UNION-MANAGEMENT COOPERATION IN PRODUCTION*


Two manufacturers and a former WPB official discuss the various aspects of the cooperative plan sponsored by the WPB during the war, and agree that joint committees can, if properly administered, contribute to morale and productive efficiency.


The authors believe that "union-management cooperation to reduce costs, eliminate wastes, increase productive efficiency, and improve quality represents a practical program that provides workers with effective direct participation in the creative phases of management ... thereby improving the competitive position of a business enterprise and increasing the earnings of both workers and owners." The Steelworkers' program is described and a number of cases cited illustrating the results achieved through its adoption. Union shop agreements are considered essential before cooperation becomes practical.


Mr. Harbison suggests that union-management cooperation is one of "the great unexplored areas of labor-management relations which must be charted with some precision as a first step in evolving a plausible theory of what the effect of unionization and collective bargaining will be on the economy." The author concludes that "co-operative endeavor between management and labor is most likely to have its roots in competitive struggles between firms," and that such "competition is the main force which can be counted upon to lead to factual rather than emotional collective bargaining."

*Items from this list should be ordered directly from the publisher. Addresses are given in connection with each reference.

A five-point program offered by the union to put the industry “on a sound and solid basis,” including promotion of New York styles and the New York market; fair trade practices; planning; cost accounting and budgetary control; and improved factory management. The contract resulting from this proposal (signed Feb. 28, 1941) included specific provisions covering promotion and plant efficiency, while the remainder of the program was left to be worked out gradually through education.


An authoritative survey of British wartime experience with cooperative machinery at the national, regional, and factory levels. While there was no obligation to set up joint production committees, both the government and the trade unions encouraged their formation, and signed agreements for government-operated establishments embodying constitutions for such committees. The committees were advisory and considered only matters relating to production and efficiency, while wages, hours and negotiable questions were left to the collective bargaining system.


A detailed description of the program of the War Production Drive. The organization and functions of the labor-management committees are explained, and three case studies are presented from reports of government field representatives. The author concludes that “the desired results have been achieved only where management and labor have built up an attitude of mutual respect and confidence, where labor standards are equitable, where labor has skilled and trusted leadership and management has a capacity for dealing fairly with labor both in the shop and around the conference table.”


A psychological interpretation of the issues in union-management cooperation. Two cases of cooperation are examined and analyzed in terms of the broader problems involved in the extension of this practice. The values of such plans, the conditions favorable to their success, the wide variety of joint activities they cover, and their relation to collective bargaining and management prerogatives are all
briefly discussed. Concluding comments by the three authors reveal different, and, on some points, conflicting ideas as to the place of such cooperation in the resolution of employer-employee conflicts.


A brief summary of cooperative experiments, with examples of three general types: (1) elimination of waste through shop committees; (2) research for introduction of new machinery and processes; (3) comprehensive programs for improvement of the business.


Both Mr. Watt and Mr. Johnston stress the importance of labor and management solving their own problems without government interference, and recommend the joint committee as an essential instrument for increasing production and bettering relations. Mr. Chalmers and Mr. Wolf describe the success of the wartime labor-management committees.


One of the most comprehensive studies of union-management cooperation in the United States published to date. Separate chapters are devoted to cooperation in the Cleveland women's garment industry, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers' cooperative policy, and the Naumkeag experiment. Two chapters describe the benefits and problems of the programs on the railroads, and a concluding chapter deals with the economic basis of and the outlook for union-management cooperation.


A handbook for union leaders encouraging the setting up of a cooperative research program and giving practical suggestions as to how to go about it and how to handle the problems most likely to be encountered.

This chapter discusses three methods of cooperation: production committees; joint research, involving the use of independent experts; and the union as a production and engineering advisor. Examples of each type are given. The authors believe that the War Production Board may "have done as much for union-management cooperation as the National Labor Relations Act did for the spread of collective bargaining," and that such cooperation may "make both employers and unions more understanding and cooperative bargainers."


This last revision of the basic guide published by the War Production Board was distributed just before V-J day, and embodies the experience gained during the war. It covers all aspects of joint committee programs and is designed to help both those desiring to set up a cooperative plan and those who already have one in operation.


A description of a case in which a company went to the union for help in reducing scrap and increasing efficiency. Mr. Armstrong feels that the results clearly prove "that the problems of waste and effective workmanship can be handled cooperatively by committee organization, which focuses the attention of the persons directly concerned in each case upon its causes and their removal."

Walpole, G. S. Management and men; a study of the theory and practice of joint consultation at all levels. London. Jonathan Cape Ltd. (91 Wellington St. West, Toronto, Canada). 1944. 200 pp. 7s. 6d.

The managing director of a well-established English engineering firm employing 700 workers presents cogent arguments for union-management cooperation both on a factory level and on a national level. After discussing the theory of joint consultation, the author describes in some detail the mechanics of the successful program in his own plant. The third portion of his book is devoted to a discussion of the extension of such cooperation on a national scale.


A detailed account of the cooperative programs of the Baltimore and Ohio, Canadian National, Chicago and Northwestern, and Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroads, all of which were inaugurated in the '20's. The author concludes that "no good reason exists why the technique of union-management cooperation on the railroads should not be tested out, and with some modification be found applicable in other sections of the field of transportation and in various non-transportation industries."