

# Labor News From Coast to Coast

## Open New Labor Bureaus

Premier Orders Temporary Offices in East and West of City

Toronto, Ont.—Feeling that many men who wished to register at the Government employment bureaus could not afford to spend the necessary car fare to get down town to the Government office for this purpose, Premier Ferguson issued instructions to Deputy Minister of Labor Ballantyne to open temporary offices in the eastern and western districts of Toronto.

## Outline Plan to Train Youths

Victoria, B.C.—The sawmill bosses at a recent meeting of their organization, the Pacific Northwest Millwork Association, outlined a scheme for an apprentice system in the sawmills and other wood-working establishments throughout the Pacific northwest.

The meeting deplored the lack of efficiency shown by the adult workers. The system is one that will take the working class boy into a sawmill or woodworking establishment upon his leaving school and place him on probation for three months. If the boy is found satisfactory an indenture is to be made between the boy's parents to be made a period of four years at what is termed "a graded scale of wages." The boy's parents under the indenture system are compelled to deposit \$50.00 which will be forfeited to the employer should the apprentice not serve out his indentured time.

The sawmill bosses were of the opinion that manual training in the schools was useless because the boys who eventually found their way into the sawmills seldom attended high school. L. B. Travers, vocational supervisor for the state of Washington set forth figures to show that only thirty-five per cent. of the boys attending school ever reach high school.

## More Employment in British Columbia

In the opinion of Hon. James Murdock, federal Minister of Labor, there is more unemployment in Eastern Canada than in the West. This was his reply to a question as to how he viewed the general labor condition in Canada at the present time. "Conditions might be better," he said, "and there are some places where there is more unemployment than in others. British Columbia, for instance, is better in this respect than it has been for a number of years," he said.

## Fight Over Railway Rights and Privileges

Ottawa, Ont.—A big fight is in progress here over railway freight rates and the special privileges of the Canadian Pacific Railway. In 1897 this company made an agreement to charge certain rates on grain eastward and on iron, agricultural machinery, fruit and some other articles going to the prairies. Now it is trying to have this agreement nullified and has won the first round. The retort of the middle west is that, if the low rates are to go, so must some of the special privileges of the road.

These low rates were in force from 1898 until 1917. Then, owing to the high war costs of railway operation as well as everything else, they were suspended. They came back in full in July 1924. The railways, both the government lines and C.P.R., endeavor to have parliament further suspend the low rates but failed. The C.P.R. then put them in force only at points served by its lines in 1927. This created what were admitted to be "chaotic discriminations." The case was argued before the railway commission, which held that the agreement fixing the rates was not binding and so the low rates go by the board. Appeals have come to the Dominion government. There will also be appeals to the courts. Eventually the issue must come up in Parliament.

## Will Convene in B.C. Next Year

Winnipeg, Man.—Next year's convention of the Associated Workmen's Compensation Boards of Canada will be held in Vancouver it was decided recently.

## Five-Hour Day?

A five-hour day in the building industry is predicted by James Hartness, former governor of Vermont, now president of the American engineering council.

## Charge Regulations Were Disobeyed

Attorney-General Nickle heard a deputation composed of the executive of the Trades and Labor Council, who complained that a local firm was not fulfilling the regulations laid down by the Minimum Wage Board. The Attorney-General has arranged a meeting at which members of the board, representatives of the firm, and labor leaders will be present.

## "Hire and Fire" System Being Used

Montreal, Que.—Though the building trades are supposed to be slack some of the construction companies active in Montreal and vicinity are working three gangs of laborers—one coming, one on the job, and one going. According to stories told by many disgruntled workers the old "hire-and-fire" system is being employed extensively by these companies, and the people profiting most by the system are the employment agencies.

The case of one man illustrates how the system works from the laborer's point of view. This man is qualified in several trades, among others those of tinsmithing and house-painting. By paying three dollars to an employment agent he secured an unskilled laborer's job on construction work in Notre Dame de Grace at a wage of thirty cents an hour for a nine hour day.

After two days' work he was laid off, but told to come down again next morning. For three mornings he spent carfare going to the job and at the end of the time got another day's work. When the semi-monthly pay day came round he drew a little over ten dollars. With a wife and children to support this did not look very big to him.

Another man, a good worker, came on the job one morning in an optimistic mood, having been told by the agent who took his three dollars that the job was good for two months. He was let out at noon the same day. He had another half day's work a little later. When on the following pay day he drew \$2.50 he had been without food for two days.

The army of unemployed now in the city, whose ranks are being augmented daily from the harvest fields of the west, has created a condition very unfavorable to the regular worker, the men allege. The only persons who are profiting by it are the employment agents. Describing conditions on one construction job a man said to a "Canadian Labor Press" representative:

"Men are coming and going all the time. Good workers are laid off for no apparent reason and new hands taken on. The men are so eager for work that they will report day after day for the chance to handle a pick and shovel."

"When they pay their two or three dollars, probably constituting the last cent they can scrape together, to the agent they are told that the job is good for a month or two. After working intermittently for a few days they are laid off. Then when pay day comes they may have to return several times to draw the few dollars coming to them."

## Longshoremen Are On Strike

St. John's Nfld.—The strike situation brought about by the longshoremen, who demand an eight-hour day and overtime from six o'clock to nine the next morning remains unchanged. The work of unloading the Red Cross liner Rosalind, of the New York and Halifax route, was begun by clerks and others, and a posse of policemen armed with rifles and fixed bayonets are protecting them. Ships loading fish for foreign markets have been diverted to other ports to complete their cargo, and coastal boats have sailed with holds but partly filled.

## The International Labor Organization

Tilsonburg, Ont.—What is the International Labor Organization, and how does it function? That Canada is fortunate in numbering among her citizens many who are intelligent friends and intelligent critics of the International Labor Organization is perfectly true. It is equally true that there are still many responsible Canadians who do not know that the International Labor Organization exists, or having heard of it, remain ignorant of its nature and functions. The fact that during the discussion preceding the recent ratification by the Dominion Parliament of four Draft Conventions of the International Labor Organization, a member of the House demanded to know if it was "the intention of the Government to hold more conventions in Geneva in the future," invites reflection. The

form of the question did not make it appear that the honorable gentleman knew that Canada is a member state in a permanent International Labor Organization.

The International Labor Organization of the League of Nations was created by Part XIII of the Treaty of Versailles. It has its own governing body and its own special conference, but the League of Nations has the duty of voting its annual budget. Annual Conferences are held, to which each member state sends four representatives—two for the government, one for the employers, and one for the employees. Through the International Labor Office at Geneva, the activities of the organization are carried on throughout the year.

One perhaps too often thinks of the Peace Treaty as a purely political and commercial document in which frontiers and nationalities and minorities were fought over and compromised upon, and, sometimes perhaps, bartered and cross-bartered; and one forgets that there was also therein an endeavor to find an international expression of a certain number of high human ideals. The raison d'être of the International Labor Organization is that Universal Peace can be established only if based upon social justice, and that "conditions of labor exist involving such social injustice, hardship and privation to large numbers of people as to produce unrest so great that the peace and harmony of the world are imperilled, and an improvement of those conditions is urgently required."

How does the International Labor Organization go about its work of raising and equalizing world standards? In its annual conferences the Organization adopts Draft Conventions or Recommendations. Each member state is free to ratify them or reject them, but each state is bound by agreement to place any such recommendations before competent legislative authority for discussion. It is the second duty of the Organization to collect and distribute information concerning all labor matters and all social questions throughout the world. In doing so, it creates a new atmosphere of feeling, suggests new ideas of reforms and explains the initiatives and experiences of each country.

Many member states have been slow to discuss the Draft Conventions, but it is interesting to note that the most evident results have been obtained in fields where they were least expected. The International Labor Organization can point with pride for instance, to a new system of labor legislation in India and in Japan, and to the beginning of a system of labor legislation in China.

## Problem of Workless

The Federal Labor Department has achieved another distinctive publication. A volume of 138 pages has been issued in an industrial relation series. This is the costly souvenir of what was called the "national conference regarding winter employment in Canada." For two days government officials, citizens, employers and labor men tried to theorize with Hon. Jas. Murdock. In the election contest Mr. Murdock won by riling every speaker out of order but himself and abruptly closing the discussions. That is what the printed souvenir volume is all about.

The serious depression in trade and the necessity of discovering more employment is never doubted. The forty-eight henchmen and others who assembled solemnly at Ottawa, as per this history of its talkfest, found the problem was due to lack of work offering in Canada. It was resolved that "work of some description be encouraged in every locality, with special consideration to be given to work of a permanent nature, such as building construction, etc." Much of the summer work, it was resolved, also could be undertaken in winter. In its wisdom the notable gathering resolved: "Further, that the greater the number of hours worked per day on all work undertaken the smaller will be the number engaged, and inversely, the shorter the hours the greater the number who will be provided with some earnings to tide them over a period of scarcity of employment, and it is recommended that this policy be adopted." How these grave decisions were finally achieved is it not to be found in this department of labor bulletin of 128 pages of the reported conversations, at Ottawa on September 3-4 by the printer to the King's Most Excellent Majesty, 1924.

## Workers Hurt

Industrial accidents are happening in New York State at the rate of 36,000 annually, and 15,000 of them were severe enough to warrant filing compensation claims, reports the state industrial accident commission. During the last six-months period compensation was allowed for 44 fatalities, for 273 permanent partial injuries and for 6,661 temporary injuries.

## When Workmen Contented, All Prosper

By Claude B. Ritter, President Commercial Law League of America

What more sacred duty can we have than keeping the citizenship of Our Country at the highest level of intelligence, health and virtue?

Our inheritance is great, and we must be worthy.

We must protect and preserve our country.

To do so, our gates must be closed to a class of immigrants who have been coming in recent years, who are literally watering our nation's life blood.

We must receive only those, who by intelligence and virtue, by thrift and loyalty, are worthy of receiving the equal advantages of the priceless gift of citizenship.

Opposed to this policy, we have a class of money-mad employers of labor, fortunately limited in numbers, who are insisting that we open our doors to cheap foreign labor. They do not realize the effect such a policy would have on our citizenship, or else put money before country.

When our farmers and wage earners are well off, it is certain that all others will be well off too, and it is a matter for hearty congratulation that wages in this country are higher than in any part of the world, and as a natural consequence, the standard of living is higher.

Every effort of our lawmakers should be bent to secure the permanency of this condition of things, and its improvement wherever possible; therefore, it follows that our labor must be protected from the presence in this country of laborers

representing a standard of living so depressed that they can undersell our men in the labor market and drag them to a lower level.

All persons should be excluded who are below a certain standard of economic fitness, to enter our industrial field as competitors with American labor, or who have not an intelligent capacity to appreciate American institutions and act sanely as American citizens.—From the Presidential address at the Annual Meeting of the Commercial Law League of America, at Montreal.

The privilege of labor is the beginning and end of humanity—the ladder upon which man climbs in the present and the golden crown of reward in the future.



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