

Labor Men Show Activity

CANADIAN BIG BIZ "PUT OVER" SALES TAX TO SHIFT BURDEN

"Big business 'put over' the Canadian sales tax so it could escape profits and luxury taxes," says the Alberta Labor News, official paper of the Alberta Federation of Labor.

"The rule for the application of forms of taxation should be that of ability to pay," says the Labor News. "But the rule that is followed by the representatives of special privilege, who have hitherto attended to such matters, is that of relieving those who are best able to pay at the expense of those who are least able to bear the burden. Such is the Canadian sales tax.

"The sales tax is a consumer's tax. It places the burden upon the shoulders of the man who must buy clothes and shelter and food.

"It was adopted at the instigation of the privileged interests, and at the suggestion of the Canadian Manufacturers' association the 1921 budget was brought in by Sir Henry Dwyer, containing no business profits tax, no luxury tax, but with the sales tax greatly increased.

"A writer in the Monetary Times describes the working out of the sales tax. According to figures supplied through this office, the amount equals \$20 per capita.

FARMER'S SUN IN LAWYER CLASSIFICATION

Mr. E. G. Long, K.C., tells the Electric Club that lawyers should be put to parliament because they know how to formulate laws.

Mr. Long misconceives the function of a legislature, which is to decide the content and not the forms of laws. The putting of a law into proper shape is purely secretarial business. It belongs in the attorney-general's department, where it is done by expert clerks. It is a subordinate operation requiring a peculiar sort of skill and knowledge, which is not often found in conjunction with wide experience of practical life and sound judgment upon the problems of society.

No one denies the right of the legal profession to be represented in parliament. It has as much right, and no more, than any other class. Any undue proportion of lawyers means that some other class is getting less than its just share. There are just so many seats in a legislature, and every extra lawyer means that some other profession or calling is partially excluded.

Moreover, the legal mind is a backward-looking mind. It feeds on precedents. It has the wisdom of tradition. It is opposed to progress. A growing nation, facing new problems, dare not deliver itself into the hands of lawyers. There are notable exceptions, of course, but such is the prevailing and current mentality of the legal profession.

Parliaments need lawyers, indeed. They need them, however, in a separate building and under the separate efficient and responsible management, for it guarantees the carriers a fixed return. Railroad stocks are greatly inflated and the fixed guarantee is upon the inflated value, commonly known as "watered stock."

"A guarantee to a private enterprise is dangerous and vicious, yet there is no more justification for guaranteeing a return on railroad investments than guaranteeing the profits of a motor manufacturer, professional man or woman a return.

"Under the Cummins-Esch law the transportation companies have found an excuse for organizing subsidiary companies with over-capitalized assets in connection with transportation, which results in further increasing the burdens of rates."

GENEVA CONFERENCE FINDS DOMINION LABOR DELEGATES PREPARED

Congress Principles To Be Retained In Agenda

As anticipated the attempt to clip wings and make effete the work at the Geneva Conference has been early in evidence, the meagre despatches received showing strong evidence in this direction. We have previously been informed that the opposition of various governments to the measures of social legislation proposed by the Labor Office and by the annual Labor Conferences manifested itself in many ways. It is a most remarkable phenomenon that, while in 1919 the principal allied and associated governments defined the powers of the Labor Office and its annual Conferences, now the workers were to have a voice in deciding upon measures towards the well-being of the toiling masses, these same governments are now trying to undermine the institution which they themselves created and are sabotaging in a most disgraceful manner the legislative efforts of the Conferences.

The Swiss Government for instance, which by the way was so delighted at the idea that the seat of the Labor Office was to be established in their country, is utterly opposed to the application of the Eight Hours Day, especially in agriculture. The British Government has declared in Parliament that they cannot enforce the application of the Washington Conventions alleging that some of these conventions are not in accordance with English traditions, etc., etc. Everywhere we look we have the same phenomenon, persistent efforts to sabotage the International Labor Office. All of which goes to show that the governments, egged on doubtlessly by the employers, are endeavoring to take back what they were obliged to concede to the workers under the stress of war conditions.

PROTECTING THE FEMALE WORKER

It is surprisingly small body of opposition to the rulings of the Ontario Minimum Wage Board is a tribute to the caution with which the members have proceeded with their duties. They realize that they are a minimum or living wage board and not a fair wage board. It is not their business to determine what industries are able to pay nor what they should pay in view of their profits, but simply the smallest amount on which girls and women should be called upon to live.

That there is occasion for the enforcement of a minimum wage is shown by the marked variation in wages found by the board. The variations in the cost of living throughout the province are found to be small compared with the variations in wages, which often are marked on a single street of a city.

The decisions of the board indicate a disposition to enforce a minimum wage of \$12.50 in Toronto for experienced factory or store workers over the age of 18 years. In Ottawa, Hamilton and London the minimum is put at \$11.50, and in other places at \$11. Lower rates are set for inexperienced and younger girls. But regular increases and a fixed ratio of experienced girls to inexperienced are provided.

It is but natural that the workers should fear that the fixing of a minimum wage will be used by employers as a pretext for adopting it as a fair wage, thus reducing pay, in some cases, from a good wage to a bare-living wage. But there has been no legal minimum wage, hitherto, and it is unlikely that the decision of the community that forces up the low wage paid by some employers will bring down the wages of others. — Toronto Star.

THREATENED RAILROAD STRIKE IN UNITED STATES CALLED OFF

The rail strike scheduled for October 30 was averted when leaders of the switchmen, trainmen, conductors, engineers and firemen, at a joint meeting, adopted resolutions withdrawing authorization of a walkout, and officials of the railroad telegraphers' organization announced they would take similar action. These were the only unions which had authorized a strike.

The vote calling off the strike was unanimous by organizations, W. D. Lee, president of the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen, announced. The official wording of the resolution adopted was that "the strike be declared not effective."

The vote in the individual unions was unusually close, however, the firemen particularly holding lengthy arguments before agreeing to cancellation of the strike order, the labor chief said. In some of the groups the ballot was described as "the closest in history on a similar question." All of the differences were ironed out by the different unions, however, and the final show-down found all of them casting their ballots for "no strike."

L. E. Sheppard, president of the Order of Railway Conductors, said that the unions had decided to call off the strike because "the growing public opinion that the strike would be against the government, and consequently the government, and not against the railroads."

"It was evident also that the entire Washington administration was opposed to us, and that we have had little chance of gaining our objectives," said Mr. Sheppard. "We called this strike to gain certain rights to which our men were entitled."

"If soon became evident, however, that the railroad was succeeding in their misleading propaganda, we would have called it off," he said. "We really would be against the government."

"This railroad propaganda found its way to the United States Railroad Labor Board. This government agency told us that it would look on a strike as against it, and the government and not against the railroads, and that the full force of the government would be brought to bear against us. We walked out. Under such circumstances there was nothing to do but annul our orders for the October 30 walkout."

Union leaders said that the resolution adopted by the labor board, announcing that no further wage re-

ONTARIO COLLEGE PROFESSOR SAYS NO CAUSE FOR ALARM

Lecturing at Ottawa under the auspices of the Women Teachers' Association, Dr. J. L. Morrison, professor of History at Queen's University, whose subject was "The British Labor Party and its programme," declared that the feeling that Labor, when in power in the Old Land, would disrupt the Empire, was without foundation.

The British Labor party believed that men working together as a whole were better than a small group of private interests. He argued that the labor point of view in politics should not be lost sight of, and people should think of what Labor was striving to do. The Labor party points to the assertions of Macdonald, Laurier and Borden, who with the same voice had asserted that the people could govern themselves and used this as an argument in favor of the Labor party. Many might be surprised to learn that Labor in Britain was realistic and when it held the reins of power the nation regarding the safety of the Empire would fade away. He was of the opinion that the Labor party, if placed in power, would refuse to form a coalition, but would be satisfied to meet the conditions. One inevitable feature of the party was the presence of some dissent.

The Labor programme included a wide plank for nationalization of utilities and great industries such as coal mines, gas, and electric power, and public ownership of railways, street cars, etc. Labor contended that the coal industries in England were worth £200,000,000 and that the paying of royalties and profits to the coal companies made the price of coal high for the consumer. They said there was a lack of economy in mining coal, arguing that the machinery was inadequate, distribution not properly carried out, thus increasing the cost of fuel to consumers.

Labor held that the middlemen's profits, which constitute a big item, would also be abolished through nationalization and through the latter system an extravagant and wasteful system. The party figured that if Britain had purchased the coal mines in 1913, the country would have owned them five years later. The workmen urged that a central authority should be set up to have at its head a responsible minister of the Crown, should direct the affairs of the mines. Miners and consumers' councils throughout the country would be affiliated with the central body. Professor Morrison asserted there would be trouble in the coal mines in England until labor got something like what it wanted. The speaker was not prepared to admit that the views of labor might be wrong.

RAIL LAW CONDEMNED

Des Moines, Iowa.—The Cummins-Esch railroad law was condemned at a conference of governors and other state officials of middle western states in this city.

"The Cummins-Esch law," said Governor Blaine of Wisconsin, "disregards the rights of the transportation management, for it guarantees the carriers a fixed return. Railroad stocks are greatly inflated and the fixed guarantee is upon the inflated value, commonly known as 'watered stock.'"

"A guarantee to a private enterprise is dangerous and vicious, yet there is no more justification for guaranteeing a return on railroad investments than guaranteeing the profits of a motor manufacturer, professional man or woman a return.

"Under the Cummins-Esch law the transportation companies have found an excuse for organizing subsidiary companies with over-capitalized assets in connection with transportation, which results in further increasing the burdens of rates."

REUTER DESPATCH FROM GENEVA EARLY THIS WEEK SAYS THAT AT MEETING OF THE INTERNATIONAL LABOR CONFERENCE THE BRITISH AND CANADIAN GOVERNMENT DELEGATES WERE AMONG THE MANY GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES WHO SUPPORTED ALL THE LABOR DELEGATES IN SECURING THE RETENTION ON THE AGENDA OF ITEMS CONCERNING UNEMPLOYMENT, PROTECTION OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN AND TECHNICAL INSTRUCTION IN AGRICULTURE.

The South African government vote, however, went with the minority, which included the French and Swiss government delegates.

S. R. Parsons, of Canada, sympathized with the French objections and contended that the inclusion of agricultural questions in the agenda was impracticable. He suggested going slowly as regards recommendations and conventions. Some of his statements regarding wages and the Amsterdam Internationale called forth protests from Delegate Poulton, of Great Britain, and Delegate Tom Moore, of Canada. Mr. Moore declared that if the benefits enjoyed by industrial workers could extend to agricultural workers it would conduct to keeping agricultural workers on the farms and preventing migration to towns.

Delegate Mertens, of Belgium, also protested against Mr. Parsons' statement concerning the Amsterdam Internationale, which he said were unwarranted. The president intervened and requested Mr. Mertens to confine his remarks to the subject under discussion.

Closure was proposed by Delegate Barrett, of South Africa, seconded by Delegate Bayley, of Great Britain, and carried by 53 votes to 38. Thereupon the motions were carried with the requisite two-thirds majority amid applause.

WORKERS' WAGES DOWN: OFFICIAL'S SALARY UP

Washington.—Secretary of War Weeks has inaugurated an economic policy in the Panama canal zone, on recommendation of Brigadier General Conroy, head of the canal zone.

Wages of workers are reduced and the many concessions given them as an inducement to go to Panama have been rescinded. The health of workers is taken from them. These reductions are estimated at \$90.95 a month for married men and \$66.60 for single men.

The "economic" program stopped with the wage workers for the commission recommended that the salary of the governor of the canal zone be increased 50 per cent and that he also be allowed an additional \$4,000 as president of the Panama railroad, for "entertainment expenses."

It is also stated that henceforth the canal zone will be operated under what anti-unionists term "open" shop.

Officers of the A. F. of L. metal trades department took the matter up with the secretary of war and the president, but without success.

MINIMUM WAGE LAW ACROSS THE BORDER

The fixing of wage rates by act of law is a practice that is quite general in a number of countries where men as well as women come within the scope of the laws. In the United States minimum wage laws are found in twelve States, the District of Columbia and Porto Rico, but they are applicable only to women and minors. The U. S. Department of Labor through its Bureau of Labor Statistics has just issued as Bulletin No. 285 an account of the minimum wage legislation of the United States, including its legal construction and its operation in the different jurisdictions.

Rates are usually fixed by a board or commission, though in Arizona and Utah the law itself names the rates. The industries covered may be few or many, according to the terms of the law. Wisconsin covers all employments with a single order, while California has nine and Massachusetts fifteen orders applicable to as many industries or classifications.

"The entire history of this legislation has been marked by attacks on its constitutionality, but the Supreme Court in five States has upheld the laws as valid, with no adverse decision by such a court. There still is evident a disposition to regard the laws as interfering with the 'freedom of contract,' which of course they do, as does practically every 'labor law,' notably those fixing the hours of labor, compensation of workmen for injuries, etc., which have been fully vindicated in the courts. Moreover the survey by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the reports of administrative commissions indicate a very general acceptance of the law by employers, many of them giving it a hearty approval, as to both principle and results.

The first law of this type enacted in the United States was in Massachusetts in 1812. Questions of con-

ITEMS OF INTEREST FROM OVERSEAS

BIG PROPOSAL. The biggest single scheme yet suggested in connection with the Government's unemployment policy has been submitted to the Government by the Underground Railways Company, which proposes to raise six millions sterling to spend on developing and extending the London tubes. It is claimed that in this undertaking employment could be given to 20,000 men for two years. The Underground Railways Company asks the Government to guarantee the interest on the sum proposed to be raised and grant a donation benefit along from February 1 to September 1 this year. At the end of June the membership had gone down to 406,000, and the lapses had doubled since June. One of the suggestions as to economy made by a special sub-committee referred to the disposal of the general secretary's motor-car. The meeting decided to reject the recommendation, "being of the opinion that the car is necessary for the efficient carrying on of the union's work."

LABOR COLLEGES. Over 40 delegates attended the conference on Class Co-ordination, convened by the Plebs League, and held at the Club House, Yardley, Birmingham. Representatives were present from the Labor Colleges in London, Glasgow, Edinburgh (and Scottish districts), Sheffield, Liverpool, Wolverhampton, Derby, Manchester, and Newcastle, from the class centres in Rochdale, Birmingham, Halifax, and West Riding, Middlesbrough, Mansfield, Ashton-under-Lyne, London, etc., and from the Plebs League.

As a result of the conference a National Council of Labor Colleges, which will undertake the work of co-ordinating the activities of the various districts, was formed.

JUDICIAL DECISION. By a series of decisions given by Mr. Justice Roche, a large class of persons was excluded from the benefits of the Unemployment Insurance Act.

His lordship held that all club servants, including engineers who looked after electric lighting, were domestic servants within the meaning of the statute, and therefore, were not insurable.

He further ruled that all employees in boarding houses attached to schools were not "employed in a trade or business carried on for the purpose of gain," and were, therefore, not insurable.

This ruling was applied to private schools. His lordship did not think

ROADS IGNORE U. S. BOARD'S FIGURES

Washington.—Figures on 1917 wages of railroad employees, now being issued by the association of railway executives, are in direct conflict with the report of the railroad wage commission appointed by Director General of Railroads McAdoo. This commission consisted of Franklin K. Lane, then secretary of the interior; Charles C. McChord, interstate commerce commissioner; J. Harry Cullington, District of Columbia judge, and William R. Wilcox, ex-postmaster, New York city.

This report is a compilation of wages of all railroad employees. Its values lie in the fact that it was compiled under government auspices by men of unquestioned character, and because it refutes the claim made then—as now—that wages of railroad employees are excessive.

The commission said: "It has been a somewhat popular impression that railroad employees were among the most highly paid workers. But figures gathered from the railroads disposed of this belief. Fifty-one per cent of all employees during December, 1917, received \$75 per month or less. And 80 per cent received \$100 per month or less.

"Even among the locomotive engineers, commonly spoken of as highly paid, a preponderating number received less than \$170 per month, and this commission's figures are obtained by the most complete and complete organization, handled with a full appreciation of all strategic values. Between the grades receiving from \$150 to \$250 per month, there is included less than 3 per cent of all the employees (excluding officials) and these suggest less than 60,000 men out of a grand total of \$400,000.

"The greatest number of employees on all the roads, fall into the class receiving between \$60 and \$65 per month—181,695. While within the range of the next \$10 in monthly salary there is a total of 312,761 persons.

"In December, 1917, there were 111,477 clerks receiving annual pay of \$900 or less. In 1917 the average pay of this class was but \$56.77 per month.

"There were 270,855 section men on the roads refusing to withdraw above epithets.

"Such terms as 'political tricksters' were levelled at the supporters of the government. Finally Mr. Cullington announced that the Labor party would take no further part in the committee stage of the bill, as the government had declined to make further grants, and a number of the Laborites left the house.

"The discussion was then continued and the Independent Liberals still pressed the government to make the concessions demanded by the Laborites. Eventually Mr. McAdoo, in charge of the bill, undertook to give the matter consideration before the report stage.

MINERS RISK LIVES; COAL OWNERS, MONEY

Washington.—"The men who go down into the bowels of the earth, hazard their lives and endure the hardships of the miner, 'pay' as much to make the coal industry what it is as do the coal owners who live in comfortable offices and risk nothing but money," said Philip Murray, vice president of the United Mine Workers, testifying before the senate committee that is probing West Virginia mining conditions.

The unionist presented a program that will safeguard the rights of workers in West Virginia and insure peace in that industry. The plan includes: Freedom of speech, assembly and movement; the right of workers to organize and bargain collectively through representatives of their own choosing; protection against discrimination because of membership or of non-membership in the United Mine Workers; assurance that these rights will not be subordinated by coal owners; assurance of private guards; assurance that victimized union mine workers will be restored to their former positions or to ones equally as good.

"We do not seek to control the coal industry, but we do demand a voice in its control," said Vice-President Murray, who called on the coal owners to present a better plan.

In summing up the coal owners, the unionist said the workers would show that the coal owners are not merely the miner's employer; they are his landlord, his merchant, the provider of his amusements, the supplier of his education, and the officer of his community, often the source of his police protection and the patron of his physician, his minister and his school teacher.

MEMBERS JAZZ

The Labor members of parliament led by John Robert Clynes are making a strong fight to induce the government to increase the amounts payable to the children of unemployed persons, under the government's unemployed workers' and dependents' temporary provision bill.

Stormy scenes occurred and John J. Jones and Will Thomas were both ordered by the chairman to leave