

## Future Aims of the Collective Agreement

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[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

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itself? However, gentlemen, the hour is too serious for us to hide certain truths from you. The economy has not always been in the service of the consumer and the consumer, sometimes, has only been considered as an instrument or means; not as an objective, not as the ultimate end of the economic act. We must never forget, in effect, that the total of the consumers of a country are not other men than those who make up the total of the workers, and that, in consequence, as well as the nature of the production, the amount of wages and prices must be studied, but not in view of a brutal and immediate profit but rather in view of a profit which takes into account the conditions of general economic equilibrium, that is, of the purchasing power of the worker-consumer.

It does not help to fool ourselves, if certain countries have utterly destroyed liberty and private initiative at the same time, it is by the pressure brought to bear by those who have been the victims of economic disorder or social injustice. And if we do not wish to see the State invade the domain of the most legitimate economic liberty, it is on condition that we renew audaciously, the conception of an obsolete liberalism and give ourselves rules, because we are at the same time, the most interested in a stable economic prosperity and also the best placed to distinguish the possible from the utopian and the imaginary from the real.

These rules, indispensable if we wish to build a man-sized economy, can best be furnished by the ideal of service to the consumer. Consumer of economic goods worthy of mankind and sold at a price which takes into account the equilibrium of family budgets.

It is undoubtedly a great step forward in the organization of a peaceful world, to see the leaders of the private economy of thirty-three nations come here to Quebec to agree among themselves on such a line of conduct and to work together to realize it.

It is the unhappiness and misery which shocks mankind and incites it to submit to the State's compulsion in order to control its fellow-men. Economic liberty will contribute towards peace if enough men of good will understand how to use this liberty to keep misery and unhappiness away. A pessimistic philosopher, observing his fellow-men concluded at one time that man was like a wolf to other men: the problem which now presents itself, is to know, if, in justice and love, we can build a world where man will be a brother to other men.

We can, we must, God aiding, try it, and your presence and your studies; here, gentlemen, will have greatly contributed in spreading amongst us more confidence in a world finally living in economic prosperity, social justice and international peace.

## FUTURE AIMS OF THE COLLECTIVE LABOUR AGREEMENT

JACQUES ARCHAMBAULT

« The collective agreement alone, if one realizes well its implications, may, in the end, suppress the fundamental conflict of the modern world: the divorce or separation between the social and the economic. »<sup>1</sup> This realistic opinion of Mr. Andre Roy, editor of the *Action Catholique* of Quebec, touches an extremely big and complex problem. How can a legal institution, so simple in itself, fill the constantly widening gap?

Labour relations, it must be noted, are based on common interests and divergent interests. The collective labour agreement, as we might say, canalizes the interests involved, on one hand, in taking for granted the common interests as the

final end of its existence and, on the other hand, in transforming the divergent interests into common interests by the appeal of the good of the enterprise, of the profession and of society.

In our days, the practical difficulty lies in the fact that the differences of opinion come from the social not being integrated in the economic. The collective labour agreement will act as a method of integration if it evolves slowly, in its various clauses, towards a conception adapted from social service inside the enterprise.

In effect, it can be noticed that the divergent interests centre around the question of working hours, salaries, holidays, paid vacations, etc., in a word around the items in which the economic is most important. (Union security clauses, because of their special character, are situated quite apart,

(1) Extract from the article of André Roy, "Le Congrès des relations industrielles", *L'Action Catholique*, Quebec, Monday, April 25th, 1949.

that is why I ignore them here).

There is nothing abnormal in this attitude. Regarding salaries, for example, if considerations of economic order could become real reasons, and not pretexts, to the improvement of the machinery, hygiene, social services of all kinds, well-educated workers directed by intelligent and well-informed leaders would understand that a smaller salary would be to the advantage of both parties since the difference between the salary demanded and the salary offered would be used to improve working conditions.

But, it is not sufficient that the workers be well-educated and directed by intelligent and well-informed leaders, the employer would have to furnish his part of comprehension and intelligence. He would do it in a concrete way in including, for example, in the collective labour agreement, a clause drawn up in this way:

« It is agreed, that during the period which extends between the date of the signature and the date of expiration of the said agreement, the Employer will undertake the following obligations:—

1.—Free medical examinations for all employees;

2.—When a worker must stay away from work because of the sickness of his wife or of his children, on the advice of such an employee, the Employer will send a family helper, appointed for this purpose, to the home of the employee concerned, in order that this employee may return to work without worrying. »

Stipulations of this sort would appear, at this time, rather unwelcome and utopian. The accept-

ance of the collective labour agreement as a social principle in labour relations will be the most important agent of such an evolution. What constitutes the favourable element of the collective agreement is, for the worker, on one hand, a legal guarantee of the employer's good faith and for the employer, on the other hand, a legal guarantee that his business will be stabilized for at least a year in so far as the salaries and working conditions are concerned.

Following this idea, only an institution offering legal guarantees to both parties continually in conflict, will bridge the gap between the social and the economic.

This will be easier than it was to have the agreement accepted as a fundamental base of labour relations. It consisted, at the very beginning, in making the first steps towards a coordination of the forces involved by the smoothing away of the difficulties of economic order which arise by the settlement of salaries and working hours. It now consists in making the first steps towards a coordination of the efforts to make the social implications of a collective labour agreement become a concrete fact by a legal guarantee.

In conclusion: at the present time, attention is centred on the clauses where the divergent interests predominate, that is, on the clauses where the economic comes first; in concentrating the attention of the parties on the clauses where the common interests facilitate agreement, that is, on the clauses where the social comes first, one will smooth away the difficulties.

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**VIE DE L'ENTREPRISE, Monthly review dealing with Committees of Enterprise. Paul Hédiard, Manager, 77 rue Nationale, Lille, France.**

Employer-employee cooperation committees are growing in number and importance in Canada as well as elsewhere. The functions attributed to the committees of enterprise are in certain countries set by law. These committees deal with economic or social activities, or confine themselves to the study of various problems. But whatever be their aims, they need a sure guide to enlighten and direct their work.

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