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MARGARET ANNA SCHAFFNER

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THE LABOR CONTRACT FROM INDIVIDUAL
TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

BY

MARGARET ANNA SCHAFFNER

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PREFACE

The present study of the labor contract is tentative in nature. Certain preliminary chapters are here presented as an introduction to a larger study of collective bargaining which the writer intends to complete from the mass of material collected on present conditions in the United States.

The period sketched in the present study lies between the close of the 18th and the beginning of the 20th century. This period marks the transition from individual to organized industry in the United States and it is this transition with which these preliminary chapters are especially concerned.

The facts presented are culled from data secured largely through personal contact with employers and workmen. The work of investigating actual conditions of industry, of interviewing employers and workmen, and of attending the meetings of their various organizations and associations was carried on mainly in Chicago supplemented by work in New York city and in certain smaller centers. The documentary material has been culled from a variety of sources the most fruitful being the records kept in the central administrative offices of some of the stronger unions. The courtesies extended by some of the national and international presidents and secretaries enabled the writer to secure a large amount of evidence from unpublished sources. Certain employers' associations having "labor commissioners" also extended many courtesies in the way of furnishing documentary material bearing on their various methods of bargaining with employees. Yet all the evidence secured through documents is of secondary importance compared to the insight which gradually breaks upon one from daily contact with the persons actively engaged in industry. The writer has come to certain conclusions, which are not generally accepted and which are not borne out by docu-

mentary proof. Nevertheless they seem to be borne out by evidence which rests upon fundamental facts in our industrial life.

The writer desires to express her sincerest thanks to Professor Henry Carter Adams of Michigan University for many helpful suggestions in the early stages of the work, and to Professor John R. Commons of the University of Wisconsin for suggestive criticisms in the final preparation of the manuscript. The many courtesies extended by officials of labor organizations, by employers, and by "labor commissioners" are thoroughly appreciated. It is a cause for regret that their large number precludes individual recognition of invaluable assistance in enabling the writer to enter into the actual experiences of industrial life. Finally, to Professor Richard T. Ely of the University of Wisconsin, the writer desires to express her deepest obligation. His continued interest and assistance made possible the collection of the data upon which the investigation is based, and his kindly encouragement and helpfulness have made possible the presentation of the material in this preliminary form.

MARGARET A. SCHAFFNER.

THE LABOR CONTRACT FROM INDIVIDUAL TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

INTRODUCTORY

In the evolution of the labor contract in the United States two historic facts confront us: the individual bargain of a century ago and the collective agreement of the present day. Separated by less than a century's development, there is a transition from individual to associated action, and, although the individual contract necessarily persists, collective bargaining is coming more and more to have a part in our industrial life.

A close investigation into our economic history reveals the unequal chronological development of our industries. This fact is the key to an understanding of our industrial development. It is impossible to gain an historic conception of our industrial relations until we recognize not only the interdependence but also the separate development of our great industries. To lose sight of the changes which take place in each separate industry in its development from small beginnings until it becomes a well adjusted mechanism employing all of the economies incident to that particular business were as fatal to an understanding of the various stages of collective bargaining as to lose sight of the general advance of our industry as a whole. The past century presents a kaleidoscopic view of industries in their weak beginnings along with those grown to world wide importance, and in practically every decade the complex process of industrial growth is illustrated by industries which co-exist in their various stages of development.

The varying relations between employer and employee which have from time to time expressed themselves in the labor contract are largely a reflex of conditions prevailing in our various industries. Hence it is that these relations are so different in different industries at the same time. The formal relations expressed in the labor contract reflect, not so much the spirit