



The Christian Trade Union Movement in France

by

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The Christian trade union movement in France began in 1887, with the formation of the Paris Commercial and Industrial Employees' Trade Union. The movement rapidly spread and developed on parallel lines in several towns, among manual workers as well as among salaried employees; it was not, however, until the early years of the twentieth century that it assumed considerable importance. At that time also the exclusively feminine unions first began to constitute an important and characteristic element in the French Christian trade union system. For many years these various trade organisations worked independently of each other; after the war, however, the need of combined organisation made itself keenly felt, and the French Confederation of Christian Workers was founded during a congress held in Paris in November 1919. In the present article Mr. Turmann outlines the internal organisation and the objects of the Confederation, and then passes in review various forms of activity of the Christian unions — e.g. the organisation of practical mutual aid, instruction, defensive measures and relations with employers.

For more than half a century the programmes and reform manifestos of the adherents of the Catholic Social movement in the various countries of Europe have been unanimous as to the necessity for trade organisation¹.

In France, following the lead given by Albert de Mun and the heads of the *Œuvre des cercles*, the Catholic Social reformers placed

¹ Cf. DUTHOIT: *Vers l'organisation professionnelle*; Reims, Action populaire, 1910. V. DILIGENT: *Les orientations syndicales*; Paris, Bloud, 1910. MAX TURMANN: *Le développement du catholicisme social: idées directrices et caractères généraux*, pp. 68-95 and 346-365; Paris, F. Alcan, 1909, 2nd edition. Mgr. GERMAIN: *La paix sociale par l'organisation chrétienne du travail*; Paris, Action populaire.

the institution of corporate occupational groups at the foundation of their programme of reform. It was in this order of ideas that in 1897 the *Réunion des revues sociales catholiques* drew up a scheme for "legally organised trades", the main lines of which were as follows :

(1) All the members of each occupation, in an area to be specified, should be officially entered on a special list of the public administrative authorities, as is done for the Naval Register, the *conseils de prud'hommes*, and the chambers of commerce.

(2) The members of each occupation so entered on this list should constitute the corporate occupational group (*corps professionnel*).

(3) Each corporate occupational group would have special regulations applying to all members of the occupation.

(4) In each corporate occupational group various trade associations would be freely formed, whether of employers, or of workers, or mixed, in accordance with the Act of 1884.

(5) At the head of each corporate occupational group there would be a council composed of delegates of the trade associations, in such a way as to ensure equal representation of the various elements in the occupation.

(6) The councils of the corporate occupational groups would make regulations for the application of general rules relating to the organisation of labour and would fix the customs of each occupation.

(7) The regulations of the councils of the corporate occupational groups would have to be sanctioned by a referendum if this were requested by a certain number of members of the occupation ; they would always require the approval of the public authorities.

(8) The councils of the corporate occupational groups would be invested with a certain number of judicial functions and with the right to levy certain contributions on the members of the occupation within the limits fixed by the law, as is the case for the chambers of commerce.

(9) The councils would nominate the representatives of the occupation on the next higher degree of the scale.

The mainstay of this scheme for "legally organised trades" is constituted by the employers' and workers' trade associations, since it is they that would have to choose the members of the councils of the corporate occupational groups. This at once explains the efforts of the French Catholic Social reformers to take

advantage of the Act of 1884 and found trade associations — efforts which are still growing in intensity.

It is true that the Catholics, under the influence of the *Œuvre des cercles*, tried at first to found "mixed trade associations", including employers and workers without distinction. But these efforts had only slender success. In 1903, when the number of these associations was a maximum, the year book of trade associations published by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry recorded the existence of only 156 trade organisations of this type¹.

But to the mixed associations, combining the two elements, employers and workers, on an equal footing, the Christian Democrats, and soon with them the adherents of the Catholic Social movement, preferred the system of "parallel" organisation of these two elements, with a joint council appointed in equal numbers by the two groups.

To-day the principle of "parallel" trade associations is generally accepted. But it must be recognised that for very many years Christian trade unions were comparatively rare.

ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHRISTIAN TRADE UNIONS

The Paris Trade Union of Commercial and Industrial Employees

In 1887 Brother Hiéron, who was at the head of an employment exchange in Paris for the members of young people's societies, collected seventeen youths attending various Paris boys' clubs and persuaded them to form a trade union. This was the beginning of the first of the Christian trade unions, that of the commercial and industrial employees. For a long time it was called the "Petits-Carreaux Union", from the address of its first headquarters².

The early days were difficult and from 1887 to 1889 it led rather a precarious existence. "It was not until the end of this period that it acquired real stability and adopted a formula which has not

¹ For the mixed trade associations cf. the interesting book published in 1927 by A. BOISSARD. A typical mixed association is the Corporation of St. Nicholas in the Lille silk-spinning industry. (Cf. G. FAGNIEZ : *Corporations et Syndicats*, pp. 158-169. Paris, Lecoffre, 1905.)

² On the origin of this union, cf. Ch. CLAVÉRIE : *Monographie syndicale, le syndicat des employés du commerce et de l'industrie*. Paris, Lecoffre. Cf. also Max TURMANN : *Activités sociales*, pp. 43-61. Paris, Gabalda.

varied since. Its membership was 369 in 1892, 855 in 1894, and 3,210 ten years later." It was not long in acquiring influence, the more so as its leaders devoted themselves to defending the rights and interests of employees, everywhere and on all occasions.

An incident may be cited in this connection which occurred in Brussels, in 1903, at the second International Congress of Employees, and during which the aim and character of the Employees' Trade Union were clearly set out. When the delegates' credentials were being examined, some reservations were expressed as to the admission of the Paris Union, on the ground that it was a denominational organisation. Mr. Jules Zirnheld in defence set out its reason for existence in the following terms :

If you wish to know the reason for the special nature of our membership, here it is. For a long time the Catholics of France held aloof from trade organisations, on account of the political colour they almost always had. We then had the idea of founding a trade union reserved exclusively for Catholic employees. Our aim was not a religious one, but was the aim that has collected us all here at this moment — that is to say, the improvement of the lot of employees.

Several speakers then asked that the Employees' Union should be treated on the same footing as the other organisations, and finally the Chairman of the Congress pronounced its admission¹.

Since then it has taken part in other international congresses, and always, thanks to the members of its research committees, with conspicuous competence. There has been no slackening of its progress. The general report submitted last year stated that its numbers had grown from 11,927 paying members in June 1925 to 12,901 in June 1926 ; there were 2,314 new members, and 1,340 names were struck off the list, almost all for non-payment of subscriptions.

But Paris is not the only place where the Catholic employees have founded a trade union. Gradually the same thing has happened in most towns of any size, and these various associations have joined up in the French Federation of Catholic Employees' Trade Unions.

Christian Trade Unions for Manual Workers

Meanwhile there was in Paris a parallel movement for the foundation of trade unions for Catholic manual workers. Among the

¹ Cf. E. VERDIN, lectures given to the Orleans "Social Week", 1905.

first of these may be mentioned the trade unions for the printing, metal-working, building, furniture, and clothing industries, which had their headquarters in the Rue des Petits-Carreaux, and a common journal, the *Echo des Syndicats*.

The movement was not long confined to Paris. It spread to the provinces and in turn reached most trades, so much so that to-day there is neither region nor occupation without numerous Christian trade unions.

We shall take as an example the Northern region (Departments of Pas-de-Calais, Nord, Somme, Aisne and Ardennes), reasons of space preventing a more comprehensive survey. Our information is taken from the report¹ submitted to the general assembly at Roubaix on 24 April 1927 by Mr. C. Broutin, General Secretary of the Regional Federation.

The clearest evidence of the success of the Christian trade union movement in this region is given by the following figures, showing the continuous advance in the number of unions belonging to the Regional Federation.

Year	Unions	Year	Unions
1920	9	1924	43
1921	19	1925	47
1922	35	1926	67
1923	36		

The report then stresses the steady rise in the membership of the unions :

From 1 January 1926 to 31 December the increase recorded is more than 3,500 new paying members. . . . If to our 15,000 union members in the Department of Nord are added those in the four other Departments, as well as the Belgian Christian trade unionists working in our region and linked up with us through the Franco-Belgian Committee of Action, it will be found that there is an army of 25,000 organised workers within the sphere of action of our Regional Federation.

Mr. Broutin then points out that during 1926 the membership of the Christian trade unions increased in the following proportions, in the principal centres : Lille, 16 per cent. ; Roubaix, Tourcoing and Roncq, 10 per cent. ; Halluin, 11 per cent. ; Arras, 20 per cent. ; and Calais, 38 per cent. Then, after describing the present situation in the various occupations, he finished with the conclu-

¹ Published in *Le Nord social*, 8 May 1927.

sion that the increase recorded was " enough to show the growing influence of the Christian trade union movement among the workers ".

What has just been said for the Northern region could be repeated — naturally with some variation — for the other regions of France, where generally the Christian trade union movement is making more or less strongly marked progress.

Women's Trade Unions

The Christian trade union movement has one specially interesting feature. This is the large number of exclusively feminine unions in it, whereas in the Socialist trade union movement men and women workers alike nearly always belong to the same union.

The Catholic women's trade unions belong to three principal groups¹. These are: (1) the Central Federation of Women's Trade Unions, often called the " Abbaye unions " from the name of the street where they had their first headquarters in Paris; (2) the French Federation of Unions of Women's Trade Associations, whose headquarters has been transferred from Rue de Sèze to 35 Boulevard des Capucines; (3) the Free Trade Unions of the Department of Isère. •

The early history of the so-called " Abbaye unions " goes back to the first years of the present century². Here again the early days were difficult, for the women workers did not yet understand what advantage trade organisations could be to them; sometimes they were even hostile, or at least distrustful of the movement³. But the founders — and at their head Sister Milcent — did not lose courage. After two years of existence, the Abbaye unions had 640 members: 288 teachers, 193 employees, and 159 workers. Then, by slow degrees, the movement spread, both within Paris and in a certain number of other towns.

The first three Paris unions were joined in 1904 by " *Le ménage* ", in 1909 by the union of certificated nurses, and in 1913 by that of

¹ Cf. two articles by Henry JOLY in *Le Correspondant*, 25 Feb. and 10 March 1925.

² Miss DECAUX, president of this group of women's organisations, has told the story of their birth in an article in *La Ruche syndicale* (Oct. 1922), the monthly journal of these unions.

³ On this state of mind cf. MAX TURMANN: *Initiatives féminines*, pp. 194 *et seq.* (chapter IV, dealing with women's trade unions). Paris, Gabalda.

the teachers of domestic science. Next came the trade unions of women workers in the textile industry and in perfumery. In the provinces, unions were formed at Bourges, Angers, Saumur, Poitiers, Chatellerault, and La Châtre. In short, ten years after the foundation of the first three of the Abbaye unions, these women's trade unions had in all about 5,000 members.

To-day the Abbaye unions include members of seventeen occupations. In Paris and the Paris suburban area there are some sixty trade union branches. In the provinces there are 120 unions in about fifty towns, principally unions of women employees or of women workers in the clothing trades¹.

A second group of Catholic women's trade unions consists of the French Federation of Unions of Women's Trade Associations². This Federation also goes back, through its component unions, to the beginnings of the women's trade union movement in France; it in fact includes among its original member associations the Lyons trade unions organised in 1899 by Miss Rochebillard³. With a score of followers, she began by founding two trade unions, one for commercial employees, and one for workers in the needle trades. A little later, a third, for silk workers, was founded. After four years these three unions had 550 members (225 commercial employees, 275 workers in the needle trades, 60 silk workers); and thanks to the services rendered by them, the circle of membership became gradually wider.

This movement of the women did not remain confined to the city where it had been born. Their review, *Le Travail de la femme et de la jeune fille*, gave the rest of France a knowledge of what had been achieved at Lyons, and similar bodies came into being in a large number of other towns.

In Paris, in January 1909, there was founded the Women Home Workers' Trade Union, with headquarters at 38 Rue Vercingétorix. This was followed in 1912 by the Union of Women Employees in Banking, Commerce and Industry, whose first efforts were directed to the improvement of conditions of apprenticeship through the medium of indentures and to the organisation of vocational training. Four years later, in December 1916, this group extended

¹ Cf. the federation reports of Miss GRAFF, general secretary, published in *La Ruche syndicale*.

² Their monthly journal is *La Travailleur*.

³ On the origin of these unions cf. L. ROCHEBILLARD: *Syndicats d'ouvrières lyonnaises*. Collections de "l'Action populaire". Paris, Lecoivre, 1905.

still further afield and the women's trade unions installed in the Impasse Gomboust asked to amalgamate with those of the Rue Vercingétorix. For several years, too, they had been in close relations with the provincial trade unions which were inspired by the same principles and were anxious to take part in trade union activity on a national scale¹.

There has been steady progress in the development of the Federation in Paris and the different regions of France. Thus the reports² submitted to the annual Congress of the Federation in 1927 by the general secretary, Miss Lafeuille, records the adhesion of a dozen unions belonging to the most varied regions. Further, after describing the propaganda carried on both by the Federation and by many of the affiliated unions, the report states that the effect of all this activity is shown "by a perceptible increase in membership in most regions", a result to be attributed not only to vigorous propaganda, but also to efficient organisation of the various departments of the unions.

The third group of women's Christian trade unions differs from the first two in not extending to the whole of France. Instead, it includes only trade unions in a single Department (Isère), but, as will be seen further on, it is full of vitality.

The first of these unions was founded in 1906, by Miss Poncet and Miss Merceron-Vicat, during a strike in the weaving industry³. Five years later, at Renage, a similar association was founded in identical circumstances; here too "organisation had to be swift in the midst of the struggle".

The women's trade unions of Isère did not all, however, start in such turbulent conditions. For instance, the Grenoble free trade unions for the glove-making industry, the needle trades, and commerce, were founded in 1907 one after the other in an atmosphere of calm and peace.

Gradually the free trade unions of Isère grew in number and in strength. To-day they have more than 5,000 members belonging to 54 unions in 43 centres, spread over 12 occupations⁴.

¹ Cf. *Fédération française des Unions de Syndicats professionnels féminins*. "Action populaire", série sociale, No. 19. Paris.

² Published in *La Travailleuse*, March 1927.

³ In a lecture given to the St. Etienne "Social Week" Miss PONCET gave an account of how this union was founded (cf. *Compte-rendu de la Semaine sociale de St. Etienne*, 1911, pp. 387 et seq.).

⁴ These figures are taken from the last report presented by Miss BERTHOLLON, General Secretary of the Federation of Free Trade Unions of Isère. A summary of the report was published in *La Voix professionnelle* (monthly journal of the Federation), June 1926.

These trade unions as a whole form the Federation of Free Trade Unions of Isère, which is divided along occupational lines into craft federations, for textiles, clothing, and salaried employees. These federations are grouped in national federations in which the general interests of the occupation are defended before the public authorities¹.

The Federation of Free Trade Unions of Isère naturally forms part of the French Confederation of Christian Workers, which is the next organisation to be described.

THE FRENCH CONFEDERATION OF CHRISTIAN WORKERS

Origin, Principles, Organisation, and Development

For many years the only form taken by the Christian trade union movement in France was that of isolated trade unions, more or less extensive but with no effective permanent link between them and no common organisation. Here was a cause of weakness which was the more strongly felt because the unions of Socialist tendencies were federated in the General Confederation of Labour.

Immediately after the war, the Christian trade unions of France felt the imperative need of combining in a national organisation. In May 1919 there was held in Paris an international meeting of delegates of the Christian trade unions in ex-allied and neutral countries; after the meeting, on the initiative of the Paris Employees' Trade Union, a Central Committee for the French associations was formed.

This Committee educated public opinion and cleared away difficulties, and the result was that the French Confederation of Christian Workers was founded during a congress held in Paris on 1 and 2 November of the same year (1919). Its headquarters were established in Paris, at 5 Rue Cadet, in the building part of which was already occupied by the Employees' Trade Union.

Article 1 of its rules lays down clearly the guiding principles which all federated organisations must accept. The text runs as follows :

¹ Cf. "Les syndicats libres féminins de l'Isère" (reprinted from *Grenoble et ses régions*), by Miss PONCET. Grenoble, Imprimerie Allier, 1925. Cf. also Emile GUERRY: *Les syndicats libres féminins de l'Isère*. Grenoble (Place St. André), Secrétariat des syndicats libres.

The Confederation purposes to draw the inspiration for its activities from the social doctrine defined in the encyclical *Rerum Novarum*.

It holds that the social peace necessary to the prosperity of the country, and the system of trade organisation which is an indispensable component of that peace, can be realised only by the application of the principles of Christian justice and charity.

It holds that man is the essential element in production, of which he is at once both cause and aim. It is therefore important that the actual conditions of production should allow of the normal development of human personality by the just satisfaction of material, intellectual, and moral needs, in the individual, family and social spheres.

It observes that the present conditions of production do not sufficiently realise this aim, and considers it necessary to push on those transformations which may ensure a better utilisation of the means of production and a fair division of the results of production among the various elements contributing to it.

It purposes to bring about these transformations, not by the class struggle, but by the education of the elements concerned in production and by collaboration between these elements grouped in separate associations linked together by mixed organisations in which the independence and the rights of both parties are duly respected.

The Confederation purposes to pursue its just claims by all legitimate means, in dealing with organisations of all kinds, political and economic, national and international; it declares that the public authorities must recognise the principle of representation of vocational and economic interests, and must reserve a liberal place for it; but it holds it contrary to public order that trade organisations should presume to usurp rights and assume responsibilities of a political character.

While strictly limiting its activities to the representation and the defence of the general interests of labour, the Confederation purposes to call for the assistance of any religious, moral, and intellectual forces which may be able to help in the vocational and social training of the workers, and are capable of developing in them those qualities of discipline, devotion, and loyalty which are indispensable to the full realisation of all the possibilities of trade organisation.

Article 2 sets out the aims of the Confederation as follows:

To create in France a general movement among trade unionists based on the above principles;

To organise a general propaganda on behalf of this movement;

To carry on inter-trade activities, both national and international;

To represent the federated organisations when the general interest requires it:

(a) in dealings with the public authorities and legal institutions;

(b) in dealings with national employers' organisations (either manufacturers' associations or associations of general interest);

(c) in dealings with international institutions or organisations;

To create all services recognised as necessary to the federated organisations;

To organise or support all institutions of general interest which may defend Christian workers or come to their help.

The Confederation comprises two types of group: national federations for specific trades or industries, and regional inter-trade federations (*unions*).

A national federation for a trade or industry is composed of all the trade unions of workers carrying on the same occupation or belonging to a single individual category. A regional federation, on the contrary, includes all trade unions without distinction, provided they belong to a single specific economic region.

The Confederation does not admit individual trade unions as members. Article 5 of the rules, however, provides that "nevertheless, if there exists neither a national nor a regional federation to which they can be affiliated in the regular way, they may be provisionally admitted, on condition that they join a federation of either kind within a time limit fixed for them by the Bureau of the Confederation."

The next article states that "the trade unions and organisations belonging to the Confederation shall preserve — within the terms of the rules of the Confederation — their entire autonomy." In particular it is stipulated that they may "create or maintain all relations and all organisations intended to protect their special interests or to intensify their own activity."

The general policy of the Confederation is controlled by the annual congress, composed of delegates of the affiliated organisations. Each trade union or section is entitled to one vote, plus one vote for each hundred or fraction of a hundred paying members.

The annual congress has very wide powers. It appoints the members of the Bureau of the Confederation every year; it receives and approves the annual report of their work; it audits the accounts for the past year, fixes the budget for the coming year, takes final decisions on questions of admission or exclusion, and takes all necessary decisions and issues instructions on the activities of the Confederation. Since its foundation the Confederation has been fortunate in having its affairs in the capable and devoted hands of Mr. Zirnheld, President, and Mr. G. Tessier, General Secretary.

"A trade union", declared Mr. Zirnheld at the 1922 congress, "is not and cannot be a religious undertaking. It is and must remain legally an association freely and exclusively managed by persons engaged in the occupation concerned." This straightforward attitude has won for the officers of the Confederation the increasing confidence of the public authorities, at the same time as the approval and encouragement of the heads of the Church.

Such as it is, the Confederation of Christian Workers to-day constitutes a highly important force in the French labour world, since it has more than 100,000 members belonging to 593 affiliated

trade unions grouped in 19 regional and 10 craft federations¹.

But the real strength of the Confederation lies not so much in the number of its members as in the intensity and diversity of the activities of its constituent organisations in the fields of mutual aid, defence of vocational interests, and social betterment.

THE ACTIVITIES OF THE CHRISTIAN TRADE UNIONS

Organisations for Mutual Aid

A Typical Case.

The activities of the Christian trade unions of manual workers are widely diversified². Generally speaking, they aim at providing for their members all the services they may need, in their private life, in their family life, and in the exercise of their calling.

In order to give an idea of these very varied activities in the field of mutual aid, we may take as an example the work done during the past year by the seven Christian trade unions of manual workers in the district of Roubaix-Turcoing³.

These seven unions have their strike fund, their unemployment fund, their mutual sickness fund, their dowry fund, their savings and loan fund. Three co-operative societies and three workers' restaurants are working with great success. Five trade union houses provide office accommodation for all the various branches of the work.

Counting in the Christian trade unionists of Halluin and those from the Belgian frontier who are working in the region, the free trade unions represent more than 10,000 members. The friendly society *La Famille* covers 1,900 families, representing 3,500 persons. The dowry fund *La Jeunesse prévoyante* has 1,450 members.

The unemployment fund of the free trade unions of Roubaix-Tourcoing paid out 13,800 francs in benefit in 1926. During January and February 1927 the amount paid out was 26,324 francs. At

¹ Figures as at 20 April 1927. On 20 April 1926 there were 559 affiliated trade unions and 9 craft federations. Last year a tenth federation was formed, that of the trade unions of workers in the printing and allied trades.

² On these activities, cf. J. ARENDT: *La nature, l'organisation et le programme des syndicats ouvriers chrétiens*; Paris, Action populaire, 1926. O. JEAN, *Le syndicalisme*; Paris, Action populaire, 1922. *Petit manuel d'éducation syndicale*; Paris, Action populaire.

³ Cf. *Le Nord social*, 27 March 1927.

present the daily benefit is 5 francs and the fund pays up to 120 days' benefit per year.

The friendly society *La Famille* paid out, in 1926, more than 35,000 francs in benefit for sickness, operations, births, etc. The sums paid in by its members to the dowry fund *La Jeunesse prévoyante* during its first year of existence amounted to 70,000 francs.

The savings and loan fund, *La Caisse populaire*, received deposits of more than 400,000 francs and lent nearly 350,000 francs for the purchase of land, houses, tools, furniture, etc. It has eight branches in the region.

The restaurants, lastly, serve 300 meals a day, and the turnover of the co-operative societies amounts to nearly a million francs.

The free trade unions of Roubaix-Tourcoing are not the only ones with a framework of this kind. The Christian trade unions of France have not all, indeed, built up such a powerful organisation for mutual aid, but there is hardly one of them that does not possess at least one or even several of the institutions we are now going to describe.

Employment Exchanges.

The first service a trade unionist expects from his union is effective help in finding him work. And in fact most of the Christian trade unions have organised an employment office for their members, though it must be admitted that during the present period of relatively severe unemployment the results are not all that could be desired. None the less, the records of some unions reach a high figure: for instance, the Paris Employees' Trade Union since its foundation has found more than 25,000 posts for its members.

Another example is the French Federation of Unions of Women's Trade Associations, whose different sections, in Paris and in the provinces, take an active part in placing their members. The Federation reports¹ that in 1925 "the vacant posts notified to the head office of the Paris central secretariat reached a total of 2,137, against 1,800 in the preceding year. Out of this number, more than 800 were filled by women workers or employees of various categories."

¹ Cf. report of the Federation by Miss LAFEUILLE, General Secretary, published in *La Travailleuse*, Feb. 1926.

Unemployment Funds.

The Christian trade unions of manual workers have also devoted much attention to the problem of safeguarding the workers against the risks which threaten to deprive them, at least temporarily, of their livelihood. For this purpose a very large number of them have organised unemployment funds.

By way of example, some details may be given as to the unemployment funds organised by the Christian trade unions in the textile industry¹:

Various trade unions have supplied information on their unemployment funds. Isère alludes to them, but does not say how much benefit was given. Calais states that it pays the unemployed 40 francs per week and has paid out a total of 1,400 francs; the fund's resources are provided by a contribution of one franc per month and by the proceeds of fêtes organised for the purpose. Mazamet is starting an unemployment fund and Le Ménil (Vosges) is also taking steps to start one.

St. Etienne at the end of December had 248 members of its unemployment fund; benefits vary according to the rate of contribution, 2, 2.50, or 3 francs per working day, from the sixth day of unemployment and for a period of two months. Benefits amounted to 322 francs in December; they were 649.50 francs in January, and the total will be higher in February.

Alsace pays unemployment benefit for nine weeks, from the second week of unemployment. Benefits are variable and may be as much as 6.25 francs per day.

The unemployment funds are best organised in the Department of Nord. Armentières, Halluin, Roubaix-Tourcoing and district, all pay out considerable sums. For December and January alone, Halluin paid out 22,564.50 francs. The most complete system is that of Roubaix-Tourcoing. Benefits are 6 francs per day; they are payable even for partial unemployment and may reach 60 days in the year (120 days for total unemployment). For December, January, and February last, more than 30,000 francs was paid out. This system only manages to keep its head above water thanks to the contributions of the communes (33 per cent.) and the Department (33 per cent.), which subsidise partial unemployment, and to the help of the State in cases of total unemployment. Fêtes are also organised for the benefit of the unemployment funds.

But the leaders of the Christian trade union movement would like to see the number of these funds increased. Thus quite recently the French Federation of Trade Unions in the Textile Industry addressed a pressing appeal to its members on behalf

¹ Extracted from the *Circulaire de la Fédération française des syndicats de l'industrie textile* (French Confederation of Christian Workers), March 1927.

of the creation or development of unemployment funds, which should be "the indispensable adjunct of each trade union"¹.

The trade union unemployment funds take steps — often with success — to obtain subsidies from the municipalities or the Departments. Good results in this direction have been obtained in particular by the free trade unions of the Nord² region.

Help for the Unemployed.

Sometimes the trade unions themselves arrange to employ those of their members who have no work.

This frequently happened during the war. The women's free trade union of Isère, in particular, rendered a very great service in this way to some hundreds of women workers. From September 1914 onwards, a very large number of unemployment workshops were organised by them in Dauphiné. They could at once provide work and a favourable rate of wages. "In September 1915 the public authorities chose the workrooms of the free trade unions as bodies representative of the trade, and arranged with the Supply Department that they should be assigned some important military clothing contracts. . . . Thus down to January 1920 ten home-work undertakings were able to distribute 4 million francs in wages to 5,000 women workers, without distinction of opinion³." When civilian replaced military clothing, great services were also rendered. For instance, the silk-net mending undertaking of La Tour-du-Pin paid out a total of 110,634 francs in wages during three years, from 1920 to 1923. The undertakings for making gloves, powder-puffs, knitted soles, bicycle dress guards, and church embroidery paid out 115,000 francs in wages in 1923. During the period of unemployment in the weaving industry in 1921, the free trade unions of Isère founded the slipper-making undertaking called *Les Pantoufles syndicales*, which resulted in the making of over 10,000 pairs of slippers by the unemployed.

But it is not only in Dauphiné that the Christian trade unions — especially the women's unions — have organised help of this kind for the unemployed. Latterly, for instance, at Puteaux, near Paris, when there was severe unemployment consequent on the closing down of a factory employing 3,000 workers, the women's trade union section started an unemployment workshop ;

¹ Cf. *La Voix sociale*, March 1927.

² Cf. *Le Nord social*, 13 Feb. 1927.

³ Cf. "Les syndicats libres féminins de l'Isère", by Miss PONCET, pp. 5-6.

work on dressmaking and underwear was provided for women and girls from more than fifty homes, and paid at the rate of 2 francs per hour.

Measures to prevent Unemployment.

While the Christian trade unions try to reduce, so far as this is possible, the hardships imposed on their members by involuntary unemployment, the leaders of the French Confederation of Christian Workers have had to devote their attention to the causes of this unemployment and the means of reducing its volume.

The National Council of the Confederation examined this question in its session of 9 January 1927. After observing that "the present situation, taken as a whole, even if it does not justify any excessive fear, calls for the greatest attention", the Council requested the public authorities :

To increase, in proportion to the need for them, the sum allocated to the National Unemployment Fund and the scale of the grants, and to provide for allowances in respect of partial unemployment amounting to not less than twelve hours per week ;

To provide at once against the possible extension of the depression by preparing a complete programme of public works of a genuinely useful kind, which might serve to absorb the unemployed as their numbers increase ;

To urge, and if necessary to compel, the public departments and services to place their orders immediately for such industrial products as they require ;

To take into account, in connection with such movements of labour from one place to another as may be necessary, the family circumstances of the workers ; the head of the family, in particular, cannot be considered as a mere machine which may be shifted at will ;

To consider, with this aim in view, what measures may be taken on behalf of unemployed or displaced tenants, and, if necessary, to consider the remission of tax obligations ;

To strengthen the control of foreign labour by formally prohibiting firms from employing any alien whose contract does not bear the visa of the Ministry of Labour, or from continuing to employ any alien whose contract was intended for another industry or for agriculture ;

To investigate at once any measures and, if the necessity arises, to take any steps, likely to make possible a redistribution or even a reduction of the number of alien workers, with a view to avoiding the discharge or transfer of French workers ;

To tighten up the enforcement of the Eight-Hour Day Act and to give instructions to industrial inspectors to refuse permission to depart from it except in case of absolute necessity : and

To continue their efforts to lower appreciably the cost of living by severely repressing speculation and profiteering and by a more scientific organisation of production, since any general measures which are not directed to this end seem bound to remain ineffective.

Strike Funds.

In addition to involuntary unemployment, partial or total, there is the unemployment — sometimes no less disagreeable — caused by strikes and lockouts. This is a particularly serious risk in certain occupations where disputes are frequent. Accordingly the Christian trade unions are organising strike funds in growing numbers, intended to help any of their members who may be thrown out of employment. But since this risk is more severe in certain trades than in others, certain conditions must be satisfied if these trade union insurance funds are to be able to meet their engagements: they must be very numerous, very varied, and, above all, capable of backing up one another. For this reason the French Confederation of Christian Workers has founded a central fund, the *Caisse confédérale de défense professionnelle*, to which the trade union strike funds are affiliated, so that in this way they transfer to the central fund a part of their risks¹.

Co-operative Purchasing Societies and Discount Arrangements.

In their wish to serve the material interests of their members, the Christian trade unions were naturally led to organise co-operative purchasing societies and to make discount arrangements with certain traders for the benefit of their members. Here the difficulty is to choose examples among the large number referred to in the various trade union journals and bulletins. Choosing more or less at random from their pages, we may mention the joint purchases and consignments of fish, organised at Annecy by the employees' trade union²; the arrangement for a discount on certain bills made by the Bordeaux women's trade unions³; the co-operative society *L'Epi* at Halluin, which distributes part of its surplus in the form of sickness and unemployment relief, the amount so paid out since its foundation being more than 100,000 francs⁴; the flourishing co-operative restaurants at Roubaix, Tourcoing, Wattrelos, and

¹ Cf. *Circulaire mensuelle de la Confédération française du Travail chrétien*, June 1922, p. 175; June 1923, p. 249; July 1924, p. 308; June 1925, p. 363.

² *La Voix sociale*, March 1927.

³ *La Travailleuse*, May 1927.

⁴ *Le Nord social*, 12 Dec. 1926.

Roncq¹; the trade union co-operative societies of Voiron, Tullins, and La Tour-du-Pin²; etc.

Among the flourishing co-operative societies, many of them comfortably installed in premises belonging to the trade unions, we must not fail to mention that of the Paris Employees' Trade Union, which is much appreciated by the members of the Union. During the last financial year, its turnover was 1,631,800 francs. This represents a considerable increase on the preceding year, a result due partly to an improvement in the system of wholesale purchasing and partly to the increase in the number of members who make use of it. Discount was allowed on bills to a total of 4,590,923 francs, out of which 250,549 francs was returned to members. The co-operative restaurant served 264,197 meals during the year, at an average price of three francs.

Friendly Societies.

The co-operative societies and joint purchasing organisations are responsible for an improvement, which is sometimes considerable, in the conditions of existence of trade unionists and their families. But the workers must not think only of their immediate well-being; they cannot forget that they and their loved ones are exposed to many risks, such as sickness, invalidity, and old age. Accordingly many of the Christian trade unions have created welfare and thrift societies for mutual aid, or are affiliated to organisations of the kind which provide a more or less complete guarantee against these risks.

A few examples may be given out of many. In the Nord region, Mr. Charlemagne Broutin's last report³ notes "the flourishing condition of *La Prévoyance* at Halluin, of *La Famille lilloise* at Lille, of *La Famille armentéroise* at Armentières, of the Societies at Douai, Denain, etc." *La Famille lilloise* is based on an interesting conception of mutual aid, which takes as its unit not the individual but the whole family. The total contributions to be paid by a family are reduced by an amount proportional to the number of its members who belong to the society; and, on the other hand, in case of sickness or death of the head of the family, the allowances are increased in the same way.

¹ *Idem*, 8 May 1927.

² *La Voix professionnelle*, June 1926.

³ *Le Nord social*, 8 May 1927.

The women's trade unions also practise mutual aid in its different forms. The women's free trade unions of Isère, for instance, have now 26 friendly societies with 3,651 participating and 1,030 honorary members. The infant welfare branch has made special progress: in 1925, 1,238 visits were made to 227 children under three years of age; in the same year the maternity branch distributed 17,310 francs in allowances to 78 mothers. From their foundation in 1906 down to 1 January 1926, the friendly societies have paid out 541,480 francs to sick members and the reinsurance fund has returned 58,912 francs to 538 sick members¹.

Similar facts and figures could be given for practically every region of France and group of trade unions.

Dowry Funds.

Marriage may be considered a "risk", but a risk gladly run by many young working women, who hope to find happiness in it. But they must meet it with a certain minimum of material resources. To help them to found a home, therefore, there are to-day very many dowry funds which the children of trade unionists can join, so ensuring a small sum of money for the day of their marriage or for their twenty-fifth birthday, in return for minute monthly payments.

Pension Funds.

Old age is another "risk", and a distinctly less agreeable one, against which it is to be wished that the workers could protect themselves by making sure of a small income for their later days. Unhappily, too few of them think of this, even among those who could do so. In several trade unions, however, old-age pension funds have been formed. We may take by way of example the pension fund organised in Paris in 1907 by the Central Federation of Women's (Abbaye) Trade Unions. Its aim is to provide pensions for members of the unions. Each participating member receives a book from the National Old-Age Pension Fund, entitling her to a pension beginning at any selected age after the age of 50 years and after fifteen years' membership. The payments may be made on the system either of alienated or of reserved capital. The annual contribution may not be less than 12 francs; the State

¹ *La Voix professionnelle*, June 1926.

contributes a quarter, up to 48 francs. Supplementary payments may however be made which increase the pension. In a recent report¹, the treasurer of this pension fund stated that this organisation for mutual aid "has made great progress in the last few years".

Convalescent and Rest Homes.

If the pension funds have not yet had all the success that could be wished, the convalescent and rest homes organised by various trade unions, on the contrary, are extremely popular among trade unionists. The Paris Employees' Trade Union, for instance, opened a country house at Groslay three years ago, where members can go with their families.

But up to the present it is perhaps the women's trade unions that have carried the development of this form of mutual aid furthest — a form which will meet with increasing appreciation as the practice of granting holidays with pay becomes more general in commerce and industry.

Since 1920 the free trade unions of Isère have two rest homes², one at Coublevie-Virien, which in 1926 had 857 visitors who stayed for a total of 10,531 days, the other at Biviers, which housed 321 members for a total of 6,933 days. Similarly, the Central Federation of Women's (Abbaye) Trade Unions has several holiday and rest homes, one of which is open all the year round to tired-out or anaemic members³.

Several women's trade unions have secured the help of trained nurses to make injections and apply dressings for their members without charge; for instance, the Bordeaux group of the Federation of Unions of Women's Trade Associations⁴.

Legal Advice and Loan Funds.

Numerous trade unions have considered how best to provide their members with the services of some form of organisation for legal and other advice. An instance is the Paris Employees' Trade Union; here a legal adviser gives the members free consulta-

¹ *La Ruche syndicale*, March and May 1927.

² *La Voix professionnelle*, April 1927.

³ *La Ruche syndicale*, July 1925.

⁴ *La Travailleuse*, May 1927.

tions on questions connected with their occupation and helps them when they have to go before the courts.

It often happens that what a trade unionist needs is not legal or practical advice, but rather a small sum of money. Some trade unions, in particular the Paris Employees' Trade Union, have accordingly taken steps to found a loan fund for their members, which makes small advances to them without charging interest. This arrangement meets with special appreciation.

Co-operative Credit and Productive Co-operative Societies.

In the same order of ideas, the question of co-operative credit for workers is engaging the attention of the heads of the French Confederation of Christian Workers. At the annual congress held in 1926, Mr. Zirnheld pointed out how advantageous it would be for the trade unions to collect the workers' savings themselves, "so as to make these savings yield a return which will be profitable to the workers themselves as well as to the trade union and social organisations".¹

This question of credit for workers is in the forefront of those now before the leaders of the French Christian trade union movement. It must however be mentioned that there are a great many workers' credit funds — not, it is true, run exclusively by or for trade unionists — which already render most of the wished-for services in this field; in particular, they make loans at a very low rate of interest to enable workers to become the owners of their own homes within a short time. Among numerous examples we may cite the workers' credit fund of Hellemmes-Lille², founded in 1913, which year by year sees an increase in the total of its deposits and in the magnitude of the services it renders.

Lastly, it should be mentioned that several Christian trade unions of manual workers have indirectly played an important part in founding productive co-operative societies. Among these may be cited the Lyons co-operative building society Le Roc, the Halluin chair-making society, and the Fougères glassworks.

Instruction and Training

In addition to the various forms of mutual aid the chief of which have just been enumerated, the Christian trade unions of

¹ *Circulaire*, May-July 1926, p. 408.

² *Le Nord social*, 14 and 28 Nov. and 12 Dec. 1926.

France have devoted attention to founding and developing organisations for providing their members with instruction and training — vocational education, trade union training, training of militant workers and propagandists, etc.

Organisations for Vocational Training.

Organisations for vocational training are very numerous, especially in the employees' trade unions and the women's organisations.

In Paris, the vocational instruction organised by the Employees' Trade Union alone¹ includes 67 classes held either at headquarters or in the local sections. These classes, which last year were attended by 1,333 students, dealt with the following subjects: French, commercial arithmetic, commerce, banking, stocks and shares, foreign exchanges, book-keeping, general and company accounting, industrial organisation, commercial and industrial law, political economy, shorthand, modern languages, industrial drawing, quantity surveying. Certificates and scholarships are given every year at the end of the session.

The women's trade unions, both the Abbaye group and those of the Boulevard des Capucines, have also organised very numerous classes in Paris, both for salaried employees and for manual workers, held in the evening during the week or on Saturday afternoon. In the Paris dressmaking trade, under a collective agreement signed in 1923, apprentices are allowed five hours a week, taken from the working day, to learn the technique of their trade.

In the provinces vocational education is also successfully arranged by the Christian trade unions, which are thus among the most effective supporters of the Astier Act².

Social Studies.

At the same time the Christian trade unions provide instruction in trade union matters and social studies, the necessity of which has been often impressed on members by their congresses. The primary object of the unions is less to collect a large number of more or less indifferent members than to build up a solid nucleus of firm adherents imbued with strong and keen convictions. Accordingly great importance is attached, in the women's as in the men's

¹ The programme for 1926-1927 is given in *L'Employé*, Oct. 1926.

² The Act of 25 July 1919 on the organisation of technical, industrial, and commercial education.

associations, to everything that aims at and achieves the development of social educational work.

At the basis of these activities should be placed the social study circles which exist in a fair number of trade unions; sometimes they are worked in connection with several unions. They attract specially the younger members, who meet for the purpose once or twice a week. When a union has not a study circle of its own, its members ordinarily attend an organisation of the same kind run by the local branch of the Catholic Association of French Youth. Sometimes a trade union or group of unions holds a one-day social study school (*journée sociale*) for its members; or it organises a kind of conference filling all the evenings of a week and finishing up with a more elaborate programme on Sunday.

From the educational point of view, the place of honour belongs to the Paris Trade Union of Employees in Industry and Commerce, with its education committee open to all members, its junior branch *La Jeunesse syndicale* which is linked up with the work of its active and devoted militant members, its course for speakers lasting a year, its editorial course, its journal *L'Employé*, which has the character of a review, and its library of 1,200 volumes¹.

The regional federations, in particular those of the Northern and South-Eastern regions, also work on similar lines. The Northern Regional Federation, for instance, has numerous study circles, has instituted profitable one-day study schools, and, in particular, has secured excellent results with its *Ecole normale ouvrière du Nord*, the 1926 session of which, lasting a fortnight, was attended by some sixty militant members, both men and women².

The women's trade unions also take a keen interest in the education of their members. A passage may be quoted from Miss Lafeuille's report in 1925 :

In Paris, the Central Federation provides educational facilities for its members : (1) by its monthly joint meetings of all unions, including a lecture on social science in the morning, and a meeting of branch and section delegates in the afternoon, both followed by discussion ; (2) by an education committee ; (3) by study circles in the sections ; (4) by participation in the course for speakers held by the Paris Social Secretariat.

Further excellent means of education are provided for members of the Central Federation by *La Ruche syndicale* and a library of works on social science and trade unionism.

¹ Cf. the report of Miss Lafeuille to the Annual Congress held in June 1925.

² General report submitted by Mr. Broutin : Cf. *Le Nord social*, 8 May 1927.

In the French Federation of Unions of Women's Trade Associations (Boulevard des Capucines), education is provided by the *Ecole normale sociale*. The training is spread over three years at least; it includes "propagandists' days", "Trade union weeks", and "propagandists' sessions".

The teaching during the "trade union week" consists of: (1) lectures by the staff of the *Ecole normale sociale*; (2) a study circle on a practical question of social science, on which each student must submit a written answer; (3) a course more directly connected with the students' working life or with propaganda, held by a propagandist.

The "propagandists' session" lasts about three weeks, so that it cannot reach more than a small number of women workers. It includes courses on principles, the study of social legislation, individual work, and practice in public speaking.

To obtain the propagandists' certificate, a member must have attended "propagandists' days" for three years, two "trade union weeks", and one "propagandists' session" and must pass a final oral examination.

A monthly journal, *La Travailleuse*, and a library complete this training given by the *Ecole normale supérieure*, not only for the Paris organisations, but also for the federated trade unions, which profit by it largely.

The French Confederation of Christian Workers, too, has a special organisation on similar lines. A "confederal session" is held in Paris every year, attended by one to two hundred militant members, who come from all parts of France and belong to a wide variety of occupations. These convinced and keen trade unionists are also excellent propagandists, and do much useful work in propaganda tours and lectures. The *Circulaire mensuelle* of the Confederation publishes in each number a list of these meetings, which shows the activity of its militant members.

Lastly, there are a score or more of trade union bulletins and journals¹, belonging to widely varied regions and occupations, which contribute to the diffusion and the defence of the ideas and institutions of the Christian trade union movement.

¹ *Le Cheminot de France*, Paris; *L'Echo des Syndicats*, Paris; *L'Employé*, Paris; *La Ruche syndicale*, Paris; *La Travailleuse*, Paris; *L'Avenir syndical*, Bordeaux; *La Champagne syndicale*, Troyes; *L'Effort*, Fougères; *L'Effort social*, Rheims; *L'Eveil syndical*, Toulouse; *Le Messager syndical*, Nantes; *Le Nord social*, Lille; *La Paix sociale*, Marseilles; *Le Rail Nord-Africain*, Algiers; *La Ruche angévine*, *Le Syndicaliste indépendant*, Strasburg; *La Vie professionnelle*, Le Mans; *La Vie sociale*, Poitiers; *Vive Labeur*, Rouen; *La Voie sociale*, Cherbourg; *La Voix professionnelle*, Grenoble; *La Voix sociale*, Lyons.

TRADE UNION ACTION FOR THE DEFENCE OF THE WORKERS' INTERESTS

Trade union propaganda would have but small chance of success if the Christian trade unions did not display great activity in the defence of their members' interests and for the improvement of their working conditions. Such activities are obviously many and varied, and no complete survey of them could be given within the limits of an ordinary article. Some examples will perhaps suffice to give an idea of the activities of the Christian trade unions in this field.

First of all, we may take the 8-hour day. Without going into details, it will suffice to mention here the vigorous efforts recently made by the trade union of Wervicq (Nord), by the federations of railwaymen, textile workers, and employees, and the trade unions of Grenoble and Châlon-sur-Saône (commerce), Toulouse and Grenoble (commerce), Lille (tailoring), and Douai (clothing trades). In short, whenever there has been a danger of evasion of the law, the trade union affected has intervened to ensure its observance.

Similarly, as regards the observance of the Sunday rest, the trade unions intervene when necessary both with the authorities and with the public. Thus, to take only a few recent examples chosen at random among many others, at Rouen, the Christian trade unions of employees have secured the promulgation by the prefect of four agreements for the Sunday closing of shops for the sale of paint and varnish, furniture, men's ready-made clothing, and women's ready-made clothing. At Douai, the employees' trade union has had a similar success for the clothing trade. At Limoges, the employees' trade union, in combination with the women's Christian trade unions, has had posters displayed in order to secure the general closing of shops on Sunday. Similar efforts, generally crowned with success, have been seen in recent months at Marseilles, Grenoble, Alès, Caen, Châlon-sur-Saône, Troyes, Chartres, Calais, Rennes, Poitiers, Lille. And to conclude, the Federation of Catholic Trade Unions of Employees has successfully carried through an appeal to the Council of State which has happily settled several disputed points in the law on trade unions with regard to the weekly rest.

In the sphere of wages, if it were not for the monotony of a mere enumeration, the only difficulty would be to choose from

the multitude of successful interventions. Success has been won in a great variety of regions and occupations.

Sometimes the trade union helps a comrade — if necessary bringing the case before the courts — to secure the wages due to him which an employer refuses to pay. There was a case of this kind at Neuveville-sur-l'Escaut, during which the intervention of the trade union was highly opportune¹.

The woman worker often has to carry heavy family charges on her own shoulders. It is thus easy to understand the interest taken by the women's trade unions in this question. A report on it was submitted to this year's congress of the Central Federation of Women's (Abbaye) Trade Unions², on which a resolution was adopted expressing the wish :

That the women's trade unions should devote increasing attention : (1) to securing a living wage for the woman who has to live on her own work ; (2) to collecting information in each region on all the rates of wages customarily paid to women, on the economic situation, and on the cost of living ; (3) to opening negotiations likely to lead to the conclusion by the mixed committees of collective agreements to regulate the highly important question of wages.

Closely allied to the question of wages properly speaking is in many cases that of family allowances. This question, too, does not leave the Christian trade unions indifferent, desirous as they are to support all measures favourable to the welfare of the family. We therefore find them frequently pressing for improvements in the system of allowances. They are often successful in their efforts : early in April 1927, for instance, the regional trade union of metal workers at Lille by its unaided efforts secured a new scale, far more favourable than the one formerly in force³.

Women workers with children to bring up, and without a man to support them, should in all justice receive the appropriate family allowances. They do not yet always do so, but it is not long since they hardly ever received them at all. In 1921 Miss Beeckmans, President of the Abbaye trade union of women workers in the clothing trades, submitted the following resolution signed by

¹ *Le Nord social*, 28 November, 1926.

² *La Ruche syndicale*, March 1927.

³ *Le Nord social*, 10 April 1927.

fourteen of her fellow-workers to the Superior Labour Council, of which she was a member¹ :

Considering,

(1) That the essentially feminine trades are deserted and should be restored to favour ;

(2) That in public departments employing both sexes and with a system of family allowances, the woman who has lost her husband benefits by these allowances ;

We urge that propaganda be carried out for the organisation in industries employing women of compensation funds for the benefit of mothers of families who have lost their husbands.

The initial steps have been taken to give effect to this resolution. Thus in the Paris dressmaking trade, the delegates of the women's trade unions have secured the adoption of a system of family allowances for women workers who are heads of families, the allowances being proportional to the number of children and payable up to the age of fourteen.

Care of the prospects of the worker in his old age has led the Christian trade unions, as we have already noted in speaking of their mutual aid organisations, to develop mutual pension funds. But in certain occupations these funds are organised by the employers or at least with liberal financial help from them. Here again the Christian trade unions intervene with a view to securing possible improvements. The federation of railwaymen's trade unions, for example, has just drafted a scheme for the organisation of their pension system².

After pensions comes social insurance. It need hardly be said that the Christian trade unions are in favour of its widespread application. They asked for it at the 1925 congress of the French Confederation of Christian Workers, and on 8 January 1927 the National Committee of the Confederation passed a resolution in this sense. The text of this resolution, which was sent to the Minister of Labour and acknowledged by him, was as follows :

The National Committee expresses the wish :

That the legal system of social insurance should be established at an early date on the basis of the Bill adopted by the Chamber of Deputies,

¹ *La Ruche syndicale*, Nov. 1924.

² *Le Cheminot de France*, March 1927.

taking into account the desiderata expressed by the French Confederation of Christian Workers, especially with regard to :

- (1) the raising of the maximum wage for compulsory insurance ;
- (2) the adoption of a complete system of proportional representation for the composition of the various bodies for the administration and management of social insurance and the settlement of disputed claims.

If we turn over the four or five hundred pages of the *Circulaire mensuelle* of the Confederation, or the journals and bulletins of the trade unions, we shall find in them a very large number of resolutions, desiderata, and proposals relating to the conditions of life and work of the workers. It is safe to say that there is no single reform affecting the workers on behalf of which the Christian trade unions have not intervened, often with success.

THE METHODS OF ACTION OF THE CHRISTIAN TRADE UNIONS

We must now see how the Christian trade unions try to make effective their views and their claims.

In the first place, they are now beginning to exert a certain influence in the official bodies, on which they have an increasing number of representatives.

On the Superior Labour Council, for instance, several of their leaders take a very effective share in the work, taking part in most of the discussions and putting forward the Christian Social point of view. Similarly, they have active delegates on a large number of regional, departmental, and communal committees where the workers' interests are concerned, such as departmental offices of the Nation's Wards, departmental technical education committees, unemployment committees, departmental labour committees, committees for the supervision of the tax on apprenticeship, wage committees, departmental sub-committees on labour supply, local technical education committees, miners' pension fund committees, etc. Among the recent elections to bodies on which occupational interests are represented, the most significant are undoubtedly those for the *Conseils de prud'hommes* held on 7 and 14 November 1926, which were marked by numerous successes for the candidates put forward by the French Confederation of Christian Workers. Failures have no doubt also been numerous, but even where they have occurred there has generally been an increase in the number of votes cast for the Confederation's candidates.

Trade Union Investment Funds

All this shows beyond dispute that the influence of the Christian trade unions is steadily growing, and that it is to-day often strong enough to be very usefully applied on behalf of the workers. The Unions do not hesitate to appeal to the industrial inspectors to secure the observance of the laws on hygiene and safety; nor do they hesitate to make representations to employers, and even to the boards of directors of powerful companies such as the railways.

In order to achieve this last aim, following the example of the Belgian Christian trade unions, the French railwaymen belonging to the French Confederation of Christian Workers have recently founded an investment fund. This fund, with the savings of trade unionists, has already acquired the minimum number of shares necessary to entitle it to send a representative to the general meeting of shareholders and so to express the wishes of the staff¹.

The Christian Trade Unions and Strikes

While the investment fund movement is still in its early stages in France, the Christian trade unions have already on very many occasions made representations to employers. Doubtless in their interventions they are ordinarily anxious not to present unjust or unacceptable claims, but they are glad to show that the more moderate their demands the greater their energy.

They do not hesitate on occasion to declare a strike if this measure is necessary to support a just claim. Certain persons are sometimes inclined to regard the Christian trade unions as a kind of "yellow" unions, slavishly under the sway of the employers' authority. They are nothing of the kind. Undoubtedly they do not declare "war with folded arms" except to defend claims which they consider legitimate and when all attempts at conciliation have failed. But then they are not less resolute than their comrades of other opinions. The only proof we shall offer is their active parti-

¹ On this question, cf. *International Labour Review*, Vol. XII, No. 3, Sept. 1925, pp. 372-385: "Trade Union Investment Funds in Belgium, France, Germany and Spain", by Max TURMANN. Cf. also *Problèmes sociaux du travail industriel*, 2nd series, by Max TURMANN; Paris, Gabalda.

cipation in two very important strikes, that in the Paris dress-making trade in 1923¹ and the bank strike of 1925².

THE SOCIAL IDEAL OF THE CHRISTIAN TRADE UNIONS

But if they do not shrink from a strike when they consider it just and necessary to secure the triumph of just claims, the Christian trade unions regard the strike of workers against employers as no more than a makeshift. Faithful to the teachings of social Catholicism, their ideal is class collaboration with mutual respect by each for the other's rights and duties.

It may happen that this understanding between employers and workers finds its concrete realisation in the agreement which ends a strike and which sometimes gives birth to a mixed committee, on which the two parties are represented and negotiate in future on a footing of equality with the wish to prevent the occurrence of new disputes.

This was the case after the strike in the Paris dressmaking trade. On 26 April 1923 an agreement was signed which settled, to the satisfaction of the women workers, the questions of wages, unemployment, holidays with pay, and vocational training. But there was one particularly important and useful provision in this agreement, that, namely, in which it was decided that "the delegates of the employers' and workers' organisations shall meet at least once every three months for the study in common of questions concerning the organisation of the occupation."

In connection with this strike, Miss Beeckmans wrote as follows³:

In this dispute the women's trade unions have seen their principles up against the test of action. It seems to us that these principles have stood the test of the dispute.

What, in effect, are the demands of the women's organisations of the French Confederation of Christian Workers? They ask, first, that between employers and workers there should be discussion and conscientious examination, without foregone conclusion, of the difficulties of a situation, instead of declaring a strike without notice and answering a strike with a lockout. The trade unions affiliated to the Confed-

¹ Cf. Supplement to *La Travailleuse*, May—June 1923.

² Cf. the well documented study by G. TESSIER (*Maison Syndicale*, 5 rue Cadet, Paris).

³ *La Ruche syndicale*, May—June 1923.

eration ask further that the organisation of labour should be real, complete, permanent, that the regular working of the occupational councils or mixed committees should prevent disputes or find their solution.

The mixed committee formed in April 1923 has been at work since then. It has averted many disputes, trying, sometimes not without difficulty, to fix wages with due regard to the various interests involved. But, as indicated above, this committee has the further credit of having organised a system of family allowances — this eminently social institution — for the women workers in the Paris dressmaking trade who are heads of families.

Paris is not the only city, nor dressmaking the only occupation, with a mixed committee of employers and Christian trade unionists. There are several others, in particular one at Grenoble in the glove-making industry, and last year, at Bordeaux, the Christian trade unions of employees signed an agreement of this kind with the association of wine and spirit merchants.

Thus is growing up — very slowly, no doubt, but with perseverance — this organisation of the labour world in accordance with the ideas of the Catholic Social movement. Last year, in the immense hall of the Trocadero, on the occasion of the ceremonies to commemorate the publication of Leo XIII's Encyclical on the condition of the workers, there was, as it were, a moment of vision when Mr. Zirnheld, the beloved and respected head of the Christian Trade Union movement, who had just proclaimed the rights and the duties of labour, was succeeded on the platform by Mr. Zamanski, president of an important organisation, the French Professional Confederation (*Confédération des Professions*), who paid homage to the workers in the name of the Christian employers. The substance of his speech was as follows :

For us, labour is neither merchandise, nor slavery, nor a puny child. It is no longer in its minority ; it has reached years of discretion. Laws are not imposed on it. Its independence is respected. Its claims are studied with its own concurrence, contracts are concluded with it. The workers are not mere subjects, but collaborators. . . . In our Professional Confederation, we hold out a loyal hand to the workers. We reconcile the rights and the duties of everyone. We adapt labour to modern conditions. We unite the classes by a broad and deep friendship. It is the French friendship of all workers which will save our country.

There is no member of the French Confederation of Christian Workers but would gladly endorse this declaration of friendship ; it is a marvellous expression of the aim and the guiding ideas of the Christian trade union movement in France.