

THE WORKER'S POINT OF VIEW

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A Symposium

With a Preface by C. T. Cramp
(General Secretary, National Union of Railwaymen)



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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

THESE articles appeared originally in *The Human Factor*—the journal of the National Institute of Industrial Psychology. They have undergone no revision beyond occasional “cuts” and the minor alterations of paragraphing, etc., to which all manuscripts submitted for publication are liable. They do not, of course, necessarily represent the opinion of the Institute, which is a non-political and entirely non-partisan body; but with their emphasis on the need for treatment of the worker as a human being rather than a machine, and with their demonstration of the importance of an understanding of human motives and reactions on the part of those directing industry, the Institute is in whole-hearted agreement.

C. S. MYERS

Principal, National Institute of Industrial Psychology.

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PREFACE

THE publication of *The Worker's Point of View* is very timely. At this moment when European conceptions of the organization of Society appear to be in the melting-pot, it is opportune that the point of view of those who are the most numerous of the community should be understood. The individual worker, of course, is like every human being. There are variations in temperament and disposition, yet there are certain broad generalizations which can be adopted as a guide to his general attitude towards life and the times in which he lives. The worker's mental background is coloured to a great extent by his material needs. A man who has only one or two pay days between himself and the Public Assistance Committee is certain to pay heed to the material factor when confronted with any of the ordinary problems of life. For instance, I have been tremendously struck by the different way in which an "advanced" trade unionist examines an economic problem, as compared with an academic socialist of the university type. The latter is invariably far more revolutionary in his expressions and far less aware of the immediate consequences of any action which may be urged than is the worker, the difference being accounted for by the fact that the trade unionist probably knows already what it is to be up against the grim facts of

hard living and unemployment, while the former, having only heard and read of these things, looks upon revolution as an adventure and thinks only of the romantic side of the exploit.

It is, of course, true, as suggested in this book, that the worker is usually conservative in respect of changes in method and technique. He always fears that his work and livelihood may be in danger. Security is something he has never had; and always he fears the unknown. I am now speaking of the British worker. A few years ago, when in the Western Hemisphere before the present world-wide depression had changed the outlook of our trans-Atlantic friends, I was very struck by the wide difference in outlook between them and the workers in our own country. They betrayed no anxiety to stick to one job. In their own phraseology, they were always prepared to "take a chance." Usually, of course, they were quite safe in so doing, as there was practically no unemployment and a man with a taste for adventure and change had no difficulty in securing a good job with a higher standard of living than prevailed here. In these islands the time has long gone by when the average workman could gaily sally forth into the world with his bag of tools in his hand, confident of finding work; and this difference between the two sets of workmen strengthens my conviction that it is the insecurity of employment which provides that material background of the mentality of the British worker.

This book, containing contributions by writers who

have made a close study of the subjects upon which they write, should be of the greatest service in enabling all who wish to understand the worker's point of view to have a much better grasp of the subject than has hitherto been possible; and I trust it may be widely read.

C. T. CRAMP