in Hamilton, Ontario, where the employees of a company who had been demanding an eight-hour day, upon being shown that the profits of the company were not sufficient to allow such a concession, unanimously agreed to waive it. Such a change would make it impossible hereafter for the statement to be made that labor is bought and sold like the other elements in production.