

erable that such an organization should be able to blight the prosperity of this Province. In their published appeal the Fernie miners say: "Autocracy has reigned too long in this fair land. We love our freedom and appreciate equal rights." What greater or more mischievous autocracy can be imagined than that which places the industries of this Province under the control of an alien organization? What a fallacy it is to talk of freedom while owning blind and unreasoning obedience to an absolutely irresponsible authority? It is said that the British Columbian miners contemplate severing their connection with the Western Federation. They will be wise if they do so, for they have sufficient protection under the laws of this country without resorting to methods which have been adopted in the United States to secure common justice, and they are surely competent to decide for themselves what their interests call for without extraneous interference.

That some remedy must, if possible, be devised for this state of things will be admitted without argument. What that remedy should be and how it can be brought about are more difficult questions. Compulsory arbitration appears to be the most reasonable, although it is not a perfect method; but it is to be borne in mind that no remedy for the prevention of evils operates wholly satisfactory. There are laws to prevent smuggling, yet people smuggle and would probably continue to do so under any system of legislation that can be devised. There are laws for the suppression of nuisances and crimes, yet nuisances and crimes are by no means rare. But no one argues that, because these laws do not secure implicit respect, they are useless. If they fail in accomplishing their purposes, we seek, if we are wise, to secure their better enforcement. Or take a class of laws which are more nearly akin to measures that may be adopted for the prevention of labour troubles, such, for example, as those for the control of railway companies and coming within the jurisdiction of the Railway Committee of the Privy Council in Canada and of the Inter-state Commerce Commission in the United States. No one pretends that these laws are absolutely effectual to prevent the evils against which they are directed; yet it cannot be denied that they are productive of great benefit, and a proposal to repeal them would be resisted by all classes of the community. Why should we approach the settlement of labour troubles and the overthrow of the tyranny of labour unions in any different spirit from that in which the settlement of transportation problems and the overthrow of the tyranny of railway corporations were dealt with?

We concede that in the case of the great corporations franchises exist, which can be rescinded, and there are properties of immense value, which can be attached, if the orders made by constituted authority

are not regarded, while in the case of labour unions the subject matter to be dealt with is the right of individuals to labour, and this we all thought, until union tyranny became a feature of the community, was something which the law had no right to touch. But this difference does not affect the argument for the enactment of remedial legislation. The partial success attending the efforts to control the corporations is an encouragement to attempt the control of the workingmen, within such limits as are consistent with the exercise of individual liberty, and the fact that no one will pretend that such control will be absolutely effectual in all cases is no reason why the attempt should not be made.

We would not be understood as suggesting the enactment of a law compelling any man to work for any one else under any conditions whatever: at the same time we object to any man being prevented from working for any other on the terms satisfactory to himself. Perfect freedom of an individual to place his services at the disposal of another for any legitimate purpose upon terms satisfactory to them both should be secured by law. Nevertheless there is no valid reason why working men should not form unions and co-operate within reasonable limits to secure better wages and better conditions of employment. On the whole the application of arbitration to the disputes arising between working men and their employers has been satisfactory, and we are strongly of the opinion that the time has come for the enforcement of this method in British Columbia by the strong arm of the law.

Compulsory arbitration is not by any means objectionable to the majority of workingmen, although they would probably all object to any compulsory steps to enforce the decrees of the Court of Arbitration. An argument, which meets with approval among some workingmen, is that the unions depend upon public opinion for their influence, and that while cases may be cited where unions have resisted it, in the majority of instances it will be found that they will not stand out when their case is not supported by the general sense of the community. The strike of the anthracite miners in Pennsylvania, it is claimed, derives its whole force from the fact that the miners have a good case. This aspect of the question is worthy of very serious consideration, and a system of compulsory arbitration depending for its force upon the coercive influence of public opinion might be worth trying. To get the best out of such a system it would be necessary to provide a full measure of protection for individuals, who might submit to the terms of the award, and of enforcing its observance by employers. By this it is not meant that if the Board of Arbitration should decide that a certain wage was reasonable and proper, that employers should operate their undertakings and pay that wage,