The question of participation by labour in industrial management has now come to the fore and it is generally recognized that the work of joint production committees can be a factor of increasing value to the efficiency of any manufacturing concern. Those firms who have adopted the method of joint consultation know the extent to which this policy has made for smooth working and efficient production and how it holds out prospects of increased production if all the opportunities that are offered are fully grasped.

According to Sir George Earnest Schuster (Chairman of the (U. K.) Government's Panel on Human Factors in Industry) there are two test questions to be asked. First, “How far is it succeeding as a method for giving the individual worker a position which encourages him to put his heart into his work?”; secondly “How far is it succeeding as an aid to decentralization and the distribution of responsibility so as to create an organization which is live, enterprising and flexible?” In both these aspects Joint consultation must be viewed as a means for fulfilling the two-fold object of achieving the maximum possible output, and of giving all employees the chances to find satisfaction in their daily work as the foundation of a happy life.

The aim of scientific industrial management is not to impose arbitrary authority, but by careful study of the circumstances, to discover the law of the situation—a law equally binding on management and men, and whose discovery should be the business of Joint consultation at every level. This argument has been ably discussed in the latest Fabian pamphlet Workers’ Control? by Eirene White. The Labour Party in the U.K. recently put forward a number of practical proposals for making joint production committees effective. At Scarborough the view was expressed that the employees ought to have more direct participation in the management of industry. (The Times Review of Industry, June 1948) The Journal of the Amalgamated Engineering Union also advocates that trade unionists should be trained for management since in its view, many able and experienced union organizers could, with training, easily qualify for managerial posts. One of the largest concerns which have adopted the method of Joint consultation in England is Richard Thomas and Baldwins Ltd. Out of 26,000 people in its employ, about 19,000 are represented in Joint consultation.

Works Committees in Denmark and Production Committees in Finland have been functioning for sometime past and their contribution to smooth industrial relations and increasing production has been acclaimed by one and all. Production Committees there consider information and questions concerning the economic position and output of the plant; discuss methods of raising output and productive efficiency, of improving working processes, and maintaining discipline. They supervise the effective use of raw materials and fuel and the sale of products; draw up plans to facilitate the supply of equipment and necessities for the employees and promote occupational and technical training and spare-time activities. They examine factors concerning improvements in works safety and industrial hygiene and supervise the application of safety regulations; and finally act as an initial intermediary between the management and personnel and generally work for the maintenance of industrial peace. It is this series of function that results ultimately in a high order of industrial management and efficiency and stabilizes the country’s entire economic system which brings about peace and prosperity for its people.

In India, Joint consultation in industry is relatively a recent development. In pursuance of its decision at the Industries Conference held in December, 1947, the Government is taking active steps to associate labour in all matters concerning industrial production. The machinery which the Government propose to set up, we are told, will function at different levels, central, regional and unit. At the Centre, there will be a Central Advisory Council covering the entire field of industry. Under it, committees for each major industry will be set up. These committees will have sub-committees to deal with specific questions relating to the industry, e.g., production, industrial relations, wage fixation and distribution of profits. Similar organizations will be set up in provinces, each province having a Provincial Advisory Board. Under Provincial Committees there will be Works Committees and Production Committees attached to each major industrial undertaking. These committees will be bi-partite in character, consisting of representatives of employers and employees only, in equal numbers. All other committees will be tri-partite with representatives of Government, employers and employees.

Organizations on the above lines are being set up where they have not already come into existence. The formation of works committees in the sugar factories of the United Provinces is described below.

The sugar industry was the first in which the U.P. Government ordered the setting up of works committees in April 1948, composed of the representatives of the employers and the workmen, with the object of providing a recognized means of consultation between the management and workmen and of preventing friction and misunderstanding. Matters to be dealt with by the Works Committees include distribution of working hours, fixation of shifts, methods of wage payments, settlement of grievances of work-
men, question of physical welfare, discipline and conduct, suggestions for improvement in methods or organization of work, investigation of circumstances tending to reduce the efficiency, and all steps that may be conducive to the harmonious relations between the workmen and the management. The activities of the Works Committees during the year 1948 and during the first 3 months of 1949 (information for which is available from the latest issue of the Labour Bulletin—October, 1949, issued by the Labour Department, U.P.) are summarised below:-

(1) No. of Works Committees.
(2) No. of meetings held.
(3) No. of cases referred.
(4) No. of cases decided.
(5) No. of cases in which the decision of the Works Committees were referred to Conciliation Board.
(6) No. of cases in which the decision of the Works Committees were given effect to by the employers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>January-March, 1949</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of Cases</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Meetings</td>
<td>674</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Cases Referred</td>
<td>1944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Cases Decided</td>
<td>1294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Cases Referred to Conciliation Board</td>
<td>315</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This shows that the Works Committees are working quite satisfactorily. With a net work of similar organization all over the country, it may not be long before we have a full fledged Capital-labour Organization in the country with readiness on the part of industry to deliver the goads, and realization on the part of the worker that it is real wages that matter and not the will-o’-the-wisp of bulky pay-packets. That way alone can India march towards economic socialism which she must in order to have a contented and happy industrial society. "In modern industry, with its tendency towards mechanization and ever larger organizations, the workers, through the Joint production committees, can again become in the fullest and best sense of the word 'Individuals,' people with a say, not merely in the running of their jobs, but of all others which directly affect them. Successful consultation is not a thing that can be ready-made. It must grow naturally in each works, to suit the circumstances and needs of the people employed there. Ideas, guidance, stimulus, there can be from outside, but in the end they must be taken over, shaped and brought 'to life by each committee for itself if the sincerity and vitality of consultation are to be retained". Indeed, the role of Joint consultation in modern industry cannot be overemphasised when a tremendous burden of responsibility for peaceful labour relations, for full production and a stable economy lies squarely on the shoulders of management, and labour in India as elsewhere.
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