

THREAT TO QUEBEC'S ECONOMIC PROGRESS

Lewis H. Brown, chairman of the board of Johns-Manville Corporation, gave a press conference here on Wednesday in which he outlined plans of the company with respect to a new asbestos development in Ontario. These plans call for a diversion of millions of dollars that have been earmarked for expansion of the company's operations in Quebec to the new field which he thought would be employing several hundred men in two years time.

Jean Marchand, general secretary of the Catholic Confederation of Labor, has been quoted as saying that if Mr. Brown seeks to tie up the new asbestos development with the strike "it is an artificial link and doesn't interest us in the least."

Mr. Marchand and whoever else represents the "us" in his statement may not be interested, but the province at large is interested – and more than "in the least." And, in the final analysis this interest may be found to extend to the very workers whom Mr. Marchand represents in this strike.

For serious permanent harm may be done the province unless a happier turn of events is forthcoming in the near future. Such discouragement to investment of capital in a province which depends largely upon the development of natural resources to assure its economic welfare is hazardous in the extreme.

This might easily bring back the days when tens of thousands of young Quebec people migrated to the United States every year to the consternation of both civil and Church authorities. Industries have been built up here and there in the province to keep these young people in Canada. Wages at first were low in those industries, but they have been vastly improved in recent years as also have working conditions, including those in the asbestos industry.

There is evidence that the people in the asbestos field as well as in some other sections of the province have been seriously misled. It is high time someone undertook the task of proving to them that the federal government cannot simply print money to provide each person with a monthly cash bonus for doing nothing.

It is also important to show them that the laws of the province must be respected. Changes can always be made by democratic enactment, but changes will only come if they are the wish of the majority of citizens. As it is, this majority resents a move by any given group to flout the law in moves that are patently against the wider interests of the community.

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