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Gaston Cholette

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SOME THOUGHTS ON THE FIFTH INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS CONVENTION

GASTON CHOLETTE

The Fifth Industrial Relations Convention of Laval which has just finished has increased the enviable reputation which has grown up around this gathering in recent years. By the fruitfulness of the reflections it provoked as well as by the number of people present, the convention was a great success.

The continual progress in the number of those enrolled is a clear sign of the interest aroused by these annual meetings. The figures for the five Industrial Relations Conventions of Laval read as follows: in 1946, 250; in 1947, 300; in 1948, 400; in 1949, 425; in 1950, 475. An important fact to note is that about 150 of the 475 members of the convention were delegates of workmen's organizations, which bears witness to the decided good will of workingmen to be informed and abreast of the times, and to their growing awareness of the new responsibilities incumbent upon them in building the society of tomorrow.

The Convention theme, "Wage Structure", was of capital importance. Wages are the most generalized form of distribution of material wealth in industrial societies. And this distribution itself is perhaps the problem the most urgent and the most difficult to solve for the Christian renewal of society.

Last year, at the closing dinner of the Convention, Mr. Esdras Minville delivered a remarkable lecture on this very question, entitled: "Is the wage system necessary?" That was a magnificent introduction to the 1950 Convention. What rendered the study of wage structures still more opportune this year was the publication of the recent pastoral letter of the bishops, in which their Excellencies insist upon the urgency of instituting a better distribution of wealth and of modifying the wage system.

The speakers at the convention prepared serious works on the principal aspects of the structure of wages. The discussions which followed each conference were carried out with great serenity. In a sphere so litigious as that of labour relations it is one of the great merits of the Laval Convention that it brings employers and workmen together in an atmosphere of calm and impartiality which one finds only with difficulty in the ordinary deliberations of the industrial world, since there the parties ordinarily have in view an immediate objective which directly engages their respective interest. Under the aegis of a university, on the contrary, it is easier to start off with a minimum of prejudice and bias, even regarding the thorniest questions.

The Convention ended with a conference and an allocution on communism. Monsieur Charles de Koninck, dean of the *Faculté de philosophie* of Laval University, spoke at length on this occasion concerning our criticism of communist conduct. He outlined to his audience thoughts on this subject which did not fail to draw out the trivialness and irrelevance of the anti-Communism many profess. The Very Reverend Georges-Henri Lévesque, O.P., dean of the *Faculté des sciences sociales* of Laval University, in the thanks which he addressed to Monsieur de Koninck after his conference, also strongly insisted on the importance of knowing well the true nature of Communism in order to combat it effectively. He also reaffirmed the determination of the *Faculté des sciences sociales* to continue its constructive and positive work, in the field of ideas and also in practical projects, in order to forestall Communism, by unmasking its doctrinal errors and by working to do away with social injustices, which form "the most favorable breeding ground of the revolutionary microbe".