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ALBERTA FEDERATION OF LABOR

The Alberta Labor News gives a full report of the important gathering of the Alberta Federation of Labor, as follows:

What may be considered as the most important business to come before the ninth annual convention of th eAlberta Federation of Labor which convened at Lethbridge on Monday, January 9th, was the new Minimu mWage Bill and the Uniform Early Closing Bylaw, which has been prepared by Hon. Alex Ross, minister of public works, to bt placed before the next session of the provincial legislature. Mr. Ross submitted these two bills to the Labor convention for their approval and he personally explained the two proposed bills to the convention.

On Tuesday morning the special committee appointed on the above two bills made their report to the convention. An act to provide a minimum wage for women was the first to come up for approval. The act provides for the establishment of a minimu mwage commission of three members, one appointed by the employers, one by the employes, and the third by the government, the lieutenant-governor-in-council to name the chairman. As explained by the minister, the spirit of the legislation is not to arbitrarily enforce its will as to wage scales, but rather to get employes and employers together. Then if the two parties cannot agree the commission will deal with thb issue and its decision will be final.

The convention favored amending Clause 10, regulating the hours of employment and shifts was amended so as to fix the maximum hours of employment the same as that fixed in the Factories' Act. This is 10 hours during the day, and 8 hours on the night shift.

The other clauses were concurred to without change as recommended by the committee.

There was a division of opinion soon registered on the proposed early closing bylaw for cities. The bone of contention was whether the weekly half holiday should be Wednesdays of Saturdays. Hon. Alex. Ross explained in the opening of the debate that he had two objects in drafting this bylaw as a uniform law for the different cities. One was that a provincial act would take away some of the autonomy now held by the cities, and second it would entail additional expease to the province by way of enforcement. He had drafted the bylaw on the solicitation of the retail merchants' association, and it was up to the cities to accept or reject it.

There were two wings represented. One wing, of which John Marsh of Lethbridge, was the mouthpiece, wanted the hours of closing extended beyon dsix o'clock on Saturday as Saturday night shopping had become an institution and was of great convenience to the miners and farmers. It was impossible for them to get into town before that time to do their week-end shopping. He said a better way still would be to close all works and industries at noon Saturdays, and then the clerks could get off at six as everybody would then have ample time to shop before that hour.

The other wing of which Delegate Roper of Edmonton, was a prominent spokesman, compromised by asking that the matter of the half-holiday be left optional in the cities. Edmonton retail employes and employers were strong for Saturday afternoon off as the week-end opportunity for recreation gave them an opportunity to get out to the different summer resorts in the country for recuperation. The act as drafted would make this impossible and would be opposed by the Edmonton clerks.

Fraternal Delegate Wilkinson, organizer for the carpenters, spoke strongly in support of maintaining trades union ideals in this and all questions. He wanted to see the stores closed Saturdays at 6. The T. Eaton company closed their stores a full day Saturdays four months in the year. Contrary to Mr. Marsh, he did not believe it was fair to ask clerks "upholstered in a $15 suit, because they could not afford a better one, to work into the hours of the night to satisfy the window-gazing desires of the public."

Officers' reports as presented to the convention covered a great deal of ground dealing with the legislation desired by the federation, and the attempts to secure this at the last session of the legislature. In all there were requests for 34 acts or amendments to existing acts presented to the late government of Alberta covering everything from a minimum wage act to regulation of rents.

Touching on the change in governments since the last convention a section of the report says:

During the year we have had Provincial and Federal elections. In each of these labor contested a number of seats with some degree of success and we now have four representatives in the Provincial and one in the Federal Legislatures. Representation from groups who have a definite economic organization as a background has been the great phase in the political activities of the province and this idea has received a marked endorsation from the people with the result that in the Provincial election both old parties were defeated and the representatives of the farmers were called upon to form the Government while in the Federal election not a single representative of the old parties was elected. With the present system of voting and with constituencies formed so that they include both urban and rural electors there is a necessity for a program being arranged and an understanding arrived at between the groups as aforementioned that is calculated to assure to each group just and fair representation.

A letter from Hon. Perrin Baker, minister of education, is included in the report stating that the contracts for the new school readers will not be awarded until the printing trade of the province has had an opportunity to present its case.

The following organizations have been added to the provincial organization during the year:

Bookbinders, Bakers, Protectionist Association, Street Railway Men and Garment Workers of Edmonton, Cereal Mill Workers and Railway Clerks of Medicine Hat, Teamsters of Calgary and Musicians of Lethbridge.

Federation's Finances.

The statement of receipts and expenditures shows that total receipts during the year amounted to $4,185.22, most of which came from per capita tax, while the expenditures were $3,234.51, with a bank balance of $950.75.

Interesting Suggestion.

An interesting suggestion is made in the report of Vice-President Fred J. White, of Calgary, now a member of the provincial legislature, when he says:

It might be well for the Federation to instruct the incoming executive, if time does not permit of the convention itself giving thought to it, of taking up, through the Dominion Trades Congress, the proposal advocated by Mr. Murdock (now the Hon. M. Murdock, Minister of Labor in the Dominion Government) when attached to the Board of Commerce, the question of government control of depreciation charges in industry and the possibility of having legislation adopted whereby when a reserve fund has been created large enough to return to the original investors their actual investments that the industry should be taken over by the government and either operated or leased by it. Having been socially paid for it should be the property of society.

Mr. White also reported on the annual convention of the Trades and Labor convention in Winnipeg last August. Robert McCreath reported on the last U.F.A. provincial convention while J. W. Findlay suggests that the organization continue affiliation with the Social Service League Council. A. Farinilo reported on the Social Service Conference held in Edmonton on November 30.

A list of resolutions to the number of 30 was placed before the convention. Among these are resolutions asking for a re-opening of trade between Canada and Russia, changes in the Workmen's Compensation Act, protection of wages of workers on government contracts on which sub-contracts are awarded, asking again for legislatio nfor a 44-hour week, for an increase in the indemnities under the Workmen's Compensation Act, changes in the Theatres Act, recognizing rheumatism as an industrial disease and bringing it within the scope of the Workmen's Compensation Act.

Legislative Suggestions.

The convention concurred in the recommendation of the officers' report which favored continuing efforts to have the provincial legislature pass labor legislation that was not adopted by the preceding government. The gist o fthe recommendations of general interest are as follows:

A maximum 44-hour week for all workers in the province, with provision for one day's rest in seven.

That all jurors be paid $8 a day so that working people can afford to serve and not feel the loss of their wages.

That all theatres and halls where there is inflammable material on the stage be provided with asbestos or other fireproof curtains for the protection of the public.

That the minimum wage for teachers be $1200 and that the model teachers' contract be granted.

That fire fighters be guaranteed one day's rest a week.

That there be a provincial-wide standard for milk and that the percentage of butter fat be raised so that consumers will be assured of a better quality of milk.

That no one be allowed to carry gasoline on street cars except in safe containers.

That the compulsory school attendance age for children be raised to 10 years.

That proportional representation be put into effect at all provincial elections.

John Marsh, of Lethbridge, made a short address on the success of the co-operative store that has been in operation in Lethbridge about a year. He suggested that the workers in other cities of the province also start co-operative stores and that by joint buying they could save considerable sums to the consumers.

A strongly worded resolution on unemployment was passed. This resolution asks that in the future government relief shall take the form of work on public works, and not the doling scheme; that a system of unemployment insurance be introduced by the federal government; and that the refusal by the jobless men to work on farms for board and bed be not considered grounds for refusal to grant these men "no work cards."

Board Member Leavitt, of the United Mine Workers, reported on the Callie mine strike in the Rumheller valley. The international union was solidly behind the strikers, and was going to continue the lockout until the operators conceded the wage point, he stated. This was the first attempt to break the agreement which expires March 31, and it was up to organized labor, he said, to stand firm in resenting the action. Such a pledge passed the convention unanimously.

On Wednesday morning an interesting discussion took place on the Social Service Council, and by vote of the convention affiliation with that body was withdrawn.

A strong resolution on the question of the Labor paper was adopted and a special committee was appointed to keep the matter of circulation and news constantly before the locals and membership of the federation.

The three and a half per cent. beer resolution passed the convention with some opposition.

Frank Wheatley, of Bankhead, was re-elected as president of the federation, and Walter Smitten was re-elected secretary. Robert McCreath, of Edmonton, was chosen as delegate to the Dominion Trades Congress, and Walter Smitten to act as fraternal delegate to the coming U.F.A. convention.

SOUTH AFRICAN MINE TROUBLES

Johannesburg, South Africa.—The government has submitted to the industrial Federations a scheme for the resumption of negotiations for consideration of the chamber of mines for a settlement of the coal and gold miners' strike.

Acceptance is unlike, however, as there is still no sign whatever of anything tending to end the dispute.

The crux of the situation today is the treat to repatriate natives on Monday. Should this course be adopted, there is a very great risk that some of the mines would never re-open.

The intense seriousness of repatriating the natives undoubtedly accounts for a general strike threat for the same day that they arrive.

The president of the men's federation vehemently denounces the idea of repatriation, and accuses the government of supporting the Chamber of Mines. The chamber, however, makes it clear that the first of the natives to be repatriated will be those with expired contracts, who number many thousands. The remaining natives will be given the option of having their contracts terminated by mutual consent if the strike is prolonged.

The bulk of the natives do not realize what the strike is for, and are puzzled at the way the whites take "holidays."

The police and strikers have reached a basis of co-operation. Opinion throughout the country shows almost unanimous support for the government in its efforts to reach a settlement of the dispute.

The Federation of Workers, members of which are on strike in the coal and gold mines, announced that all essential services will be stopped at seven o'clock Saturday morning. The grounds taken by the federation are that non-union workers are being employed, and that the offer of the federation to work the coal mines has been refused.

The recent statement by Premier Barwell, of South Australia, that the maintenance of a "white" Australia was impossible and that colored labor would have to be admitted, has alarmed the Labor party, says Reuter's correspondent at Adelaide. The Labor party has issued a manifesto urging the workers to fight any movement for the introduction of colored elements into Australia.

There is apparently no sign of a settlement of the strike situation now involving coal and gold miners and allied workers. The situation is fraught with extreme gravity for the whole of South Africa, says a Reuter cable from Johannesburg.

The Village Deep Mine is flooding and other mines are exposed to the same danger, while it is now regarded as certain that some of the mines [illegible]

Those who speak with authority are urging the people to rally behind Premier Smuts and his Government in their endeavor to find a basis for a lasting settlement of the dispute and save South Africa from economic ruin, which the protracted close-down of the mines will mean.

There is every indication that little can be done in the next few days to improve the situation, and a crisis will be reached next week.

The position of the men employed on the Government railways in South Africa was brought into prominence today by Labor Leader Moore, who declared that the men were much dissatisfied with the recent withdrawal of the eight-hour day and the reduction of wages.

The railwaymen, says Moore, were also disappointed by the postponement of the opening of Parliament, where they hoped their grievances would be redressed. He expressed the opinion that the railwaymen were entirely in sympathy with the gold and coal miners in their strike, and that it was possible that the situation would compel both classes of workers to consolidate their forces.

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