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CHRONIQUE SOCIALE. CHOPARD.
Monday, 29th May, 1950.

In these we have already mentioned the importance of the thirty-third international Labour Conference beginning in Geneva on June 7th. It will go into problems relating to unemployment, full employment, relations between men's and women's salaries and besides will examine five recommendations dealing with different aspects of the relationships between employees, employers and the State. The recommendations are as follows: No. 1: regarding collective agreements between employer and employee, 2) regarding conciliation and voluntary arbitration, 3) co-operation between employers and employees in the undertaking, and 4) and 5) are about co-operation between public bodies and employers and workers associations on both professional and national economic levels. The report of the International Labour Office remarks that in one form or another collective agreements have been come to in 48 countries, that is to say in the vast majority of member states of the ILO. Basically, these agreements, generally limit themselves to regulating conditions of work and salary. In countries where the economy is to a great extent directed by the State, these agreements have somewhat lost importance since the war. The reason is that salaries have been strictly fixed by the government as a part of policy to combat inflation. Many governments have blocked salaries. In the totalitarian, so-called democracies in Eastern Europe, collective agreements, are, like the unions, only one of the instruments for facilitating the carrying out of the governments plan and for submitting the workers to a strict discipline which they are not allowed to debate. They are used to aid increased production, not in order to raise the standard of living, but to increase military potential. This state of affairs considerably limits working people's rights and weakens the possibility of their sharing the fruits of their work. Such things do little to make people happy in their work; they give no incentive to production — that is, without force — nor do they increase the business' capacity for competition; and certainly they do nothing for strengthening confidence between the owners and the workers.

In many Western countries, this limitation on collective agreements has surely helped to bring grist to the communist mill; the waves of strikes which have broken over France and Italy, and to a lesser extent Great Britain, show this clearly. To-day, there is evidence of a reaction: A return towards free scaling of salaries and an awidening of the scope of collective-agreements. That is absolutely logical. Salaries being determined basically by production — this itself is regulated by economic conditions — the collective agreement should encourage workers to examine economic problems themselves. The ILO report state that such a movement is in fact coming into being in more and more countries so as to insure that workers' associations will take part in applying measures designed to increase production. On their side the employers admit the necessity of giving the workers guarantees regarding their share of the results of production. In other words, it is now more and more realized that the workers will only agree to make further efforts if they are assured of a part of the results of their efforts. In this regard it's interesting to recall that the London Foreign's Ministers' Conference made it clear that the results of social and

economic progress should not be grabbed for strengthening military measures. In itself, that shows that people are convinced that collective agreements in the Western democracies should have other aims than those of the Eastern countries.

Now for the ILO recommendations concerning collaboration between public bodies and workers and employers associations in both private industry and a country's economy: they confirm a phenomenon not generally recognized: that the freedom of action of businesses is, from now on, limited. The fact is that it's prosperity depends to a very large extent on measures taken on the professional and the national — even international — level. Furthermore, the comments made in most different circles) made on the plan for uniting German and French coal and steel industries put forward by French foreign minister Schuman, show one thing especially that the plan can only come into being if the unions are consulted first and the workers take a full part in its working out. Therefore, the enlarging of the scope of collective agreements is the condition without which a peaceful solution of all economic and social problems is not possible.

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