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DEFICIENCIES OF COLLECTIVE AGREEMENTS  
IN HUNGARIAN NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TRADE UNIONS

Jozsef Rozsa

At the request of the National Council of Trade Unions, the Council of Ministers has issued a decree that approximately 150 shops must conclude, as of 1 July 1951, collective agreements for the second half of 1951. The experience gained during the meetings leading to the conclusion of the agreements indicated that the workers had understood the aims of the collective agreements; it also proved the feasibility of consulting the workers regarding the plans. The latter made suggestions which will increase the efficiency of the enterprises. The agreements also contain important technical regulations which will contribute to the fulfillment of the Five-Year Plan and facilitate the employee's work.

Although most of the factory directors understood their tasks, some of them had neglected to protect the health of the workers by failing to install protective equipment. To correct this, the new agreements contain protective provisions for the second half of 1951. It was also revealed that some enterprises had neglected the cultural and sports aspects of their task. Appropriate provisions of the new collective agreements outline the entire sport and cultural activities of the enterprises for the second half of 1951.

As to the deficiencies which were revealed during the preparation of the collective agreements, it must be mentioned that the enemy's rumormongering is still a problem. For example, at Urkut the rumor was spread that the new collective agreement entails a uniform 20-percent wage increase. At Dorog, the mine workers were told by hostile elements that the agreement is ineffective, and it is not worth while even to discuss it.

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Some factory directors have shown disregard for the importance of the collective agreement by relegating its preparation to their associates, who were totally ignorant of the nature of the agreement. Another shortcoming was manifested by some of the authors of the collective agreements who had incorporated certain provisions which were in conflict with the Labor Code and other laws. These contradictions have to do with the problems of vacations, piecework, and overtime pay.

Employees of several enterprises have shown a lack of interest in the provisions of the agreements. For example, of the 130 employees of the brick factory at Becsi Street, only 30 took part in the shop meetings, and only five or six workers of the Loden Clothing Factory showed interest in the collective agreement discussions. In another instance, the meeting had to be postponed because none of the workers were present. Employees of the Istvan Shaft of the Csekszabolcs Mine and the workers of the Metal Products and Machine-Tool Factory also stayed away from the meetings. These incidents prove that no adequate preparatory steps were taken by the directors and the trade unions.

Most of the deficiencies have already been eliminated, while the remaining shortcomings will have to be corrected after the collective agreements have become effective.

Based on the experience gained thus far, the additional tasks may be summed up as follows:

1. It is the primary duty of the factory directors and the trade-union officials to engage the workers in preliminary discussions regarding the collective agreement. If necessary, special meetings must be held to explain to the workers the importance of the agreements. Newly hired employees should also be informed of the provisions of the collective agreement.
2. The collective agreement became law after the interested parties, the ministries, and the trade unions had signed it, therefore it is necessary to assure that its provisions are observed. The director and the shop committee must make quarterly reports to the workers as to the fulfillment of the agreement. These reports must be discussed by the employees. Those who have not fulfilled their promises must be criticized constructively at the quarterly meetings. Of course, this does not mean that control must be exercised on a quarterly basis; it has to be daily and systematic. The workers must observe and meet the target dates contained in the agreements.
3. The ministries and the trade unions must prevent the collective agreement from being neglected by the enterprises. They must see that the quarterly reports are made by all enterprises. The collective agreement indicates the mutual obligations of the director and the workers. A role in the direction and supervision of the enterprises is assigned the workers. The collective agreement emphasizes the responsibility of the directors and shop committees in fulfilling and exceeding the plans.

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