

THE TEACHING OF COLLECTIVE BARGAINING IS ON THE WAY, SAYS MARY ANDERSON

BY JANE WHITAKER

"Whether you call it 'collective bargaining' or 'trade unionism,' or merely 'knowledge to protect the workers,' the fact remains that sooner or later what we term collective bargaining will have to be taught where vocational training is taught for the protection of the working class."

This was the reply of Miss Mary Anderson of the Women's Trade Union League to a question I had asked her relative to the action of the school management committee in objecting to a resolution to include this course of training in public school study.

"When we took up our resolution with Mrs. Young we thought she understood that 'collective bargaining' was trade unionism," Miss Anderson continued. "Of course, she did not or she would have so stated at the meeting.

"But there was no intention on our part of having this resolution 'sneak through.' It was a resolution prepared by the Women's Trade Union and so written. It is trade unionism, and trade unionism is at the present time the only protection the worker has against the greed of employers.

"If vocational training is taught in schools, and some branches of it are being taught at present, it is vitally necessary that the students shall also be given a knowledge of the wages which other workers are demanding

in the same line of work, otherwise vocational training in schools will only suffice to glut the market with labor that underbids labor and capital will quickly take advantage of it."

"That is one of the things I have often wondered about," I told Miss Anderson. "In the line of work I used to follow, stenography, I found that the teaching of that work in public schools threw on the market an over-surplus that was always underbidding. I believe frankly that the lowering of wages for stenographers has been brought about greatly by the fact that certain girls were able to learn stenography at no initial expense to themselves, and they therefore felt they could afford to work for less money in the beginning.

"They may not, and probably did not look further than the beginning, but the very fact that they underbid as beginners forced a gradual lowering all along the line."

"That is a danger," Miss Anderson admitted. "We have always realized that, but we hoped and we still hope that we can make school boards understand the necessity of teaching

pupils what wage they should receive.

"Vocational training does not necessarily mean that a girl or boy who takes up a course of study in school must pursue that work. The boy or girl is enabled by vocational training to discover whether the work they take up is the thing they want to follow, and if it is not, they still can change.

"In any event, it gives them skill in some one line of work so that there is no longer any possibility of the cry that the employers must do 'education work' or that the boy or girl is an 'apprentice' when they enter the working world.

"That, in the past, has been the excuse of employers for paying low wages and they have also been able to set an arbitrary period at which this apprenticeship shall end.

"Under a system of vocational training, the apprenticeship is served in the school, and the worker who starts out does not need 'education' by the employer, which simply means that a worker does not need to accept the wages of an apprentice for an indefinite number of years after