

"The Echo"

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THE CONGRESS AND ITS WORK

The Dominion Trades and Labor Congress finished its labors on Wednesday last after a most successful session extending over five days. A great variety of questions came under discussion, and the ability with which they were handled and the amount of intelligent criticism thrown into the debates reflected the highest credit on the intellectual ability of the delegates and their capacity to deal with live issues. Indeed, the manner in which some of the delegates acquitted themselves proved conclusively they were fitted to rise and address any public assembly. Comparison is odious, but we cannot help saying that the manner in which the meetings were conducted stood out in strong contrast to the way some of our public bodies conduct their business—say the Montreal City Council for instance. The officers elect for the ensuing year are men of experience, well qualified for their respective positions and have long taken an interest in the labor movement, so that there is every guarantee the instructions of Congress in regard to public questions will be faithfully carried out during the interregnum between now and the meeting next year in Montreal. Our city is to be congratulated on having been chosen as the next place of meeting, and it would be well for all the labor organizations before long to set about making provision for their reception.

The subjects discussed by the Congress, as we have said, were remarkable for variety, and in almost every instance desirable to be legislated upon on lines laid down in the various resolutions. Early in the session Congress reiterated its demand for more stringent legislation in regard to Chinese immigration. The letters read from Victoria and Vancouver, British Columbia, where the evils attendant upon their presence in large numbers is more keenly felt than anywhere else in Canada, must convince the most prejudiced that there is at present a great and serious peril to the advancement of that province. Facts of a revolting nature were given in proof of the statement frequently made that girls were imported from China and kept in a state of slavery for immoral purposes. With such proof before them it is surprising that professing Christians can openly advocate throwing wide open the gates of Canada to John Chinaman with his beastly and filthy surroundings.

Assisted immigration was another matter which came in for a share of deserved criticism, and although the practice has been discontinued by the Federal Government, it was shown that imported pauper children were banded to the extent of \$2 per head, while there were thousands of orphans in the various charitable institutions throughout Canada which could be utilized for adoption. The practice of keeping a staff of paid agents in Great Britain to extol the advantages of Canada as a field for all classes of emigrants was also severely and properly denounced, several speakers declaring that deception was largely practiced by those agents to induce emigration, while the country was also portrayed in roseate hues to inspire people, without regard to suitability, to make a home in this country. Disappointment naturally follows a landing here of those taken in by such claptrap, and the consequence is that the country is injured in the long run. It has been proved over and over again that the labor market here is greatly overstocked; it is abundantly shown by the number of idlers to be seen on the streets of every large city any day in the week and by the exodus which daily takes place to the United States, therefore it was wise and proper to call the attention of the Government to the matter, which we trust will result in closing the mouths of some of those officials.

The effect of incorporation upon trades unions will stand discussion, and although we are in favor of demanding that they be given a legal status, the terms upon which they might be offered such should be well considered. When there are benefit features attached it is right that the Government should step in and see that members of these societies are not defrauded out of their benefits, and that the society has sufficient funds behind to carry out what it promises. But it is entirely different where the object of the union is to protect the wages of its members and regulate matters of trade between employer and employee, and we question whether the mere fact of incorporation would do much good. As we understand the law at present the fact of incorporation would take away the sting from trades unions through being illegal to strike in a body, no matter what provocation was received, and this, unless a stringent compulsory arbitration act was in force, would nullify the effect of a workingman's combination. We should like to see trades unionism legalized to the extent that the dues and assessments of members, so long as they voluntarily remained members of their union, a legal debt, recoverable by some simple process, and the funds properly protected from defalcation. If trades unionism was given legal status to this extent the effect upon members and outsiders would soon become apparent. In the first case the transactions of the union would be more sharply looked after and it would have the effect of increasing membership by restoring confidence in trades union operations which, to some considerable extent, has suffered more or less in all unions from the looseness with which financial matters have been administered.

It is evident that Congress considered it too early in the day to pronounce upon the question of Canadian independence, and they got out of the difficulty by adopting a non-committal resolution calling upon the Federal Government to sound the popular vote, which it is about as likely to do as to pass a prohibitive liquor bill next session.

The resolution adopted in regard to arbitration is of rather a milk-and-water description. We confess to having little faith in voluntary boards of arbitration—precedents are all against

their success. In the first place employers, as a rule, object to submitting the details of their business to outside scrutiny, and unless full access can be had to the books of a firm how are the arbitrators to gain sufficient knowledge to give a satisfactory award? In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred the employer strenuously holds to the opinion that he has the right to run his business just as he pleases, and very few have come to recognize the fact that the workman is anything more than a piece of machinery which he may throw aside or retain in use just as it suits. Even the most generous among the employing class will take all he can over what may be called legitimate profit out of a man's labor without feeling any conscientious scruples as to his right to do so without sharing with the producer; they have no moral feeling in the matter and consider their duty done when they pay the current rate of wages, even if that rate is barely with-in what can procure for the toiler a mere existence. By all means give us arbitration for all labor disputes, but make reference to it compulsory on the demand of either party, with suitable penalties for non-compliance with the award.

There were other interesting matters discussed, but these may be left over for future consideration. In the meantime we congratulate the members of the eighth annual labor parliament on the success of their meeting and also felicitate the citizens of Toronto on their splendid hospitality towards their visitors.

Ex-Chief Engineer Arnoldi, of brass dog fame, has been convicted by a jury of misbehavior in office and admitted to bail on \$4,000 security, himself in \$2,000 and two of \$1,000 each. It is not at all likely than anything more will be heard of Arnoldi and his little indiscretions, and it would not be surprising to find him back in office again after a short penance.

Brother Jonathan, while carrying on his usual game of bluff against Canada in regard to the cholera epidemic, it appears has been all the time concealing its actual presence in his own territories. Just like him!

THE RIGHT TO LABOR.

The use to which language is put by the snip-snappers of our boodle press would shame a sophist of the age of brass. Hear their definition of the "right to labor."

One might think that by this phrase is meant, quite plainly, free access to the means of production, with its natural corollary, "the right of the toiler to the full product of his toil," in other words, the abolition of private property in the instruments of labor—the abolition of capitalism.

Not so, however, in the lexicon of our snip-snappers. They will not even have it mean, "the right of every man who must eat his bread in the sweat of his brow to demand and obtain employment from the privileged class which, under capitalism, owns the instruments of labor and manages production."

While the right of proletarians "to labor," thus defined, would still preserve the right of capitalists "not to labor,"—that is, to live in idleness and luxury upon the labor of proletarians—our snip-snappers will not so define it. It would limit to some extent the rights of private property; it would subject them to certain uses; worst of all, it would abolish enforced idleness and deprive capitalism of that great army of unemployed men which it costs nothing to support and which is, in a far higher degree than the Pinkertons and militia can be, an effective instrument for the subjection of the employed.

What is, then, according to our snip-snappers, the "right to labor?" It is simply the right of the unemployed to take at reduced wages the places of the employed. And, thus defined they make it a "sacred right!"

Likewise is the condition imposed upon starving men by the robber barons of industry to give one day's toil for a quarter day's pay, termed, "free contract" and proclaimed the essence of human freedom.

And there are good people even among the despoiled who say, "Amen: it may be hard, but it must be so since it is freedom." It

never occurs to them to ask, "Is this freedom indeed?"

This may be the age of reason; but will the age of common sense never come!—The People.

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OLD CHUM

(PLUG)

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All Wool Costume Tweeds
At all Prices

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Bright Boy: "It's wot makes you sorry w'en you get found out."

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In Misses' and Children's Tweed Costumes.

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S. CARSLEY,

1765, 1767, 1769, 1771, 1773, 1775, 1777, 1779

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