

## EDITOR'S COLUMN<sup>1</sup>

In an industry cursed by periodic overproduction, the employers may be pleased to have their workers go on strike. This is one of the major conclusions of Anita Shafer Goodstein's study of labor relations in the lumber industry of the Saginaw Valley, Michigan, 1865-1885. Mrs. Goodstein, by careful use of the business correspondence of a large lumber producer, illuminates the lumber magnate's attitudes on labor questions. To these executives, the conditions of employment were determined by stern economic laws, which were to be interpreted by the employers themselves. Any employee unwilling to accept the results of this procedure could look elsewhere for work. Mrs. Goodstein shows the numerous influences playing on wages and hours in the Saginaw Valley: competition in the lumber markets with Canadian producers who had lower labor costs than the American firms; the significance of seasonal and cyclical fluctuations in business; the inevitable appearance of company towns in a rapidly expanding frontier region; the removal of the industry elsewhere as the timber resources of the Saginaw Valley were exhausted.

Overproduction was also a problem for the first producers of printed books in southern Europe, as demonstrated in the article by Florence Edler de Roover. The introduction of the printing press in Italy in 1465 immensely increased the capacity to produce books. With the new device, it was not only possible but necessary to turn out books in lots of several hundred. But a market did not yet exist for so many copies of a book. The nobility and wealthy merchants, accustomed to finely written manuscripts, adopted a snobby pose toward the printed volumes—they continued to buy the more expensive product. This lack of a market greatly increased the problems of financing and storage. The sedentary merchants, with their large capitals, extensive warehouses, and farflung connections with retailers, gradually worked out answers to these difficulties which beset the early printers.

Fritz Redlich concludes in this issue his account of the Lauchhammer Iron Works. Much of the present installment deals with the recruitment and organization of the Works' labor force, from top

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<sup>1</sup> Written by Professor Ray Ginger, under whose direction this issue of the *BULLETIN* has been prepared for publication.

managers to unskilled workers. Dr. Redlich contributes valuable information on the career-patterns and occupational mobility of employees in the German iron industry. His article also deals with other features of the Works' history: investment and profits, transportation of raw materials and finished products, sales policies and procedures.