

LABOUR DAY

"Organized labour in Canada numbers over one million three hundred thousand Canadians", Mr. Michael Starr, Minister of Labour said in an address to a Labour Day Luncheon at the Canadian National Exhibition in Toronto, September 1.

Mr. Starr, said in part:

"It is fitting that on this occasion should take place a ceremonial recognition of the role of working men and women in the affairs of this nation. In this connection it might be well to recall something of the early history of these Labour Day celebrations. The first one was held in Toronto in 1872 under the auspices of the Toronto Trades Assembly. This was in the form of a picnic and according to accounts of the event, was a great success. By 1882, the picnic had been done away with, and parades to the Exhibition Grounds were being held for a rally and speech-making. In that year, one of the founders of the Carpenters' Union, Peter J. McQuire, proposed that "a festive day be set aside which would permit public tribute to industry and labour". By 1886, the Labour rally had become a part of the Toronto Exhibition and it is rather interesting that the Exhibition authorities decided that the Saturday of each year's Exhibition would be known as Labour Day. I understand that the arrangement was that one-half of the gate receipts were allocated to the participating unions. I do not know whether this arrangement still prevails but I would suggest that the question might be worth looking into by the unions. At the Trades and Labour Congress Convention of 1888, a resolution was adopted requesting the Federal Government to make Labour Day a national holiday. In 1894 on July 23, the Government proclaimed that the first Monday in September would be a national holiday known as Labour Day.

"Along with other Canadians, I take pride in the accomplishments of the working men and women of Canada. I am proud of the fact that Labour by its efforts over the years, has helped to bring about in Canada a living standard which is among the highest in the world. As Minister of Labour, I have dedicated myself to do everything within the framework of my terms of reference to raise that living standard.

"Labour in this country has borne itself in an attitude of responsibility and dedication to the orderly advancement of labour's aims. Through enlightened leadership, through its research facilities, through its close contact with the economic facts of life, labour is in a position to play a formidable role in maintaining peace and prosperity. Management, too, has vast collective responsibility in this regard. I am sure that management is aware of this and that management is facing up to the challenge of today with energy and imagination.

"The challenges are many. There is the challenge of processing more raw materials in Canada, so that Canadian labour may take home a larger segment of the skilled worker pay cheque. There is the challenge of finding markets for these goods at competitive prices. There is the challenge which management must face, of lowering production costs without lowering the Canadian standard of living. Which means more efficient, more economical production methods -- and which, I venture to add, means more per capita production.

"There is now, looming upon the labour-management horizon, the vast uncertainty of automation and its effects. Here we must reconcile the twin necessities of production efficiency and the human factor. Labour is not a commodity. It is men and women and their families.

"We have recognized the need of a skilled labour force in this country to meet the challenge of the Slave World. By co-operation between Federal and Provincial bodies we are providing training skills for Canadian workers. I do not pretend that everything is being done in this line which can be done. But we are adopting a positive approach.

"With regard to labour legislation, I do not say that it is perfect. Very few things in this world are. But I say this. As we move into new problems, new approaches in today's world of Big Labour and Big Management, we shall adopt new solutions. I have received suggestions and recommendations from both labour and management regarding our present legislation. It is my hope that these suggestions may be embodied in a new legislative approach which will be more in keeping with the problems of today.

"Looking back over the period since last Labour Day, we find on this Labour Day of 1958, that Canada has more of everything. More people, more workers (the labour force is now over 6,000,000) -- more jobs. The figure for persons with jobs in July was close to 6,000,000, about 15,000 fewer than July last year, but rising by 11.7 percent since the low in February. This marked the greatest gain for the period since 1955. With an average weekly wage of \$68.00 Canada's weekly income was greater this year than ever. Unfortunately, we also had more people out of work.

"In a world of declining markets, the Canadian economy, like others has been subjected to stresses and strains. During the past winter and early spring, as you all know we have had in Canada a comparatively high level of unemployment. While this is always a serious problem, I think it is well for us to remember that it is a very different kind of problem in an expanding economy such as ours than in a static or receding economy. The reason for this is that the largest single reason for unemployment at any time in Canada today is the tremendous expansion that has