

Press Comment—A Labour Response

The following extract from an article in the "Sydney Morning Herald" of the 3rd April, 1947, written by a leader of the Labour movement, is an encouraging response to the efforts of the I.P.A. to bring about goodwill in industry. The author of the article, Mr. J. P. Ormonde, is a member of the executive of the Australian Labour Party in New South Wales, and a regular contributor to the columns of the "Sydney Morning Herald." The extract is of more than ordinary significance.

"I believe that many employers are as anxious as Labour is to get away from the 'dog-eat-dog' methods of the past. . . In the broad field of industrial relationships there are indications that employers want to drop political line-ups. They are less vociferous in declaring themselves with the non-Labour parties.

"The Council of the Institute of Public Affairs, in a recent issue of its publication, 'Review,' strikingly drew attention to this new spirit.

"In its 26-page review of industrial relationships, neither the Labour Party nor any other political party is blamed for industrial unrest.

"The 'Review' states:—

"In particular, the present methods used in the determination of standard wages and hours should be altered. For instance, the setting of the basic wage level should not be the subject of, nor should it have to wait upon, a dispute between the parties to industry. It should be determined at regular intervals—say every three years—primarily on the basis of the trend in industrial productivity.

"If some more or less automatic means for the determination of the wage level, acceptable to both parties to industry, can be arrived at, a big step forward to industrial peace will have been achieved.'

"Discussing industrial relations further, the 'Review' says this:—

"The conception of industry as a partnership requires, among other things, a vast extension of the principle and practice of joint consultation between representatives of the workers and of employers at national, State, industry, and factory levels.

"Possibly national and State industrial relations councils, consisting of representatives of employers and unions, should be constituted on a formal basis with provision for regular meetings. In the factory consultative councils, works or production committees or similar bodies should become the general rule, and the representatives of Labour on these councils should be provided with comprehensive information of the policies and finances of the business concerned.'

"These far-reaching declarations breathe the spirit that is needed to solve Australia's production problems. It is a spirit that is reciprocated by Labour. . . . If the approach to the problem set forth in the 'Review' is genuine, as I believe it is, and if it can win the support of the organised employers, there is ground for strong hope that the reign of peace and co-operation in industry is not far off."

