

MINERS' UNIONS IN CANADA*

(Continued from last issue.)

Western Federation of Miners.

As with the coal miners, various forms of organization have existed for many years among the metalliferous miners on the North American continent. For some time these bodies were independent or purely local concerns, the operations being confined to some particular locality. As early as 1867 a miners' union was organized at Virginia City, Nevada, and has maintained a continuous existence, affiliating with the Western Federation of Miners some years after that organization was formed. In January, 1879, in Leadville, Col., the miners formed a union, which was publicly known as the Miners' Co-operative Union, but was in reality a Knights of Labor Assembly working in secret. This union, though having largely increased its membership in the early years of its existence, appears to have lost its identity, for it is recorded that in May, 1885, a miners' union, with 85 charter members, was organized in Leadville. In 1887, this union, with a membership of about 600, became identified with the Knights of Labor. There was no affiliation between the miners' unions which had been formed in the various mining camps, not even an exchange of working cards. This situation continued for a number of years until a convention was held in Butte, Montana, on May 14 and 15, 1893, at which were laid the foundations of the Western Federation of Miners. The beginning was small, fourteen unions, with a combined membership of approximately 2,500, forming the nucleus of the new organization. At the outset the policy of the Western Federation was to include in its membership coal miners as well as metalliferous miners, and this course was pursued until, in 1908, an arrangement was made between the United Mine Workers and the Western Federation of Miners whereby a division of jurisdiction was effected, the former confining its activities to the interests of the coal industry, and the Western Federation to metalliferous miners. In 1908 an interchange of transfer cards was also arranged between these two organizations.

The Constitution of the Federation.—The preamble to the constitution of the Western Federation of Miners, as contained in the issue of 1912, is as follows:

"1. We hold that there is a class struggle in society, and that this struggle is caused by economic conditions.

"2. We affirm the economic conditions of the producer to be that he is exploited of the wealth which he produces, being allowed to retain barely sufficient for his elementary necessities.

"3. We hold that the class struggle will continue until the producer is recognized as the sole master of his product.

"4. We assert that the working class, and it alone, can and must achieve its own emancipation.

"5. We hold, finally, that an industrial union and the concerted political action of all wage workers is the only method of attaining this end.

"6. Therefore, we, the wage slaves employed in and around the mines, mills, smelters, tunnels, open pits and open cuts, have associated in the Western Federation of Miners."

The following is a resume of the articles of the constitution as laid down for the governance of the organization:

The federation is composed of persons working in and around mines, mills, smelters, tunnels, open pits and open cuts. Among other objects it is the aim of the federation to increase the wages and improve the conditions of employment of the members by legislation, conciliation, joint agreements or strikes. Local unions are composed of twenty or more members. These units may form district or state unions, the same to be chartered by the federation. District unions are subordinate to the federation, but are a higher authority than the local unions in its jurisdiction. The conventions of the federation are held biennially on the third Monday in July, and each union is entitled to one delegate for 100 members or less, and one for each additional 100 members or majority fraction thereof, but no delegate is entitled to more than five votes. Ladies' auxiliaries of the Western Federation are entitled to one delegate with one vote. The pay of each delegate is not less than \$5 per day, which is paid by the local union represented. The transportation expenses of one delegate from each local in good standing are paid by the federation, as is also the transportation of one delegate from each ladies' auxiliary. Unions electing more than one delegate pay the whole expenses of delegates in excess of that number.

The officers of the federation consist of a president, vice-president, secretary-treasurer and four other executive board members. These officers are elected biennially by referendum vote. Provision is made for the recall of any official on petition of not less than 10 per cent. of the membership in good standing, representing not less than ten local branches. Among other duties of the president, he has the power to appoint, with the approval of the executive board, such organizers as conditions justify. Organizers so appointed are entitled to \$100 per month and transportation expenses. The president is required to visit each district once a year, and may convene the executive board when necessary; or he may, with the approval of the executive board, call an extra convention of the federation. With the concurrence of the executive board, the president may sell, transfer or encumber in any manner and to any extent any and all real and personal property, except the funds of the federation. Also, with the consent of the executive board, the president may revoke the charter of any local union or penalize it for violation of the constitution or by-laws, or for proven treachery to the principles of the federation. With the approval of the executive board, the president has the power to appoint one or more auditors, whose duty it is to audit the accounts of all unions, and to collect, for the use of the federation, such statistics as may be determined by the president. For his services, the president is entitled to \$5 per day and all necessary transportation and other expenses. The secretary-treasurer, whose duties include full charge of all the funds and property of the federation, receives \$150 per month. The executive board members constitute the board of arbitration and conciliation, and between conventions have full power to direct the workings of the federation. Each executive board member is also an organizer, and has power to investigate the conditions of local unions, and to report to the president. In case of trouble arising in the jurisdiction of a union, a member of the executive board

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