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OTTAWA TRADES COUNCIL MEETING

Unemployment, the question of work on the new city hospital, the attitude of certain local aldermen toward Labor, and the railway strike, were the chief subjects before the Ottawa Allied Trades and Labor Council.

The president, J. A. P. Haydon, detailed the work done by the advisory committee on unemployment, and dealt with the steps being taken by the Federal Government and the city to combat unemployment during the winter. "No worker," he announced, "will be allowed to starve in Ottawa this winter."

City Council's action in giving the contract for cut stone for the civic hospital to Ottawa stone-cutters was applauded. It was said, however, that some aldermen, notably Aldermen Whyte, Hunt and Lowe, had wanted to reduce the labor wages stipulated, to bring the Ottawa tender within the mark of the lower but rejected Montreal offer. These aldermen were separately and somewhat severely criticized, and labor was advised to take a more active part in civic elections.

Delegate Adam Hay, of the Railway Clerks, introduced the strike topic. He pointed to the two recent wage reductions of 12 per cent. and 10 per cent. and showed that of the three United States roads on which men had struck in the past, one was bankrupt, one in the hands of the receiver, and only the third was still going. He charged that unemployment was due to a strike of Capital, which discharged men at 60 cents an hour until they could re-employ at 30 cents.

The foremost speakers were Delegates Adam Hay, Robertson of the stone-masons, Peter Leckie and D. McCann. Donald Dear, of the firemen, occupied the chair while the president made reports.

The date for the IL.P. political convention was announced as October 31 and Delegates McCann, Rod Plant and Charles W. Lewis were appointed convention delegates by the chair. Two Labor candidates will be put up in Ottawa.

The introduction of a resolution by the executive committee of the Allied Trades and Labor Association, at its meeting, protesting the rate of thirty cents an hour paid laborers on provincial highway construction, caused much discussion, during which, while the "starvation wage" was decried by some delegates, others declared that this condition was due to the farmers, and that the provincial government was acting fairly.

The resolution was as follows:

"Your executive could not overlook the 30 cent per hour rate on road work in this province as laid down by the Hon. Mr. Biggs as a fair remuneration."

"There is no mistake being made in linking up this minister with this ridiculous low wage, he having made matters much worse in our opinion by the excuses offered for his position in this particular.

"'Fallen from grace,' is a very apt application and we are of the opinion that his attitude is entirely different when dealing with the human element as against the purchasing of motor trucks. We are apparently in a helpless condition to restore the Hon. Biggs to a sense of reason in regard to the rate which should be paid, but we would recommend that this council's representative, D. Dear, on the Trades and Labor Congress executive of Ontario, take up the matter with the provincial officers and attempt to gain redress in this regard."

Views on Wage Fixation.

Speaking to the motion, President Haydon said he was not surprised at this low wage rate in view of the fact that the Provincial Government had set a standard wage rate for this work all over the province, instead of establishing the minimum wage rate according to the conditions in the different localities. He was taken up on this by Delegate Johnston, who pointed out that most of the road building was in progress in farming communities, where, in many cases the rates paid by the farmers were lower than thirty cents an hour. In fact, the farmers were complaining, stating that labor was being drawn from their farms to the roads owing to the higher rates paid to laborers on the latter.

He was seconded by Delegate Patterson, who stated that the farmers who paid most of the taxes which went to build the roads, could not afford to pay the wages offered men on road construction, and accordingly were complaining that they had difficulty in securing help.

"The Ontario government, which is a Farmer government, in all fairness, had to consider this phase of the question," said this delegate, "and naturally is not much concerned about how the city man who goes on road construction is fairing."

Average Wages Paid.

The executive drew attention to the rates which were being paid by lumbering concerns in the district to bushmen, viz., from $16 to $30 per month, and recommended that this question should be the subject of an enquiry by a provincial fair wage board.

Delegate Johnson said that the figures were hardly correct, as statistics in his department showed that up to the end of last week the wages offered had been from $826 to $32. Since then, however, two firms had decided to lower the wages to $23 to $30. In addition men had to pay transportation both ways unless they stayed until the break-up and he estimated that on an average a man who worked six months in the bush, drew the equivalent of four months' wages.

Delegate Lewis said if he was correctly informed men had been shipped to the bush by firms at a $16 a month wage rate, and Mrs. A. J. Johnson, another delegate, went him one better when she remarked that a friend of hers admitted to her that just recently he had shipped "four carloads of men to the Kipewa with wage rates ranging from $16 to $24.50 per month.

According to orders issued by Dr. J. W. McMillan, chairman of the Minimum Wage Board, no experienced female employe 18 years or over in a manufacturing industry shall be paid less than $11.50 per week in cities of 5,000 or over (Toronto exempt), or $11 in cities under 50,000.

In the case of inexperienced adults the minimum wages fixed are $9.50 and $9 for the first six months and $10.50 and $$10 for the second six months. Young girls are to receive not less per week than $8 and $7 for the first six months with increases for the second and third periods of six months. After 18 months' work girls are to be rated as experienced help.

EVIDENCE BEFORE ARBITRATION BOARD

It was stated employees would not agree to the 12 1-2 per cent wage reduction in the aggregate, and an equally decided assertion by F. P. Brady of the Canadian National Railway that his company would insist upon the entire saving represented by such reduction, were given before the board of arbitration.

It was said that if the management would agree to reduce the total, then it would be possible to discuss distribution. They would only consider the 12 1-2 per cent basis as a maximum to be deducted from the higher paid employees, while lesser reductions might be considered for the lower-paid.

For use at the session, Oct. 27, Rev. Byron Stauffer, the chairman, asked Mr. Brady to submit a selection of the classes concerned which in his opinion would be most badly hit by any reduction in wages, and a list of say eight of the 35 classes involved, which could best stand the cut.

Mr. Stauffer held that there was considerable difference in the way in which a wage reduction would affect the employees. He cited, for instance, a stenographer of 18, earning $110, as compared with a freight shed man supporting a family, with a pay check of $90 a month. It was brought out that stenographers earning $60, $65 and $75 before the McAdoo award in 1918, rose to $87.50, $90 and $95 by virtue of that award, and to $110, $120 and $125 respectively after the Chicago award last year. By the reduction this year their pay became $100, $110 and $115 respectively. In the matter of percentages, the pay rose from 100 per cent previous to the McAdoo award to 144, then 182, and finally back to 166 per cent.

C. W. Bolton of the department of labor appeared before the board to give cost of living information. Taking 100 as the basis in 1913, he said that prices had risen to 201 in 1920, and had now fallen back to 163 per cent. Mr. Stauffer arranged that there shall be available at the next session similar figures covering general changes in wages over the same period.

A. C. Egan made the statement that outside of an increase in passenger rates accorded in March, 1918, which netted the company about 8 per cent, they were working on exactly the same passenger rate basis as in 1915. The increases allowed in September, 1920, had already been wiped out by reductions made on January 1st and July 1st of this year. Freight rates had also been reduced 5 per cent on each of these dates.

Mr. Brady said the railways would be better off without passenger traffic; sleeping cars were invariably a source of loss, as also observation cars. Mr. Egan added that all the railway's profits are made during the last four months of the year, when the grain is moving.

This week is expected to wind up the sessions.

LONDON LABORITES ARE HOLDING CONVENTION

Final organization of the London Labor Party will be undertaken at a meeting called for this week in London Memorial Labor Temple, when plans will be considered for participation in the forthcoming Federal and probably the annual civic elections.

This meeting will be open to regularly accredited delegates from bodies which have decided to affiliate, also to the organization delegates who attended the previous meetings of the party. In the case of organizations which have not yet considered the question of affiliation seats will be given to former delegates of the Labor Representation Committee on the payment of the affiliation fee.

The election of officers will take some little time of the convention, as well as the ratifying of the platform of the Ontario Section of the Canadian Labor Party.

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