

The participation of Workers in the life of the Enterprise

Gaston Cholette

Volume 5, numéro 2, novembre 1949

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1023288ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1023288ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Département des relations industrielles de l'Université Laval

ISSN

0034-379X (imprimé)

1703-8138 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer cet article

Cholette, G. (1949). The participation of Workers in the life of the Enterprise. *Relations industrielles / Industrial Relations*, 5(2), 17–18. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1023288ar>

Labor. He is silent on its more recent points of view, at least as far as 1946, in the field of wages, conciliation and arbitration, the strike, union security, etc.

Of the nationalistic character of the Catholic Syndicate movement the author does nothing but repeat the basic grounds on which this movement has depended, from its origin, to justify its existence, but he cites no new argument put forward in the Catholic Syndicate press in more recent times.

Concerning Canadian worker representation at the annual meeting of the International Labor Organization in Geneva, Mr. Logan allows his readers to think that the representative of the C.C.C.L. at this conference acted only as technical advisor to the government delegate while in reality since 1945 he has been one of the technical counselors of the Canadian labor delegate.

Lastly, the author devotes several pages to a criticism of many controversial questions brought forward by Catholic syndicalism. This part is the same as in 1928. He also points out the different points of view that he finds even to the right of existence of this movement. He quotes parti-

cularly the evidence of those who, like himself, have never viewed Catholic Syndicalism in Canada with a too-sympathetic eye.

In the measure where its demands differs from that of rival movements, Mr. Logan says that Catholic Syndicalism in Canada throws its weight on the side of the forces which divide English and French Canada. But his prejudices prevent him from understanding the social philosophy, the ethnical reasons and the deep inspiration at the bottom of the movement. His last thought, however, is less pessimistic than twenty years ago as to the actual situation of organized labor in Canada, in short, he thinks that the ideal to seek should be a frank admission of the differences which distinguish each union movement in Canada in order to arrive at a *modus vivendi* permitting in its wake the efficient administration of laws once adopted.

In this he is perfectly right. The national interest demands that this *modus vivendi* between the Canadian and Catholic Confederation of Labor, the Trades and Labor Congress and the Canadian Congress of Labor be established.

BOOKS

LA PARTICIPATION DES TRAVAILLEURS A LA VIE DE L'ENTREPRISE ⁽¹⁾

(THE PARTICIPATION OF WORKERS IN THE LIFE OF THE ENTERPRISE)

GASTON CHOLETTE

If in a generation or two the chief fabricators of social reform in the Province of Quebec are asked what they think of the role of the Church in this domain they certainly will not be apt to respond, « Nothing », as did a French union leader recently to a group of American journalists.

As a matter of fact, in workers' as in employers' associations, and in all spheres of activity common to both these groups, we find the discreet yet decisive influence of the social doctrine of the Church. In the Province of Quebec the clergy, after having played a valuable part in the formation and development of professional organizations, are in the fore front where it concerns the theory of reform.

The Sacerdotal Commission of Social Studies merits, in this regard, a very special mention. Formed recently by the Episcopate of this Province in order to respond more adequately to the needs of the present time, specially where the explanation of the doctrine shown in its broad lines in the encyclicals and its application to

the Quebec milieu are concerned, this body has not waited long before distinguishing itself in the eyes of all by the boldness of its concepts and the firm prudence of its point of view. It will be a long time, for example, before its intervention on the Labour Code project and in the famous Asbestos strike will be forgotten.

In its short existence, it has many times proved its willingness to draw from the social doctrine of the Church its maximum of effect and significance. While supporting steadily the great principles at the base of the traditional doctrine of the Church, and placing itself faithfully in the perspective of the encyclicals and other pontifical texts, it has taken upon itself the mission of formulating for the Province of Quebec the interpretations and applications which are pertinent and opportune.

After having published « Professional Organization in Quebec », it presents to the public a second study on « The Participation of Workers in the Life of the Enterprise ». This is in the form of a booklet of a hundred pages, about half of which contains the opinion of the members of the Commission, while the rest is devoted to citing pontifical texts.

The subject treated, a thorny and controversial one, is of extreme importance since it constitutes the Gordian

(1) *La participation des travailleurs à la vie de l'entreprise*, a booklet of 100 pages by the Commission sacerdotale d'études sociales, for sale at fifty cents at the secretariat of the Sacerdotal Commission of Social Studies, Bishopric of Saint Hyacinthe.

knot of the reform of institutions in the labour world where the fate of society is now in play. On the happy or unhappy regulation of the universal crisis which reigns in labour relations will depend the success or failure of our present civilization. We should then be very grateful to the Sacerdotal Commission of Social Studies for having courageously examined this problem and for having cast on it the light of its knowledge and impartiality.

Apart from the introduction, in which is explained and appraised the status and the aspirations of Labour, the work is divided into five parts. These five parts cover the following subjects: general ideas on ownership and the enterprise, the capitalistic conception of enterprise, the sharing of workers in the management of the enterprise, particularly in joint stock companies, finally the sharing of workers in the ownership of the enterprise. In conclusion, we find directives on the responsibilities which devolve upon each in «The advance towards reform of the enterprise».

It is not possible to summarize this work of the Commission on «the participation of workers in the life of the enterprise» while faithfully respecting at the same time the thought found there, because there are too many elements and too many nuances which must retain their relative importance if the whole perspective is not to be falsified.

The best thing to do in a review, or rather, a commentary like this, is to draw in the broad lines and ignore the details. The main idea of the Commission, in this brochure, is that we should act in such a manner that the workers will share more and more closely in the life of the enterprise (particularly in certain cases where the present economic regime has capitalized on abuses) by a progressive advancement towards co-ownership, co-management and sharing of profits.

One finds here the same theme and, in general, the same moral appreciation and the same attitude as in the series of articles on the reform of structure published two years ago in the *Industrial Relations Bulletin*.²

After having, in the introduction, pointed out the opportunity and the urgency of promoting the workingman in the scale of the enterprise, the profession and the nation, the members of the Sacerdotal Commission analyse clearly the right of ownership in the context of capitalist enterprise whose commonest expression is in the joint stock or limited liability company. They make it clear that the right of ownership varies with the nature of the object and that in the case of an enterprise the right of the shareholders and their representatives is not exclusive and absolute because the «object» here, besides involving persons as well as material things, is essentially ordained to the service of society.

In the second part, bearing on the capitalistic conception of the enterprise, we find an enumeration of the grave abuses of present-day capitalism, a moral judgment on the capitalist system, a description and a moral opinion of the labour contract, finally a general view of enterprise reforms.

The third part (on the sharing of workers in the profits of the enterprise) treats of the remuneration of capital and labour as well as the sharing of extra profits. On this subject, here are two important sentences: «These rights (of workers) take precedence over the right of capital to profits, to dividends, to bonuses and to improvements, as the human element takes precedence over capital money. Workers also have a right to their share of the excess profits».

In what concerns the «Sharing of workers in the management of the enterprise, especially in the joint stock companies», which forms the fourth part, the authors declare that: «Theoretically, there is no objection of moral, economic or social value against co-management». In practice, they acknowledge that this reform can only be established progressively and they make the following suggestions: «In the social field, nothing prevents the attainment of co-management. On the technical level, it should be consultative with an increasing tendency towards the sharing of deliberations. On the commercial and financial level, the three normal steps should be: information, consultation, then deliberation».

In the fifth section, the Commission specifies the respective ownership rights of the share-holders and the workers in the enterprise.

And that is enough to point out the opportuneness of the work and to sharpen the curiosity of anybody who pretends to be in touch with the times.

Over and above the distinction between employer and employe, which threatens more seriously every day to become a pitiless separation, there is human labor itself: the work to be done, the job to which every man contributes something vital and personal, with a view to supplying society with goods and services adequate to its needs. It lies in the very nature of labor, understood in this sense, to draw men together in a genuine and intimate union, and to restore form and structure to a society which has become shapeless and unstable. This in turn would infuse new life into the relations between society and the State.

By contrast, those who would make of society and state a mere conglomeration of laboring-men, disregard the fundamental nature of labor and civil society. Labor is emptied of its real meaning and denied its inward unifying power. In the last analysis, these people are not here planning to organize men—laborers considered as men—but to heap up a gigantic sum of incomes in the form of salaries or wages. The danger that economic forces may control the State, to the serious detriment of the general welfare, is every bit as serious in this instance, as when the State is subject to the dominating influence of capital.

(2) *Structural reforms in Enterprise*, a booklet of 210 pages, for sale at the Département des relations industrielles, 2, rue de l'Université, Québec.