

## IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST

The asbestos strike has dragged on now for more than four months. Tempers have flared from time to time. Violence marred its conduct at several points. Whether or not this violence brought the parties to their senses, it was in fact succeeded by efforts to settle the dispute by compromise, if not by goodwill. A mood of this kind lasts only so long and we have seen this one dissipate in the presence of the union's evident determination to make no concessions at all to get its men back to work.

The good offices of both Government and Church have been available to the parties. These, too, seem to have been rejected. Company and union are again deadlocked and we see renewed efforts, by advertisements in the newspapers and lengthy statements by union leaders, to court public opinion. This new departure suggests how important is public opinion to both sides in this strike.

This strike began as an ordinary industrial dispute. The public interest was not then directly involved but as the dispute settled into stalemate public interest did become involved. The dispute took on implications much wider than those of a disagreement between a company and its employees. That is why it is important to heed the voice of reason now. Workers have suffered. The company has suffered. The law has not emerged unscathed. Every day's delay increases the suffering of all. If slight concessions can be made at all to the interests of peace, now is the time to make them.

It should be remembered that what is being attempted now is not a settlement of the issues that gave rise to the strike. These are something for arbitration. Proposals made within the last few weeks are designed to get the men back to work — and at higher rates of pay — nothing more. Yet we see the union manoeuvring these discussions toward a basic settlement, ignoring, or tending to ignore, the need for getting the strikers back to work before moving on to the arbitration proceedings which form the only path along which the union can travel back to legality.

In the interests of a settlement — in the public interest — it has been agreed to overlook the original illegality of the strike. Both company and government are prepared to restore the union's bargaining certificate, properly withdrawn when the illegal strike was declared. This was a clear gain for the union. Yet Mr. Jean Marchand, the Catholic Confederation's secretary-treasurer and the real leader of the strike, still insists — he insisted in a statement issued only yesterday — that the company is out to smash the union. If the company were so disposed, would it agree to negotiate again with a union which defied the law in the first instance and was later guilty of violence of a kind never before witnessed in an industrial dispute in this province ?

This is not written to exculpate one side and place all the blame on the other. There have been faults on both sides But surely the union must see that its illegalities, its violence, debars the workers from taking an intransigent stand. Mr. Marchand bases this intransigence on what he calls "reprisals" and relates these to criminal action

taken against strikers. He is on bad bargaining ground here, for the law does not bargain with offenders. It must take its course.

The appeal now is for some semblance of common sense. Everybody must give way a little bit in the public interest.

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