The Minimum Wages in the Building Industry

Gérard Roy

Volume 4, Number 4, December 1948

URI: https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1023460ar
DOI: https://doi.org/10.7202/1023460ar

Cite this article
was inserted in the law it aimed at permitting the
extension of all the clauses of a collective agree­
ment which could apply to a business or an indus­
try. It was only following legal opinions that
this clause was given the restricted scope which
we know at the present.

What is important to-day is not to make the
most of the reasons for limiting the field of action
of the law but to study, to search for and to find
the means of extending it to the whole domain and
to all the problems of employer-employee rela­
tionships.

It would be advisable, in the third place, that
the same facilities be accorded to those who wish
to negotiate in virtue of the Collective Agreement
Act as to those who wish to negotiate in virtue
of the Labour Relations Act. In other words, it
is necessary that the contracting parties be assu­
red the facilities of conciliation and arbitration for
the negotiating of contracts but more, when the
decree is in force, that the disputes should be sub­
mittted to a Labour Tribunal capable of regulating
problems expeditiously and without the complica­
tions and delays of our courts of justice.

To resume, if we wish the Collective Agree­
ment Act to continue to play its part, if we wish
that it should not decline but progress, it must
evolve, it must be reinforced where its opponents
are finding weak points, it must be amended from
the results of experience. Then the contracting
parties will find it to their interest to negotiate in
virtue of this law in preference to all others and it
would benefit from all the advantages of the exis­
ting laws as well for the negotiating of decrees
as for the putting of them into effect.

The Bulletin of Industrial Relations spreads
abroad both principles and facts. Nothing prevents
it, from my way of thinking, from presenting also
opinions or submitting subjects for study. It
could be that I am wrong, but I fear that if the
Collective Agreement Act is confined in limits too
narrow to respond to actual needs, it will be
abandoned in spite of all the services which it
does and could render. This law was erected on
a marvellous principle. It is our business to see
that it is given the opportunity to operate.

THE MINIMUM WAGES IN THE BUILDING INDUSTRY

Gérard Roy

In most of the regions of the Province the
working conditions of labour in the construction
trades are now regulated by decrees put into effect
under the Collective Agreement Act. After fif­
teen years of the Law’s application in this field it
is most interesting to analyse the 84 basic decrees
passed since 1934 and the 335 Orders in Council
amending them, with a view to deriving there­
from statistics extremely useful to employer-
employee organizations, to the parity committees
entrusted with the supervision and carrying out of
the decrees, and to all those who are interested in
the problems of industrial relations.

The following tables dealing with the trades
of joiner-carpenter, electrician and bricklayer give
a general idea of the minimum wages set by the
decrees since 1934 in the principal regions of the
Province.

According to the Federal Bureau of Statistics
the most recent cost of living index, November
1948, stands at 159.6. The comparison between
the increase of the cost of living and the rise in
the scale of wages can be made for each region.
Nevertheless, before drawing definite conclusions
from these figures we must take certain factors
into consideration — the real level of the cost of
living, certain wage levels which were not high
enough in 1939, the strength of labour organiza­
tions etc., etc.

It is most important to underline the fact that
minimum wages (made obligatory by law) not
being subject to the fluctuations of the Law of
Supply and Demand, are a guarantee for the
workman. However, in many regions, the real
wage is often higher than the minimum rate of
the decree because of individual arrangements
resulting from the unprecedented period of activity
in which the building industry finds itself.
TABLE 1: MINIMUM WAGES FOR THE TRADE OF CARPENTER-JOINER IN THE PROVINCE OF QUEBEC 1934-1948

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chicoutimi</td>
<td></td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abitibi *</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hull</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>.95</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td></td>
<td>.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joliette</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>蒙特利尔</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>.95</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td></td>
<td>.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>蒙特利尔</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>.95</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>蒙特利尔</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td></td>
<td>.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>蒙特利尔</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td></td>
<td>.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>蒙特利尔</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td></td>
<td>.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>蒙特利尔</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td></td>
<td>.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>蒙特利尔</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td></td>
<td>.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>蒙特利尔</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td></td>
<td>.45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) Decrees pursuant to the Collective Agreement Act. In the regions comprising more than one zone the rates mentioned are those of Zone I.

TABLE 2: MINIMUM WAGES FOR THE TRADE OF ELECTRICIAN IN THE PROVINCE OF QUEBEC 1934-1948

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chicoutimi</td>
<td></td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abitibi *</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hull</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joliette</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>蒙特利尔</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td></td>
<td>.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>蒙特利尔</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td></td>
<td>.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>蒙特利尔</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td></td>
<td>.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>蒙特利尔</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td></td>
<td>.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>蒙特利尔</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td></td>
<td>.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>蒙特利尔</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td></td>
<td>.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>蒙特利尔</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td></td>
<td>.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>蒙特利尔</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td></td>
<td>.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>蒙特利尔</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td></td>
<td>.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>蒙特利尔</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td></td>
<td>.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>蒙特利尔</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td></td>
<td>.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>蒙特利尔</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td></td>
<td>.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>蒙特利尔</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td></td>
<td>.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>蒙特利尔</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td></td>
<td>.45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) Decrees pursuant to the Collective Agreement Act. In the regions comprising more than one zone the rates mentioned are those of Zone I.
Jean of perfection or, even of progressiveness, but we do feel wish to imply that we have reached an advanced degree man. At the same time our present-day mass production on which we are basing future plans.

We would like to review some Company’s approach to industrial relations, we do not system of ours depends in no small measure on the ability participation in the enterprise.

Christian democracy has taught men to aspire toward greater and greater self-realization and self-expression. It has preached the dignity and worth of the individual man. At the same time our present-day mass production society has been reducing the opportunities offered the individual to secure that self-expression. Mass production society has been reducing the opportunities offered the individual to secure that self-expression. Mass production has turned out of sheer frustration to another form of society, even though in many ways a less desirable one.

At the outset, may we say that in presenting our company’s approach to industrial relations, we do not wish to imply that we have reached an advanced degree of perfection or, even of progressiveness, but we do feel that we are on the way. We would like to review some of the activities which we think have been of value to industry, while creating enormous quantities of goods at low prices, has submerged the individual worker in the flow of production to the point where he is losing, or has lost, all feeling of individual identity, or sense of participation in the enterprise.

It is our belief that the survival of this capitalist system of ours depends in no small measure on the ability of modern industry to protect the dignity and self-respect of the ordinary working man. There is no force in society, other than industrial management capable of solving the problem. If we do not succeed the working man will turn out of sheer frustration to another form of society, even though in many ways a less desirable one.

The Search for a Solution

In seeking an answer in our company, we have put emphasis on the basic attitude of management — of all management — towards the employees generally. Real personnel work is in the last analysis, carried out by the line or the operating organization. If management is genuinely interested in the people it employs and in their progress as individual human beings and makes an effort to express this interest the details will for the most part take care of themselves.

In our view, an Industrial Relations or Personnel Department serves its best purpose in helping to bridge the gap existing between management and labor created by the physical size of modern plants and by mass production factory methods. It is one of the avenues through which management expresses its interest in the employees of the company.