

Strikes Losing Their Effectiveness?

WHENEVER a union labor strike is settled you may look at the price of something you buy or use to go up.

Employees of General Motors staged what might be called a limited strike. It didn't shut down all GM plants but the settlement agreed upon is going to make you pay more for a new car (if you buy one) whether it is a Ford, Chrysler or GM product.

The GM settlement will be used as a pattern for negotiations by other major automobile manufacturers, so all prices will go up. Foreign automakers probably applaud this.

Another result is that thousands of people not on strike suffered loss of income during the sporadic strike. This includes non-union workers who were forced off their jobs, as well as related industries, service businesses and merchants who lost trade because of the enforced layoff.

Strikes have shut down almost every type of industry and business at one time or another, as well as essential government services,

transportation and athletic events. Goals always have been to force management to give them "More!"

Workers are entitled to a reasonable share in profits of companies they work for, but there is a serious question as to whether they should be allowed to resort to the violence of strikes to enforce extravagant demands.

Labor unions helped to bring about improvements in the status of working people in early years of the industrial era. Laws have been enacted to correct child labor abuse, inadequate pay scales, unhealthful working conditions, retirement pay, and other problems.

Labor unions also have been effective in crippling railroad passenger service, in causing travelers to fly on nearly bankrupt airlines, in disrupting school openings, in exporting jobs in electronic manufacturing, and in shutting down fire and police protection.

Strikes no longer are necessary and may be losing effectiveness as increasing numbers of business and industry negotiators are standing

up to attempts at intimidation by labor union bargainers.

Workers seem to be grasping the fact that extravagant union demands have resulted in loss of jobs in a number of industries.

A recent report of the Bureau of National Affairs, a private research firm, said that union membership has dipped below 20 million for the first time since 1968. Labor union membership has declined while total number of jobs in the United States has risen from 71 million in 1965 to 103 million in 1984.

Labor unions benefit from several laws which give them special advantage but newer legislation is helping businesses to relocate, adjust wage scales or make other changes to meet operational crises. Democratic candidates are promising labor "More!"

Because union contracts usually provide for annual increases in wages and benefits for three years or longer, you may expect more strike settlements to apply pressure for continued inflation for years to come.