

U. C. M. CONVENTION—Continued.

tectors of our cities and towns should abstain from unionizing.

It is, however, unreasonable to expect that a particular class of workers should voluntarily hold themselves aloof from what they, in common with other workers, may conceive to be the advantages of trades unionism. If membership in a police or fire brigade is understood to deprive workers of the privilege exercised by other workers with respect to trades unionism, it would seem but just that the workers concerned should receive some compensating advantage.

One of the chief advantages of a union which has succeeded in establishing good relations with the employees or employers with whom the union members are connected, is that the union through its officers represents the union members in securing adjustment of the various grievances inevitably arising in connection with the activities of any considerable number of industrial workers. This has become the ordinary and perhaps most effective means of securing a collective bargain. It is true that other methods may be employed to accomplish this end, and there has been, during the past year or two, much publicity given to the subject of industrial councils, and the trades union has not been always regarded as an essential part of such a system. No system has been as yet worked out, whether by way of industrial councils or otherwise, which seems to displace the trades union as the most effective present means of securing a collective bargain. It would seem therefore that any class of work-people who by law or public opinion are restrained from becoming trades union members should be equipped with other means whereby they may have a reasonable hope to secure a redress of grievances. It may be objected that since the classes named are servants of the public, then public opinion will itself serve this end and that no special agency or method is necessary. This has not, however, been the experience of the classes in question. There is at present no means whereby on the one hand public opinion can be accurately informed on the subject or on the other hand whereby the consensus of public opinion can be satisfactorily expressed.

Such contact as the Department of Labour has had with disputes between municipalities and their employees seems to show that this class of work-people, instead of faring better than their fellows in the service of private employers with respect to means of securing reasonable attention to grievances or to better conditions of work, fare usually a good deal worse. In municipal employment the capital and labour aspects of an industrial dispute do not appear. The employer cannot be held to be enriched at the expense of the worker, and tirades against the capitalistic class are not in order. The fact remains that there have been, during the past year or two, numerous strikes in Canada on the part of the classes named and even worse conditions have prevailed in other countries. The cost of living has risen greatly during the past five years. Wages have kept pace with the increased cost of living or have failed to do so in proportion as the workers have received increases. Pressure on the employer has been chiefly by means of trades unionism. Some generous and enlightened employers have, no doubt, anticipated the necessities of their work-people. Public servants, whether of federal or provincial governments or of municipalities, have not, as a rule, been organized, or have not, at any rate, been organized on trades union lines, and were thus not in a position to apply the pressure that came from trades union organization. Their wage increases were in many cases meagre in comparison with the increased cost of living and with increases obtained by industries supported by trades unions. Hence from all these classes of workers there have been, during recent years, large accessions to the ranks of trades unionism.

In the case of differences between a private establishment and its employees there has not been, as a rule, any doubt on the part of the workers as to the particular person, whether known as president, general manager, or superintendent, to whom a grievance or the question of a renewal of working agreement should be carried. In the ordinary industry, be it mine, railway, or factory, there is usually a regular gradation of appeal, and, where trades unionism has established itself, each appeal brings into conference higher officers on each side. Public service methods in these matters compare unfavourably with those of private employers. Confining ourselves to the case of police and firemen, or other classes, as for instance, waterworks employees, where industrial disputes threaten definite perils to the municipality, we find the workers as

a rule voicing their grievances in the first place to the chief of the service concerned. The chief is unable on his own authority to deal with the larger grievances, particularly with respect to a general increase in salary, and it is demands of this nature which have come most frequently before municipal officers during recent years; the chief must himself report to the next higher authority. It is unnecessary to go into detail, but the grievance has to run the gauntlet, in most cases, of a committee of the city council and again of the city council as a whole; the board of control also has certain functions. These bodies are not in constant session, and at most sessions other questions may push aside grievances of firemen or police. Then there is the mayor. The various authorities rarely see eye to eye; perhaps are largely at cross purposes. The situation is frequently complicated by the fact that the municipal elections are not far off, and mayor, aldermen and controllers cannot refuse to bear this fact in mind. Also there is the question of estimated expenditures for the coming year under the cure system the men controlling municipal expenditures may pass out of office, sometimes willingly, sometimes unwillingly, at the end of the year. All these facts tend greatly to confuse negotiations respecting an industrial dispute arising between a municipality and its employees. The arrival of a trades union generally throws the grievance itself temporarily into the background, and agitation centres chiefly on the question whether or not civic employees, particularly when the police and firemen are concerned, should have the right to become trades unionists in the ordinary acceptance of the term. The strike in such cases looms nearer and, as in many cases both in Canada and elsewhere, actually materializes. It has been the same story whether in Montreal, or Toronto, or Ottawa, or Winnipeg, or Vancouver, or, looking to other countries whether in Boston Mass., or Cincinnati, Ohio, or London, or Liverpool or other cities of Great Britain; many other lands than these have been affected, and the police of Montreal, in Canada, and those of Buenos Aires, in the Argentine Republic, were on strike simultaneously.

So far as concerns Canadian municipalities, the Dominion being, if the law has been interpreted correctly, powerless to act otherwise than by consent, it would seem to lie with the provinces to develop a system whereby employees of the classes under consideration would have access to a tribunal vested with authority to adjust grievances relative to wages and conditions of labour. Only when provision to this end has been made will the municipal authorities have the moral right to ask their police or firemen, or waterworks employees, or other employees engaged in the performance of essential work, to refrain voluntarily from unionizing themselves. Should any province go so far as to render illegal trades union membership on the part of a policeman or fireman, the provision of a tribunal of the character indicated would seem to be more necessary. There seems otherwise every reason to expect in the future a continued and increasing number of industrial disputes, frequently resulting in strikes, on the part of police and firemen and members of other classes of public servants who have not at present means of securing redress of their grievances and to whose active membership in trades unions there are some manifest objections.

Increasing Number of Municipal Disputes.

The speaker referred to the rapidly growing number of municipal disputes which had come formally to the attention of the Department of Labour. In the year 1918 there had been sixteen such disputes, involving the following cities, namely: Montreal (4), Ottawa (3), Toronto (2), Winnipeg (2), Victoria, New Westminster, Quebec, Hull, Brantford. The classes of municipal employees concerned in these disputes were as follows: firemen (4), policemen (3), municipal street railway workers (1), other classes of municipal employees (9).

During the year 1919 twelve municipal industrial disputes were reported as occurring in the following cities, namely: Toronto (2), Edmonton (2), St. John, Brantford, Brandon, Hull, Lethbridge, Niagara Falls, Guelph, Montreal the classes of employees concerned in these disputes being as follows: firemen (2), policemen (2), municipal street railway workers (4), other classes of municipal employees (4).

Four municipal industrial disputes were reported to the Department during the first five months of 1920 involving the cities of Hamilton, London, Toronto and Moose Jaw, one of the disputes relating to municipal street railway workers.