Cite labour-management co-operation at Acton

The Acton plant of Building Products of Canada has been cited for its forward looking Labour Management Consultation Committee by a government publication called Teamwork in Industry. Published by the Labour-Management Consultation Branch, Canada Department of Labour, the publication devoted a page from its four page January issue to an article on the LMC at BP in Acton.

Principals in the article are former plant manager E. J. Arnold and Norman Elliott, president of Local 603, United Rubber, Cork, Linoleum and Plastic Workers of America. It is entitled LMC at this Acton plant IT'S NOT PERFECT, BUT...

Following is the article in full:

Acton, Ont. — When management and union decided several years ago to establish an LMC committee at Building Products of Canada Limited in Acton, Ontario, representatives of the two parties devised a special formula to satisfy the particular needs of the Acton operation.

Instead of one committee, the plan consists of a two-tiered system of committees, with five departmental or joint councils, and a senior plant council that co-ordinates the business of the five joint councils.

"Because of the complexity of our system, we of course have problems with it," said Norm Elliott, president of Local 603, United Rubber, Cork, Linoleum and Plastic Workers of America. "I'm not completely happy with the way our council system is working at the present time."

Meet monthly

The joint councils with three representatives from union and *three from management meet* once a month to discuss ideas and problems that do not come within the jurisdiction of the union-management labor agreement. The plant council, consisting of five members from senior management and five from the union executive, meets regularly to discuss non-contractual problems that cannot be resolved at the departmental council level.

"Our biggest problem is the breakdown in communications," Mr. Elliott said frankly. "We have fallen down in keeping council members aware of what is going on. We really need to police the joint councils to see that the old business is resolved.

New ideas

"Recently we reviewed the minutes from all the old joint council meetings. At the plant council meeting, we invited a representative from each joint council and a lot of constructive new ideas came out. There's always the danger of bogging down with too much paper work because we have five monthly meetings to review each month. We've got to keep on top of it all the time to be effective."

Each joint council has its own secretary, and the secretary's minutes are posted on a bulletin board. Copies go to each plant council member.

"Another problem we encounter is overlapping in areas that more directly involved the union-management negotiating committee as opposed to the plant council." Mr. Elliott continued. "Recently, we ran into problems with seniority as a result of the company's selling a production department. Preliminary discussions were held at the plant council level, but when it was evident that serious problems could have resulted in grievances, the union-management negotiating committee began to handle personnel changes."

Explained plant manager, E. J. Arnold: "We started out very enthusiastically, but due to plant expansion we tended to slide a bit on the plant council. We try to resolve as many problems as possible at the plant council level, but in some instances," he admitted, "they have been by-passed, over-looked or forgotten. By and large, though, it has worked out well."

Tended to be suspicious

Some workers tended to be suspicious about the idea of a joint council system. "They thought the company would implement those suggestions that were beneficial to the company and ignore the others," Norm Elliott said.

"And a few of the employees were not overjoyed that their suggestions were not implemented right off the bat. Our greatest difficulty in this respect is in disseminating information and decisions evolving from plant council back to the rank and file union member. They think sometimes there is hidden motivation on the company's part, and that if the union has agreed to a company decision it has been duped."

Lacking in communication

"Our last meeting revealed that we were not getting as much back and forth communication," Plant Manager Arnold agreed. "Some of the problems were left in limbo and not brought to higher court. Some were turned down and the employees not advised."

Neither of the two men pretended that with LMC everything was totally smooth or without incident, but both spoke approvingly of the LMC concept and what it has meant for the plant at Acton.

LMC is responsible for 100 per cent eye protection program at the plant," Mr. Arnold said.

"The safety committee first drafted applicable rules and this was given union-management sanction. We certainly could not have initiated a program of this sort without full union support."

Refutes narrow concept

"It serves to refute the narrow concept that labour and management have to be perpetual adversaries," Norm Elliott said. "This traditional idea sometimes prevents the real issues from being explored. And LMC helps to eliminate this.

"I definitely would not like to see LMC stopped because if it failed it would leave a bitter taste in people's mouths," he continued. "It serves to resolve a great many issues that would otherwise have to be investigated as complaints by the union management negotiating committee, and its time is already taken up with issues under contract jurisdiction."

Most complaints, however, have been resolved before they reach the grievance stage, and none of the grievances have gone to arbitration.

As the local union president, Mr. Elliott has the unenviable position of attempting to listen to management with an open mind, and relaying management decisions back to local union members, while still protecting union interests.

"The joint council meetings engender a free exchange of ideas, and the company is generally receptive to employee suggestions," he said.

Mr. Elliott pointed out that the pastics industry is developing so fast and is so competitive, and the profit point of view is on everybody's mind to such an extent, that the regular employee finds it difficult to appreciate the company's decision when a request has to be denied because it's not economically feasible. "Employees have to be convinced that their interests are being protected," he said. "Most employees like to believe they are performing some type of worthwhile function in their line of work."

The Building Products of Canada Limited plant at Acton is one of eight plants in Canada operated by the company, which employs some 1,600 workmen, engineers, scientists and salesmen across Canada.

Employs 150 people

The Acton plant employs approximately 150 and produces complete lines of both CSA certified and utility grade polyethylene pipe for cold water applications, PVC sewer pipe for waste handling, PVC duct pipe for electrical applications, PVC drain waste and vent pipe systems (pipe and fittings) for plumbing, and pressure pipe for potable water and industrial applications. The plant also manufactures acrylic and styrene luminaires and flex sheet for fluorescent lighting, flat sheets for moulding operations, and vinyl house siding and accessories.

When one department that produced a multitude of plastic shapes and profiles was sold to Gilson Manufacturing in December 1969, the Acton plant was faced with the difficult task of laying off, transferring and retraining employees affected by the change.

"This was handled smoothly through LMC," Mr. Arnold said.

"Some people, 18 in all, went with the business. We filled orders and moved machines, six at first, then two more, maintaining continuity as much as possible. There were a few rough spots, but by and large it went fairly smoothly."

Seven day production

About a year and a half ago the company decided that if they were to remain on an efficient competitive basis they would have to switch over to a seven-day production schedule. Employees used to work a five-day workweek, but the difficulty of shutting down and re-starting the plastic extrusion lines necessitated the change.

Production workers now take their weekends off throughout the week with a regular weekend off once a month.

"Employees don't often get the chance to hear management's side of the story first hand," Norm Elliott said. "LMC gives a far broader cross-section of employees a chance to sit down and discuss issues with management representatives than would be possible through the regular union - management process. This is a valuable tool in helping to combat rumour and incorrect speculation before they reach dangerous proportions.

"It also provides for discussion of many issues that otherwise might have to wait until contract negotiations before being investigated."

Both Mr. Arnold and Mr. Elliott agreed that a way must be found to make LMC a more effective means of communicating information to the average employee.

It gives him an insight into the problems confronting management, and in turn, a chance to make his own feelings known to company representatives. From a labour relations point oof view, LMC can be most productive.

County council names committees for 1971

Members of Halton county council were appointed to the various committees and boards on which they'll serve for the coming year. The appointments were made during the inaugural meeting of county council Tuesday, Jan. 12.

For the first time the striking committee included three reeves and three deputy reeves. Previously it had been a job for reeves only.

Reeves Tom Hill, Mrs. A. MacArthur and Ron Harris and Deputy Reeves Harry Barrett, David Coons and Art Speight were on the striking committee.

Committee lists

The following are lists of committees and their members. The first named *is the chairman.*

Social and family services: R. Harris, G. McKenzie, J. Swanborough, R. Miller, A. Masson.

Board of health: D. Coons, H. Barrett, P. Barr, A. MacArthur.

Finance

Finance: A. Masson, D. McMillan, R. Morrow, D. Coons, P. Barr.

Child welfare: P. Barr, R. Miller, G. McKenzie, D. McMillan, F. G. Oakes.

Manor Committee of Management: T. Hill, H. Barrett, D. Coons, A. Speight.

Museum board: R. Miller, A. Speight.

Personnel, legislation and by-law: A. MacArthur, J. Swanborough, G. McKenzie, R. Morrow, R. Harris

Property

Property and office administration: H. Barrett, A. MacArthur, R. Harris, T. Hill, R. Morrow.

Roads committee representatives serve on terms ranging from one to five years. Those with more than a two year term will remain on the committee for the duration of their appointed time. D. McMillan one year; A. Masson two years; T. Hill three years; J. Swanborough (chairman) four year term; A. Speight five years.

Industrial

Industrial development, R. Morrow and clerk Garfield Brown.

Note: In the case of the museum board and child welfare committees the names listed are appointed to serve with the committee of members elected or appointed by groups other than county council, and chairmen for those groups will be elected at a later date.

Obituary

Sarah Starkman dies in 96th year

A former resident of Acton, Sarah Starkman of 51 Shallmar Blvd., Toronto, died in Baycrest hospital on January 4. She was in her 96th year.

Funeral service at Park Memorial Chapel was conducted by Rabbi Reuben Slonim and interment was in Holy Blossom Memorial park January 6.

Pallbearers were six grandchildren Albert Colman, Detroit; Murray Sweigman, David Freeman, T. H. Rachlin, Brian Stark and Alan Stark, all of Toronto.

She was born in Poland and came to Canada in 1906. Her husband, A. L. Starkman, died 11 years ago. Surviving are daughters and sons Ida Sweigman, Toronto; Rose Colman, Detroit; Ethel Rachlin, Toronto; Esther Freeman, Toronto; Maurice Freeman, Toronto and R. Maxwell, Mono Mills; 15 grandchildren, 31 great grandchildren and one great-great grandchild.

It's no trick to meet expenses these days. The toughest job is to avoid them

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A letter from Eden Mills

By Val K. Barrow

Eden Mills, Ont.
17 February, 1967.

Dear May:

Centennial Year - the flame burning in the frosty air on Parliament hill - and here we are, really in the grip of winter. Lots and lots of snow piling up. And the children are having a really wonderful time of it. They have a toboggan slide from the top of the lots near the fence right down across the road. I should think at least half the village collects there. And it is really fairly safe because only five households use the road. I hope so, anyway.

Mike Marshall has been shovelling the snow off the steps for me. I have to walk up from the road now, of course. Last night it had drifted so badly I missed on of the steps and went off into the snow over the top of my high snow boots. The whole family was at the picture window, watching and waving and even before I had my coat off Mike was out with his shovel.

Fortunately, too, as Elizabeth and Bill were coming for supper.

In the morning on the way to work there was a huge drift at the edge of the village. As I went through it the car was completely covered — like driving through a wave. I sure was glad I was driving the Volkswagen because I find it good in the snow. You can imagine, though, how strong the wind was, because a car went up the road as I was coming down from the house and I can't have been more than two minutes behind it.

A couple of weeks ago we had another bad storm - of a different kind. We'd had a thaw and then it started to rain about mid-day on Sunday and the temperature dropped. I got up at 6 a.m. on Monday, opened the big front door, took one look and went back to bed.

To heck with struggling with those driving conditions. Later in the day I heard 12 cars got stuck at the corner, so I was glad of my decision. When I finally got up about nine the rain had stopped and the sun was shining in a brilliant blue sky. It was like fairyland.

Every delicate twig was coated with ice and twinkling like a myriad of diamonds. Breath-taking! I went to every window to look out at the beauty. There were, of course, no rabbit tracks from their winter home under my bedroom window and I guess they were snug inside.

By mid-afternoon I thought I'd better do something about the car, so I bundled up and slithered down the hill. Actually it wasn't too difficult because I broke through the icy surface with nearly every step. I should think the ice was almost an inch thick on the windshield and even with the help of a de-icing spray it took me over an hour to get it off.

Shirley Gilbertson, with much more energy than I stopped by to chat and said she'd been out shovelling all day. Lazy old me spent most of the time curled up on the couch in the "Owl's Nest", reading. But I did make an outstanding stew.

Everyone says this is a very severe winter. And certainly it is much more so than last year. There are some faithful little sparrows lodged cosily between the ceiling and roof of the porch and I have a bird feeder hanging in the lilac bush for them.

My last year's attempt of sunflower seeds and fat in a tin, with a stick pushed through for a perch, failed — probably because the tin was too bright. Guess I should have left the label on or painted it.

Anyway, this year this plastic feeder is getting constant use and it's fun to stand at the window and watch the cheery little birds.

And you have daffodils in bloom! Many weeks to go here for us before that happy day.

All for now.

Love
Val.

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