

SETTLEMENT OF WAGES DIFFICULTIES IN B.C. SHIPYARDS

IN earlier issues of the *Labour Gazette* (see *Labour Gazette*, April, 1918, p. 231, and May, 1918, p. 310) reference was made to friction which had arisen over the wage question in British Columbia shipyards and machine shops and to the appointment of a Commission to look into the same. The Commission has since made a report, which while signed by all members, is stated to be the work of the chairman, Hon. Mr. Justice Murphy, who assumes responsibility for it, and states that throughout the report the words "the Commission" are used for convenience in phraseology. The attitude of the other members of the Commission in regard to the various points is noted with each question discussed.

The report states the Commission assumed two functions (1) to give decisions on the various points in controversy, and (2) to make recommendations with a view of stabilizing labour conditions in the shipbuilding industry in British Columbia for the period of the war. The decisions, as distinguished from the recommendations (it is stated) "are founded on the evidence and exhibits and are not to be taken as expressing the views of the Commission on the points decided as to what would be fair and just if the Commission were a Conciliation Board and not a Board of Inquiry."

The Questions at Issue

After stating the purposes for which the Commission was appointed and reviewing the shipbuilding industry in British Columbia and the relation of the shipbuilding firms and machine shops to the Imperial Munitions Board, for which Board most of the shipbuilding was under construction, the report points out that organized labour, through the Metal Trades Council of Victoria and Vancouver, put four demands before the Commission, namely:

1. That they were entitled to an all-round 10 per cent increase in the wages then being paid in wooden and steel shipyards.
2. That the differentiation in pay which existed in the yards as between men classed as house carpenters and those classed as shipwrights was unjust and should be abolished.
3. That ordinary labourers should be paid \$4 a day.
4. That an agreement should be entered into between the Imperial Munitions Board and organized labour.

In addition to these specific questions, other matters put before the Board were: (1) the question of the shortage of caulkers and the attitude of the Caulkers' Union in regard thereto, (2) the efficiency of organized labour, (3) as to whether the night shift should receive an increase over the rates paid the day shift, and (4) as to the position of the machine shops which had contracts to supply material to the shipyards in the event of wages being increased.

The Board's Decisions and Recommendations

After a lengthy review of the circumstances leading up to the men's demands and to the evidence taken before the Commission, the report finds:

"That the men in the wooden shipyards are entitled to the 10 per cent increase demanded, retroactive from February 1, provided they are willing to work 48 hours a week on straight time in all yards except during June, July and August," and provided that they accepted the ruling as to carpenters and the wage rate for labourers contained in the Macey award. (The award thus referred to is the decision given by the United States Wage Adjustment Board

—sometimes called the Macey Board, from the name of the chairman—which fixed the rates to be paid all classes of labour in the shipbuilding districts of the United States Pacific coast. Under this decision the rate for carpenters was to be \$6 per day for those men who had worked three continuous months at house carpenters' rates, which meant that all house carpenters should serve three months in the shipyards at the rate of \$4.50 per day before being entitled to the \$6 rate. The Macey award fixed labourers' wages at \$3.25 per day.)

To this finding of the Commission, Mr. Tonkin, the commissioner identified with the shipbuilding interests, dissented, and Mr. Kelly, the commissioner identified with the labour interests, while agreeing that on the evidence the chairman was right, stated he would submit recommendations in regard to the hours.

In regard to the 10 per cent increase in the iron shipyards, the Commission found that in the case of the Coughlan yards there were three fair courses which should have been taken by the men: (1) to abide by the existing contract until it lapsed by effluxion of time on August 1, (2) to open it up by giving 15 days' notice required by the agreement, and (3) to apply to the Imperial Munitions Board at Ottawa to fix a new wage scale under the clause in the contract which makes the decision of the Board an operative factor in fixing wages. The Commission submitted, however, that "the Coughlan firm have a moral claim to be fairly treated, which means that they should be allowed a fair profit on their operations in so far exclusively as such profit would be impaired by the granting of this 10 per cent increase." The Commission recommended that if the 10 per cent increase were put into effect in the Coughlan yards it should be put in force at the Wallace yards and that the Imperial Munitions Board should favourably consider any application for relief on the part of this firm on thorough accounting as to curtailment of profits owing to the forced

adoption of the new scale. While finding that the men were not entitled to the increase from February 1, the Commission recommended that the matter of back pay should not be an obstacle in the way of establishing industrial peace. Mr. Kelly agreed with the conclusions of the Commission on the question, but was of opinion that the Coughlan firm should have informed the men when they made the demand for the 10 per cent increase that under the contract they should have applied to the Imperial Munitions Board at Ottawa and that the Coughlan firm should have informed the Imperial Munitions Board at Ottawa of the demand, and should have told the men they would do so. He also stated he would make a recommendation as to hours as in the case of the wooden shipyards. Mr. Tonkin dissented.

While referring to the 10 per cent increase as dependent on the acceptance of the Macey decision as to carpenters and labourers, the Commission recommended that carpenters doing shipwright's work in shipyards should receive the minimum rate for shipwrights (\$6 per day) and that the 50 cents per day which had been deducted from some of the carpenters' pay by some yards following advice of the Macey Board's decision on the question should be refunded. Mr. Tonkin assented to the refunding of 50 cents per day to these carpenters, but dissented from the main body of the finding. Mr. Kelly assented. The Commission also recommended that common labour be paid a rate of \$3.85 per day of eight hours, and that it should be based on the acceptance of the 48 hour week. Mr. Kelly agreed as to the rate; Mr. Tonkin, while dissenting, recommended \$3.60 per day.

The demand of the Metal Trades Council that the Imperial Munitions Board should enter into an agreement with organized labour was refused, as in the Commission's opinion the agreement called for a closed shop and as the money contributed to the munitions industry was raised by taxes on the people of Canada generally there should be no in-

terference with the right of any individual to obtain employment. Mr. Tonkin agreed, but Mr. Kelly dissented.

All members of the Commission were agreed that the situation in regard to the caulkers was a regrettable one, it being found that on the evidence the caulkers' organization as a body distinct from the Metal Trades Council, had sought to unduly impede the efforts of the employers to remedy the shortage of caulkers either by the training of apprentices or the establishment of schools to teach caulking. It was considered regrettable, however, that certain negotiations, which had taken place at the outset of difficulties between the Caulkers' Union and the representative in British Columbia of the Imperial Munitions Board in which the union proposed to increase the number of apprentices, had not been pressed to a definite conclusion.

On the question of an additional 10 per cent to the night shift, the Commission found the men were entitled to it, but suggested that where three shifts were worked an additional 5 per cent be paid to the second and third shifts on the understanding that the shifts were changed every two weeks, and, failing the swinging of the shifts, that they be paid 10 per cent above the day shift.

All members of the Commission were agreed that the efficiency of organized labour in the shipyards was fully equal to that in any yard on the coast, the Commission, however, holding that there must be a fair day's work for a fair day's pay and a full day's work for a full day's pay.

While the Commission pointed out there was no obligation on the part of the Imperial Munitions Board to reimburse contract shops for added costs in consequence of the 10 per cent increase, it recommended that the Imperial Munitions Board "should favourably consider any application made by these firms to it for relief" in the event of the increase going into effect. Mr. Kelly concurred, and Mr. Tonkin, although holding against the increase, was of opinion that if the Dominion Govern-

ment put the increased rates into effect in the shipyards, there was a strong moral obligation on the part of the Government to pay the increased labour costs to outside shops who had based their contracts on the lower rate.

The Commission also made the following suggestions supplementary to the foregoing:

That a Dominion Government Wage Adjustment Board be appointed to deal with the shipbuilding industry in its relation to labour, composed of one representative nominated by the contractors, one by organized labour and the third, the chairman, by the Dominion Government.

That all restrictions against what is termed unfair material should be eliminated with the qualification that where fair material were obtainable in British Columbia, other things being equal, it should be purchased there.

That agreements be entered into for the duration of the war.

That the question of open or closed shops be left to the negotiations of each party to the agreements.

That full freedom be given to the employer to take men from the ranks of labour to train them as mechanics, and that these men be graded and paid according to ability.

That the question of new grades of labour with corresponding increases be dealt with by the proposed wages adjustment board.

That agreements contain the usual clauses as to the settlement of disputes and grievances, and, failing a settlement between the parties, that the matters be referred to the proposed wages adjustment board and no strike or lockout take place until this board, after a public hearing, hands down a decision.

Settlement of Dispute

Following the Board's report, which was handed out April 23, the Metal Trades Association held a number of meetings and finally took a ballot of the

unions concerned on the question of accepting the Board's recommendations. The men voted against accepting the Board's award, and, on May 23, declared a strike. All employees of the various coast shipyards, with the exception of Coughlan's, the Vulcan Iron Works and the British Columbia Marine Company, which had agreements with the unions, went out, about 5,000 workmen being affected. The men remained on strike until June 4, when the dispute was adjusted through the efforts of Hon. G. D. Robertson, who had proceeded to Vancouver at the request of the Dominion Government, and after full conference with the Minister of Labour. An agreement was arranged between employers and employees covering the shipbuilding industry, the settlement representing a slight improvement for the men over the terms of the findings of the Commission, and having the additional feature of continuity until the end of the war. It was agreed that wage rates should be advanced quarterly as might be warranted by fluctuation in the cost of living and that all grievances arising which the parties were unable to settle between themselves would be referred to an adjuster, whose decision should be final. It also provided that during the life of the agreement there should be no strikes or lockouts. The full text of the agreement which governs "the operations of shipbuilding and allied manufacturing plants in the province of British Columbia as from June 1st, 1918," follows:

Text of Agreement

SHOP RULES.

1. Eight hours shall constitute a regular day's or night's work, and 44 hours shall constitute a regular week's work.

2. All time worked over eight hours will be considered overtime and be paid for at the rate of double time until workman is relieved. Sundays and Dominion holidays, including the following, New Year's Day, Good Friday, Victoria Day, Dominion Day, Labour Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and Saturday afternoons will be paid for at the rate of double time. Under no circumstances shall any work be per-

formed on Labour Day, except to preserve life or property.

3. Where second and third shifts are worked the employer will allow 30 minutes for meals in each of these shifts. Where a double shift is worked double time will be paid if the job does not last longer than three nights.

4. Should a man be working during the day, then be transferred to a night shift, he shall receive the regular rate of overtime for the first night.

5. Men sent to work outside city will receive first-class transportation, board and wages while travelling and an allowance of \$2.50 per day for board while working or waiting.

6. If a man has worked all day and is requested to travel at night, he shall receive the regular day's pay. Sleeping accommodation not being provided, the overtime rate shall prevail.

7. The employees in each craft or calling in a shop or yard shall have the right to select three of their number to represent them as members of the shop committee. Each member of this committee shall be chosen by majority vote in such manner as the employees shall direct. The chairman of each craft committee shall be a member of the joint shop committee.

8. Any committeeman appointed in the manner provided in the preceding clause who shall be found to have been discharged without just and sufficient cause after due investigation in the manner herein provided for the adjustment of grievances shall be reinstated with full pay for all time lost.

9. It is agreed that all work done in city districts and adjoining municipalities where it becomes necessary for a workman to travel from shop to job and job to shop, said travelling to be in the company's time and carfare to be supplied.

10. All grievances which arise in any shop or yard shall be given consideration as follows:

- (a) All complaints and grievances to be adjusted by the foreman in charge if possible.
- (b) When such adjustment cannot be made between the foreman and the men directly interested, the matter will be taken up by the company direct and the shop committees representing the craft having the grievances, and they shall endeavour to reach a mutual understanding.
- (c) If the matter cannot be adjusted between the shop committee and the employer, the shop committee may call in to conference with the employer a representative chosen by the committee.
- (d) In the event of an adjustment of such grievance not being reached under the provisions of the foregoing clauses, then the matter shall be referred to the ad-

juster, whose decision shall be final, and in the meantime there will be no lockout on the part of the company or strike on the part of the men.

11. All employees shall be paid at least every two weeks and arrangements shall be made to pay in cash. In no case shall more than three days' pay be held back.

12. Any employee being laid off, discharged or quitting of his own volition, shall receive all wages and personal property within 24 hours of the termination of his employment.

13. Men required to work in oil tanks, or tanks of boats carrying oil, or acid tanks, the same shall be cleaned and steamed according to Government regulations. Time and one-quarter shall be paid for exceptionally dirty work.

14. Men now receiving rates in excess of the minimum rates herein quoted will suffer no reduction, except as justified under provisions of clause 15.

15. These rules to remain in effect for the period of the war. The wage rates will be revised every three months according to official information on the cost of living as published in the *Labour Gazette* of the Department of Labour of the Dominion of Canada as applicable to the Province of British Columbia.

16. The adjustment of grievances and of rate, as provided in clauses 10 and 15 of these regulations shall be made by an adjuster appointed by the Federal Government on the joint recommendation of parties concerned. In the event of their being unable to agree, the adjuster shall be named by the Federal Government on the joint recommendation of the Minister of Labour and Senator Robertson.

RATES OF PAY.

Machinists	\$6.00
Machinists' specialists	4.50
Machinists' helpers	4.00
Boilermakers	6.00
Shipfitters	6.00
Riveters	6.00
Chippers	6.00
Caulkers (steel)	6.00
Flange turners	6.60
Pressmen	6.00
Planermen	5.00
Angle and frame setters	6.00
Punch and shear men	4.95
Countersinkers	4.65
Drillers and reamers	4.50
Holder on	4.65

Slab helpers	4.30
Anglesmiths	6.60
Anglesmith heaters	4.50
Machine flange helpers	4.50
Plate hangers (leading hand)	5.50
Plate hangers' helpers	4.30
Flange fire helpers	4.50
Boilermakers' helpers	4.30
Shipfitters' helpers	4.00
Rivet heaters	4.00
Blacksmiths	6.00
Blacksmiths' helpers	4.50
Moulders	6.00
Moulders' helpers	4.00
Furnacemen	4.95
Casting cleaners	4.30
Foundry carpenters	4.95
Patternmakers	7.15
Coppersmiths	6.60
Coppersmiths' helpers	4.00
Plumbers and pipefitters	6.00
Plumbers' and pipefitters' helpers	4.00
Acetylene welders	6.00
Acetylene burners	5.50
Sheet metal workers	6.60
Sheet metal workers' helpers	4.00
Painters	5.50
Painters (bitumastic)	6.60
Electrical workers	6.00
Electrical workers' helpers	4.00
Operators of locomotive cranes	6.60
Operators of Gantry cranes	6.60
Operators of double cable ways	6.60
Operators of all double machines	6.60
Operators of electrical, steam or air operated winches and donkeys	6.60
Operators of single aerial cable ways	6.00
Operators of overhead cranes (in shops)	6.00
Steam and electrical operators in power houses	6.00
Engineers in charge of boilers	5.50
Firemen	4.40
Oilers	5.00
Furnacemen	5.00
Operators of single drum steam, electric or air winches and donkeys not hoisting	5.00
Caulkers (wood)	7.70
Shipwrights, joiners, millmen and boat-builders	6.60
Riggers	6.00
Air machine tool men	4.95
Planking men	4.95
Ceiling men	4.95
Beetlers	4.95
Hook tenders	4.40
Degree men	4.40
Hand hammer clinchers	4.00
Woodworkers' helpers, general	4.00
Labourers	3.85