

Écho du 3^{ième} Congrès Other Peoples Views on our 3rd Congress

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Echo du 3e Congrès

Other peoples views on our 3rd Congress

BUILDING THE CHRISTIAN SOCIAL ORDER

As a Catholic Province of great and rapidly-advancing economic importance Quebec has a special religious responsibility as an example of Catholic social policy. It has a mission to let its light shine before men that they may see its good works and glorify the Church by whose teachings it is inspired. It cannot be asked to justify itself by the purely worldly standards of material success but by the principles which are set forth in the Social Encyclicals and which the representatives of Catholic Quebec acknowledge as their own.

An edifying example of the noble response that the Province is making to the challenge of the times was seen last month in the Third Annual Congress of Industrial Relations held in Quebec City under the auspices of the venerable and progressive University of Laval. It is only 16 years since Laval opened a modest School of Social Science limited to evening classes. Six years later, with the arrival of its present dynamic director, Father Lévesque, O.P., it began to expand marvellously. In 1943 it was elevated to the rank of a Faculty with courses of University level in the social, economic and political sciences. The Faculty is divided into several Departments, one of which is that of Industrial Relations, under the direction of M. Gérard Tremblay, the Deputy Minister of Labor of the Province of Quebec, who combines the qualities of high intellectual culture with unsurpassed practical experience of industrial problems as an organizer and administrator.

The first Congress of Industrial Relations was held two years ago with an attendance of 200 delegates; the Congress last month had an attendance of over 400 representatives of business management, labor organizations, Government services and the clergy. Not all the delegates were Catholics for many large business firms whose management is Protestant appreciate the value of the opportunities afforded by the Laval Department and its Congress for improving industrial relations and solving the problems which face management and labor alike.

The sessions lasted for two days and the general theme was «Forms of Labor-Management Collaboration». Particular subjects were Vocational Training, Works Committees and Industrial Health Services. The spirit of collaboration was most marked and it pervaded the whole atmosphere. We can hardly speak of old-timers at such gatherings because such gatherings are a new development. But those who knew the separate meetings of workers and employers a generation ago remember that the two classes were almost as distinct and different in appearance as black and white. The differences were in speech, in clothing and even in physique. Now it is seldom possible to tell a labor union leader from a personnel manager or a civil servant. The external similarities are representative of the happy rapprochement of minds that has taken place and promises well for the future.

Another marked feature was the practicality of the discussions. Thanks to the degree of agreement on principles that has been achieved the speakers were able to devote themselves to the problems of application, of realization in daily life. But it was not the practicality of materialism of mere bargaining, of give-and-take. There was a lofty Christian idealism which made one feel that Laval University had really succeeded in making itself a laboratory of Catholic social action, that it is educating men to be builders of a social order according to the mind of the Church. This idealism was implicit in all the discussions and it was magnificently expressed at the closing banquet, in an address by Father Lévesque on «The Theology of Labor». Work is not a mere necessity for the supply of physical needs; it is a human collaboration with God in creation; it is a duty of man,

it is a God given vocation; work has indeed a painful character attached to it as a penalty for sin but when this penalty is accepted from the hands of God in a Christian spirit it becomes an act of redemption. Economics is not a dismal science when it is illuminated by Theology.

Henry SOMMERVILLE

(Canadian Register, Toronto)

AUDACE ET FRANCHISE

Le troisième congrès des relations industrielles organisé par la Faculté des sciences sociales de l'Université Laval, vient de se terminer à Québec.

Ces assises annuelles sont devenues en peu de temps l'un des événements les plus importants de la vie professionnelle dans la province de Québec. Chaque fois, un nombre de plus en plus élevé de délégués, représentant les associations et les entreprises les plus en vue dans le monde économique québécois, répondent à l'appel du Département des relations industrielles. Cette année, l'affluence fut si considérable que les organisateurs durent retenir la plus grande salle du Château Frontenac.

Pareil développement eût paru impossible il n'y a pas très longtemps. C'est le mérite d'une université dynamique d'avoir pris l'initiative et la tête d'un tel mouvement de rénovation qui s'impose avec urgence. Seule une institution de ce genre était en mesure de grouper, sous le signe de l'étude désintéressée, des éléments dont les intérêts se heurtent si fréquemment.

Ce qui caractérise ces congrès, c'est l'AUDACE dans le choix du thème et la FRANCHISE dans la discussion. L'an dernier, on abordait résolument et sans détour l'épineux problème de la convention collective et de la sécurité syndicale. Cette année, dans un magnifique pas en avant, on a scruté les formes de collaboration patronale-ouvrière, y compris celles qui impliquent une certaine réforme de la structure traditionnelle de l'entreprise.

Jusqu'à date, dans la province de Québec, ce genre de réformes n'avait retenu l'attention que de rares théoriciens. C'est un heureux signe des temps que ce stage soit désormais franchi et que l'on ait pu discuter de ce problème publiquement, lors du congrès des relations industrielles, d'une façon qui permet d'escompter des réalisations prochaines.

Si l'on ne fait encore que se risquer timidement dans cette voie, au moment où plusieurs pays d'Europe y sont définitivement engagés, il faut évidemment en chercher l'explication dans les différences considérables entre les conditions économiques et les besoins des deux continents. De plus, la pression des éléments révolutionnaires est telle, là-bas, qu'elle a mis les catholiques en demeure de tenter sérieusement l'application de la doctrine sociale de l'Eglise.

Dans la province de Québec, renommée pour son esprit chrétien, le capitalisme a longtemps suivi la même courbe d'évolution que partout ailleurs. Parallèlement, par la force des choses, le syndicalisme ouvrier s'est développé en marge du patronat et a dû limiter son action à fortifier la position des petits salariés en face du capital. L'organisation professionnelle s'est faite sur un plan horizontal.

Heureusement, un sérieux changement est actuellement en cours. De plus en plus, sous l'influence des apôtres de la doctrine sociale de l'Eglise, l'on s'oriente vers des formes de collaboration patronale-ouvrière qui ouvrent des horizons nouveaux sur l'avenir des relations industrielles au Canada français.

(L'Action Catholique)

Gaston CHOLETTE