

1920, and supplemented, after a preliminary draft had been written, by further inquiries in 1921. The duration of this subsequent investigation is not indicated.

The purpose of the study was to evaluate employees' representation as a method for collective dealings between the employees and the managements of large corporations. It is one of a series of inquiries projected in 1919 intended to "record the experience of those industries in which definite effort had been made to give wage-earners a voice in matters affecting their employment." The interest of the investigators, we are told, was focused upon "the status [such plans] give to wage-earners as measured by the workers' opportunity to share in decisions affecting industrial relations."

The author gives credit to the representation plan for the introduction of the actual eight hour day in the Minnequa Steel Works in November, 1918, resulting from the initiative of the employees and the readiness of the management to heed their expressed wishes. The author also regards as a distinct achievement of the plan the practice of utilizing joint committees to investigate wage conditions as the basis for adjustments, both up and down. Less arbitrary action by foremen and superintendents, and consequently greater security of employment, is said to have resulted from the procedure established for adjustment of grievances, though this result is partly attributed to the activity of the employees in the steel strike of 1919.

Fault is impliedly found with the company for its failure to "establish a settled policy of consulting the representatives before making changes which affect working conditions." Stress is laid upon the determining influence of the United States Steel Corporation on wage rates. In view of the clause in the working agreement guaranteeing wages equivalent to those paid by competitors, and the fact that the steel corporation "manufactures in normal times from 40 to 50 per cent of the steel products of the country," the workers in the Minnequa Steel Works, which produces only 2 per cent of the nation's output, are felt to "have no part in planning wage scales." The absence of any strong national labor organization in the steel industry, moreover, together with the fact that it is the policy of the dominant company to decide upon wages without consulting any of its wage-earners, is said to mean that steel workers as a class have no voice in the determination of their wages.

Judged from the standpoint of accurate reporting of events, this book deserves commendation. It bears much evidence of conscientious effort to ascertain the truth by careful verification of alleged occurrences and due recognition of varying opinions as to their meaning. Sources of information are precisely given. In the text or footnotes are to be found also comments of company officials throwing light upon the reasons behind various policies and practices or suggesting interpretations at variance with those of the author.

Yet one lays the book down with a sense of disappointment due perhaps more to what has been omitted than to what has been included. Despite the sub-title which correctly indicates the restricted scope of the work, one unconsciously looks for what the main title would seem

to promise: an evaluation of employees' representation in steel works. According to the latest survey of the subject by the National Industrial Conference Board,<sup>8</sup> there were in 1919 twenty iron and steel mills in the United States in which works councils were operative; in 1922, and also in 1924, seventeen were reported to the Board. Obviously, conclusions based upon observation of a particular plan in a single plant can hardly be regarded as necessarily valid for the industry.

The reviewer's acquaintance with employees' representation in certain other steel companies and in several other industries leads him to believe that it is, not so much the conditions characterizing the particular industry as it is the viewpoint and ability of the management which accounts for the way in which workers are affected by a representation plan. The benefits derived vary from company to company and from plant to plant, and seem primarily dependent upon the objectives and attitudes of management. While purposes and attitudes, of course, are affected by competitive conditions and unionization, the influence of these factors may easily be overestimated.

One wonders why Mr. Selekman's book on the steel works should have been published separately rather than combined with that on the coal mines of the same company. Duplication of certain material would have been avoided and much of the detail would not have suffered from condensation. Significant differences in the success of the plan in the company's two departments, its coal mines and its steel mill, might have been revealed quite as effectively and somewhat more conveniently in a single volume. Possibly this would also have expedited publication which seems to have been rather unnecessarily delayed, as the field work appears to have been completed in 1921. There are occasional references to data obtained from correspondence or through the press relating to later events; but the picture as presented, it seems possible, may not do justice to conditions as they were in 1924.

Apart from these criticisms the book merits unquestionably the serious attention of all who seek a basis of facts for an understanding of the employees' representation movement. It contributes appreciably to our knowledge of the subject and is helpful in suggesting some of the most important shortcomings and difficulties of administration in a concern where there is a works council.

ERNEST R. BURTON.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup>Special Report Number 32, "The Growth of Works Councils in the United States," February, 1925.

<sup>9</sup>Bureau of Personnel Administration, New York.

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