

FRIENDS OF LABOR

ENTERPRISES THAT HAVE SHOWN A FRIENDLY ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE WORKING CLASS

LABOR DEFLATION

(C. R. E. Monthly.)

Why should not wages come down? Cost of living has come down. Profits and production have come down. Why should Labor be exempt, especially as the workers were the biggest profiteers during the war?

So runs the threadbare argument. Let us subject it to the searching light of statistics.

If it transpires that the workers did not profiteer during the war, and that on the contrary the wage received then was only a pittance, any man of good will will agree that the reductions which have already taken place are excessive to the point of the unbearable and that further reductions will only provide the straw that will break the camel's back.

Let us go to the Government for our figures.

Page 324 of the "Canada Year Book for 1920" gives at the top a summary of statistics of Manufacture in Canada for the years 1917 and 1918, the two last years of the war.

This table reveals that the average wage of the workers in 1917 was \$7.57 and in 1918, \$8.66. Statistics for the one year covered 601,305 workers and in the other 603,116 workers, two large numbers to give other than accurate results. It may be taken that the average wage for these workers was close to the average wage for all workers in the years mentioned—otherwise workers from the poorly paid occupations would flow to the higher and produce a level again.

Official figures from the Dominion Bureau of Census for the year 1919 enable us to cover the two last years of the war and the first year of the peace:

Average wage	
1917	\$7.57
1918	\$8.66
1919	\$9.41

Not once prior to, during, or immediately after the war have the wages of the working class risen to an average of \$20 a week. During the height of war prices, while eggs and butter were selling with the \$ mark and sugar was sold to a price of 20c or more a pound, hard coal headed towards \$30, rents doubled and trebled, clothing followed suit—during all that time the workers received \$19 or less to support life each week.

They have been compelled to forego much even of this miserable amount in return for drops in certain foodstuffs and articles of apparel, balanced by increases in rent and fuel. And are asked to surrender still more despite the fact that the cost of living has started another climb, permanent or not it does not matter.

It recalls a very graphic illustration used by Jimmy MacFadden, fighting Secretary of District 26, U.M.W. He points out that under the cost of living budget of the Department of Labour, a quart of milk is allowed to

each family of five. Which means that the little girl in the family can receive four-fifths of a glass of milk each day. A drop in the cost of living means that instead of four-fifths of a glass once a day, she can get a full glass once a day. It is at this point that the employer comes along and takes the milk from the child in order to pay dividends on his watered stock.

It should be added in closing that the handful of owners of industry in Canada took in returns from the industries of Canada roughly as much as the whole 600,000 workers during the years 1917, 1918, 1919. Who are the profiteers.

P. R. IS FAVORED BY GRAIN GROWERS

Annual Convention Will Adopt This Method for Future Elections.

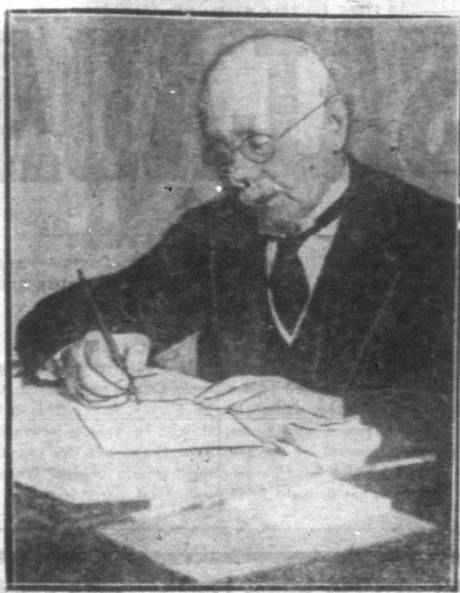
SASKATOON.—Officers of the Saskatchewan Grain Growers' after this year are to be elected by proportional representation and the transferable vote. Delegates to the annual convention accepted this principle after a long debate. It was pointed out that proportional representation was in the platform of the Progressives, and it was alleged that there was inconsistency in failure of the organized farmers of Saskatchewan to use the system in their own affairs.

The entire morning was occupied with discussion of proposed amendments to the constitution. A resolution which would have excluded all those whose "principal interest" was in farming from membership was rejected on the ground that it involved a narrowing process rather than a "broadening out." A proposition that no members of parliament or the legislature should hold office or the central executive was dropped when delegates had been told that such a step would involve the retirement from the presidency of J. A. Maharg, M.L.A.

Delegates refused to change the name of that organization. By an overwhelming majority a resolution which proposed to adopt the name "United Farmers of Saskatchewan" was voted down.

There was considerable discussion over a proposal that membership in the association be restricted to "bona fide farmers and agents of their organizations," and an amendment that only those whose "principal interest" was farming be admitted on a two-thirds of the locals.

Delegates opposing both resolutions declared there were thousands of persons in Saskatchewan in sympathy with the organization who would be ineligible under such provision. "We seem to be narrowing up rather than broadening out," said one. On the other hand, it was said that co-opera-



Henry A. Dix, head of a New York clothing firm has turned over his million dollar concern to his employees.

THE EXPANSION OF THE GUILD MOVEMENT

By JAMES T. GUNN, Secretary, Canadian Federation of Labor.

The Building Guild Movement which is exercising a powerful influence on the mind of the British building workers, has furnished the inspiration to similar movements in Europe, although the movement in Italy is an exception in that it started independently from the British movement.

It is significant of the attractiveness of the Guild idea that it developed in Great Britain and Italy with out mutual inspiration.

The outstanding feature of the Italian Guild movement is that the Guilds were created first, to relieve unemployment, secondly to provide an outlet for the overflowing energies of black-leg-proof unions. All the Italian Guilds are closely connected with the Trade Union Movement. For instance the National Federation of Building Operatives enumerates amongst its objects the creation of Guilds of production and labour, and at its last congress passed a resolution affirming that "in order to overcome the under-production of houses and the production of houses and building materials, it is indispensable that the building industry should be developed on a co-operative basis."

The same congress instructed the Federation to coordinate the numerous local Guilds into a National Federation of Building Guilds, which is to be a section of the N. F. B. C. giving as its reason "that unions have reached a stage in which . . . they must engage in actual production." This National Guild is at work constructing a long railway line for the State Railways.

The National Building Guild is based on local Guilds. Each member of the local guild must pay for at least one share, the price of which is fifty lire, and no member may own more than one hundred shares. There are no dividends paid on these shares, unless one may term the twenty-five per cent. of the profits that goes to the workers in proportion to the wages they have earned, a dividend. Twenty-five per cent. of the profits is transferred to mutual aid funds, and the remaining fifty per cent. goes to the sinking fund.

The National Guild is responsible for all large scale works that involve the interest of vast zones and distributes them amongst the district guilds. It is also the financing agency for national construction and takes over and manages subsidiary industries, such as quarries, brick, and cement and lime factories, together with the workshops which prepare building material.

It is backed by two hundred thousand members of the N. F. B. C.; it controls labor and the labor market and is capable of engaging in any kind of construction work, from road and bridge building to the building of the finest residences in any part of the country. Tremendous work has been done already by its affiliated Guilds. During the last two years most of the reconstruction work in the war area has been carried on by the local Guilds. The National Guild has an expert staff and a schooled, disciplined rank and file. It is so fast for profits, but wants to realize the principle that will make it possible and feasible to transform the building industry into a true national public service, free of "red tape" and working in conjunction with the public administrative trading stores had been killed by local merchants baring from within the organization, and that instances had been known of politicians using the same method.

"Do you want a One Big Union, or a farmers' organization," one delegate said. Resolutions and amendments alike were voted down almost unanimously.

registration in the interests of the community.

The other European countries in which the Guild movement is in action are Austria, Hungary, Germany, Holland, France and Ireland, all of whom owe their inspiration to the example of the British Building workers.

Soon after the conclusion of the war, building workers in many parts of Germany united to form productive co-operative societies. The new movement was very successful, and in September, 1920, the Building Trade Unions took over its management and formed the Union of Social Building Corporations as a limited company, with a working capital of twenty million marks. According to its stipulation, this Union is formed for the purpose of forming and promoting social or co-operative building corporations which represent them in their relations to government, Parliament and communities. The profit made must not exceed 5 per cent. of the capital invested. Most of the local societies adopted the name of "Bauhütte," which in the middle ages was the name of gatherings, and afterwards of the Building Guilds.

It is managed by hand and brain workers, and a partner can only transfer his share to another partner. Partners cannot be partners. The Committee of Control assists the Managing Director and the Works Committee in technical and administrative affairs. The Committee of Control represents the associations of building workers, societies for establishing small dwellings, the provinces and the State.

The Union comprises at present about two hundred corporations with twenty thousand workers. During the past year the turnover amounted to 300 million marks.

It has been successful in reducing the cost of building, as during the years 1920-1921 the tenders of the "Bauhütten" were 400 million marks below those of private concerns. Some instances may be given: in 1920 the City of Bonn wanted tenders; the lowest given by private concerns was 500 thousand marks, whilst that of the Guilds was 200 thousand marks, being 145 per cent. cheaper. In Darmstadt private tenders for carpentry amounted to 72 thousand marks; the Guild only asked 35,870 m. In Heilbronn the cost of excavating was reduced, through competition, of the Guilds from 16 to 17 marks per cubic metre, although the wages at the same time were raised 27 per cent.

In January, 1922, the movement was recognized as of general utility, and was therefore, exempted from the special taxes on corporations, thus enabling them to obtain credit more easily from public funds, notwithstanding the opposition of private building interests.

Turning to Austria, we find in existence the Builders and Civic Improvers' Guild. The Guild aims at a close union between those who make and those who use the products of a building industry, viz.: of the Building Trade and all other trades connected with it. Three organizations are in association in the Guild. The first is the Builders' Union, comprising both manual and administrative workers in the building trade. The second is the Garden City Association, a co-operative association for the laying out of garden cities. The third is the Austrian Lodgers' Union, the object of which is the protection of the lodgers' interests, and in a country where living in tenements is the rule, such an organization is of great importance.

The object of the Guild is to gain full control of the building of new houses and flats, and the keeping in good repair of already existing houses. The Builders' Union, the Garden City Association, Vienna Town Council, and the government have founded institutes to provide the Guild with the building materials, and the Builders' Union is at work on several settle-

ments. The Guild is built on democratic principles, and the Executive Boards of the three bodies which constitute the Guild send a certain number of members to the Guild Council. At present the Guild has about two hundred thousand members.

The Building Guild of Hungary owes its creation to the National Federation of Building Trades' Operatives, which has twenty-five thousand members and is largely Marxian in spirit. Two years ago the Federation of Building Craft Unions was transformed into a real industrial union of the Building Guild, which would include technicians and office workers and be based on the principle of democratic self-government, having as its objects greater efficiency, higher output and better craftsmanship, with continuous pay and no distribution of profits.

The first local guild was started in Budapest, and the number of volunteers asking to be enrolled in the Guild surpasses, at the present time, the working capacity of the Guilds. It is even more remarkable that the support given to Guild action is stronger in small towns and country places than at the capital.

In Holland a building Guild has been formed at Amsterdam, with similar objects to those of the British Building Guild. The Social, Democratic, Syndicalist, Christian and Catholic Building Unions are each entitled to two members of the Guild Council, and provision is made for other Unions to have a representation on it. The Guild carries on propaganda for the creation of a national body. With the exception of some small contracts, no information has been available to indicate its success, either in the amount of contracts received, or in lower costs of building.

In Ireland a National Building Guild has been created out of the Dublin movement, and at the present time, according to the "Voice of Labor" plans are on foot for the reorganization of the whole Irish Building Industry as a National Guild, working in conjunction with the Dail Eireann.

According to the statements sent out by the National Federation of Trade Unions, steps are now being taken to create a National Building Guild in France. The initiative in the matter has been taken by the Union of Technicians, who are working in conjunction with the organized building workers, having as their object, the building of houses for public bodies, and all sorts of building work for local authorities, especially devoting their energies to reconstruction work in the devastated areas.

The French Seaman's Federation is proposing to start a merchant fleet of its own and wishes to buy seventeen vessels, from the French Government, having a total tonnage of 112 thousand, making a beginning with these. A separate co-operative organization under union control, is to be formed to take charge of the enterprise.

The French Miners' Federation formed a company and started work-

ing a quarry which has turned out quite successful. The Belgian miners have put some money into the enterprise as a sign of international solidarity.

In connection with the devastated areas of France, the French and German Building Unions have agreed on a plan for doing the work, partly with German labor, through the German Building Guilds, on terms which would eliminate all profit. The French workers would be represented on the governing bodies of the Guilds doing the work. This plan was overwhelmingly approved by the residents of the areas in question, but the French government stepped in and refused to allow it to be carried out.

Turning to the Western world, the only sign of Guild ideas in action is in Tampico, Mexico, where the dockworkers have taken over the management of the work of the port into their own hands and are running the dock on Guild lines.

In Boston a small experiment is carried out by a number of building trades' operatives in co-operative house-building, without, however, having any direct support from their Trade Unions. They have between thirty and forty contracts in hand and have gone along working on rough plans which they themselves have drawn out, buying materials as best they could. It is claimed that their costs of production have so far been about 15 per cent. below those of private contractors.

In Minneapolis the Bricklayers' Union has organized a plan to build better and cheaper homes for the workers, and at St. Paul there is a co-operative undertaking, owned and controlled by the workers for the purpose of building homes. This enterprise, in the short period it has been at work, has already effected a saving of from twenty to thirty per cent. in the price of houses. Its funds have been contributed to by the unions.

These U. S. experiments, however, are not strictly Guilds, and so far there is no indication that the American or Canadian workers are likely to be seized with the inspiration of Guild ideas and the conception of work as a national service which is gripping the minds of the European workers and which they are endeavouring to translate into action in spite of the opposition of private interests.

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