

## Tough Thomist

French Canada was surprised. In strikebound Asbestos, Que., a loud explosion awoke workers one night last week. Next morning a locomotive engineer stopped his switch engine just in time — a two-foot gap had been blown in a stretch of company-owned tracks. In a fight later that afternoon workers out on strike against the Johns-Manville Corp. (TIME, Feb. 28), beat up a company mining engineer. No one knew who had blown up the tracks. But there was no doubt as to who had won the fight.

Fighting or violence of any kind had always been unusual for the National Federation of Employees of the Mining Industry. They were affiliated with the *Confédération des Travailleurs Catholiques du Canada*, a union whose principles are based on the encyclicals of the Popes. In the past the clerically guided union (it has a chaplain in each local) was better known for turning the other cheek. For years it called few strikes, won even fewer.

**Calculated Choice.** No man exemplified the C.T.C.C.'s change into an aggressive labor organization better than 30-year-old Jean Marchand, who ran the Asbestos strike. Stocky, Quebec-born Jean combined a solid grounding in Thomist philosophy with an obvious talent for two-fisted union tactics. He attended a Catholic school and university, became a labor organizer for the National Federation of Pulp and Paper Workers at Chicoutimi, Que. in 1942. Marchand made a calculated choice. Said he: "The Catholic syndicates are the only unions that have a chance of doing any good [in Quebec]. They cannot be accused of Communism or enmity to French Canadian nationalism."

Federation Boss Gérard Picard, an ex-newspaperman who had long worked to strengthen C.T.C.C.'s labor organizing, was impressed with Marchand's practical approach and urged that the C.T.C.C. take him on. Marchand helped to organize the pulp and paper workers, ran a series of strikes that won substantial wage increases in the paper, textile and furniture industries, then became secretary general of the federation.

Last month Marchand took personal charge of the Asbestos dispute, in which the workers walked out without first going to the provincial arbitration board as the law demands. When Premier Maurice Duplessis' Department of Labor called the strike illegal, Marchand laughed and kept his workers out. It was the C.T.C.C.'s most serious break with Duplessis' *Union Nationale* party, which had looked upon the Catholic unions as useful and docile allies for the promotion of French nationalism in Quebec.

**Merely a Ruse.** Duplessis thought he would have little trouble forcing the union back into line; when Marchand called on him with a delegation of Asbestos miners and union officials to discuss a possible settlement of the strike, Duplessis refused even to see Marchand, whom he had already pilloried as a "saboteur of labor."

The union's entire board of almoners (chaplains) endorsed Marchand's stand. Duplessis' attack on the properly elected officials of the C.T.C.C., said Abbé Henri Pichette, chaplain general of the union, was merely a ruse to create dissension within

the federation. Marchand wept when he heard the board's vote of confidence. Then, once more his practical self, he began collecting cash and food for a long, tough strike at Asbestos.



Labor Chiefs Picard & Marchand  
*Cheek-turning was passé*

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