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Nos collaborateurs

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In comparison with such a conception of employment, the nature of paternalism clearly reveals itself as a grotesque imitation.

Indeed, as we have remarked at the beginning of this article, if the patronate is the image of fatherhood, paternalism is its caricature! The tragedy of European Communism, for example, is that it has forgotten this difference and has willed the abolishment of all forms of paternity.

It must be admitted that paternalism presents a powerful temptation at a time when social evolution is becoming imperative. Of what does this paternalism consist? Essentially this — it causes an employer to pretend to Christian principles which he does not feel at heart. Paternalism is, one might say, « social phariseism » — the appearance of unselfishness masking an interest all too self-centred. One might cite the patron who considers as generosity on his part what the workers consider only as their just and fair due. A common misapprehension this!

It follows, and we must insist on this point, that this conversion on the part of the employer is only possible when there is a similar conversion on the part of the worker. Nothing is more distressing than the spectacle of an employer's sincere attempts to achieve the paternal attitude being interpreted as the gestures of an interested paternalism. The workers must make an effort to overcome their defiant attitude at the same time that the patron is striving to become a sort of model workman — militant for the improvement of his men's working conditions. Marxism came to grief when it systematically tried to make patrons out of workmen. Liberalism failed because it systematically opposed the patron to the worker. The Guild System of the Middle Ages was successful as long as the « master » was really only the leading worker, in the same way that the king was the greatest gentleman of his kingdom.

That remains to be done is to restore this very spirit to the Christian social order of modern industrial society. The necessity is to prove to the world without delay that Christianity can triumph over the contemporary doctrines of an atheistic humanism.

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Ideas such as these are pertinent to the present situation in Canada. For, employers everywhere seem imbued with an interest in the welfare of their workers. They are envisaging reforms in economic structure reforms inspired by such powerful social writings as those of the Papal encyclicals. Such a movement should, and could, be a great success! The endeavours and mistakes of others may be extremely usefull if they help to avoir wrong moves.

As regards the reforming of the labour class it might be desirable to bear in mind the following conclusions. They have been formulated, it is true, for the European countries (1) where social unrest is much more advanced. But they present,

non-the-less, the advantage of stressing the problems which are waiting to be solved here.

a) Experience shows that the success of an economic wage formula (2) profit-sharing, ownership-participation, proportionate remuneration, shop convenience, independent shifts, operation on a co-operative basis etc.) requires first of all that the employer does not attempt to use it as a stimulant to production. By a paradox which is quite apparant, an economic formula produces an improvement in output only when its primary purpose is the realisation of social justice. The employer's instinct is to utilize the wage formula as a stimulant. The workman's instinct is to interpret the employer's good intentions as calculated selfishness. The formulas alone are not likely to modify in the least such a misunderstanding. From this it follows that their use is of no value unless it expresses a reform in the state of mind. As this reform can not be achieved spontaneously by the working classes — perhaps because of a certain inferiority complex — only the employer class can embark upon it to begin with.

In the last analysis, it is on the true intentions of the employer towards his employees that the solution of the problem depends.

c) Arising from this — the diversity of the structure and the dimensions of the enterprise being known — the choice of an economic wage formula should conform to each individual case. The objective study of the economic and social facts in a given enterprise should proceed and accompany all sincere attempts at reform. Because, there exists, as opposed to the error of paternalism, another as dangerous, although less prevalent — that of utopian idealism.

« Respect for Nature, a passion for reality and the will to do good », these are the contradictory qualities which, through an alliance of Humanity with Divine Grace, can be counted upon to save modern economy from the chaos which threatens it.

(1) Publication of the I.S.E.A.: « Salaire et rendement », p. 164.

(2) In opposition to the technical formulas of salary: — hourly wage, piece work, the systems of Taylor, Rowan, Beveaux, Baunt, Walsley, etc.

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