

THETFORD MINERS UNJUSTLY TREATED BY LABOR MINISTER

Charge Made at Trades and Labor Congress.

MINISTER MAKES DEFENCE

Hon. T. W. Crothers Says He Is Convinced His Action Was Justified.

TORONTO, Sept. 25.—Allegations that the men employed in the asbestos mines at Thetford Mines, Quebec, were unjustly treated by the minister of labor, and the mine operators, were the subject of a debate which occupied the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada throughout its sitting this afternoon. They were contained in a resolution presented by Delegate Rousseau of Thetford Mines, and concurred in by the resolutions committee.

Hon. T. W. Crothers, minister of labor, who had come to Toronto to take part in the discussion of the proposed revised industrial disputes act, was present. He frankly told the congress the information which had been given him regarding the dispute between the miners and mine-owners of Thetford Mines during the last summer. He explained the grounds for the action taken by himself and his department, and declared that he was convinced that the action was fully justified.

Scores Labor Minister.

The motion of Delegate Rousseau declared that the reason a board of conciliation was not granted to arbitrate between the parties at Thetford Mines was the bad faith of the minister of labor, and that the mine-owners had acted in bad faith by ignoring an agreement, in which they had bound themselves not to discriminate against the men who had been on strike, and that Mr. Roy, coadjutor to Cardinal Beaudry, had incited Rev. J. E. T. Proulx to fight the movement to establish an industrial union at Thetford Mines, with the result that a Catholic union was formed.

The case of the miners was set forth by Gus Franc of Montreal, Richard A. Riggs, M. P. E., of Winnipeg, and other speakers.

"If the evidence is true," said Mr. Riggs, "a very serious indictment has been brought against the labor department. If the evidence is true, it simply means that the industrial disputes act is a colossal farce, and, at the whim of any minister, can be used to browbeat labor and to settle disputes in the interests of the employers."

Elections on Holidays.

This morning the congress went on record as favoring election days being statutory holidays, and falling that having the voting hours extended to 8 p.m.

After a discussion over the pensions for reservists called home to the allied armies, a resolution carried favoring putting them all on an equal footing, if the French, Russian, Italian and Belgian governments desire to raise the pension to the Canadian standard.

A resolution was carried favoring the taxation of all lands, irrespective of improvements, and that no lands be guaranteed to any but bona fide settlers.

STEAMER ARRIVES ON FIRE.

LIVERPOOL, Sept. 25.—The British steamer Wyncote, from Philadelphia for Glasgow, has arrived in the Mersey with fire in her after hold.

GOVERNMENT PROBE INTO FIRE EPIDEMIC IS BEING STARTED

Provincial Fire Marshal to Investigate Burning of Barns in Western Ontario—Kent District Alarmed.

TORONTO, Sept. 25.—Three provincial officers, under the direction of Provincial Fire Marshal Heaton, are engaged in investigating the so far mysterious epidemic of barn fires in various western parts of Ontario, reported in The Advertiser on Monday. Mr. Heaton said today that the matter has been engaging the attention of the department for some days. The number of seemingly mysterious barn fires throughout the agricultural districts of the western part of the province has been ominously large, and is naturally causing farmers much apprehension and suspicion of wholesale organized incendiarism.

PHOTO MEN RESPONSIBLE. CHATHAM, Sept. 25.—That numerous barn fires of more or less serious proportions which have occurred in this district recently, are of an incendiary nature, and the work of parties of photographers and picture enlargers from the American side, is the allegation of farmers who have laid complaints with County Constable George Peters. Within the last ten days he reported there have been fifteen barn fires.

The county constable last night received telephone calls from eight or nine incensed farmers who urged that the authorities take steps in the matter at once.

They thoroughly believe that the photo men are responsible for the fires, and claim that the origin in many cases can be traced to spots where they had been at work.

Some Are Germans.

They also claim that the photo men, some of whom are Germans, insist on taking pictures of their farm buildings, in spite of the farmers' refusals.

The vicinity in which the farmers have been victimized is chiefly in the Lambton county, outside the jurisdiction of Constable Peters. The Kent county constable has referred the matter to the proper authority.

Two-thirds of the victims are declared to have been women and children.

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