

Editorial Page of The Canadian Labor Press



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A WEEKLY NEWS LETTER.

"OPEN-SHOPPERS" INVADE OTTAWA.

EDITORIAL writers, politicians, unfair employers and others, who desire a return of the days when there was no democracy in industry, have labored long in editorials, speeches, propaganda, and in other ways, in their endeavors to decry the Labor movement. These champions of reaction would have you believe that to Labor, and Labor alone, should be attached all blame for industrial turmoil. It is indeed very seldom that mention is made of the capitalist agitator. We have them in our midst. One of these came to Ottawa last week and addressed the local branch of the Association of the Building and Construction Industries. He assailed Labor and urged the employers to declare war on the trades union movement.

The Canadian Labor Press in a recent editorial pointed out the dangers of the "Optional Plan of Employment" under which the employers are hiding their motives. The employers' open-shop agent advocated this plan for the building industry of Ottawa.

Mr. Tom Moore, president of the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada, answers the challenge of the president of the Detroit Builders' Association in the following statement:

"It is not likely that Ottawa contractors will be convinced by the statements of Mr. Kennedy as to the intentions and officers of the International Union of Building Trades. Mr. George Crain and other Ottawa employers in public statements expressed the view that the business agents and officers of trades unions spend the largest part of their time avoiding trouble and trying to reach a settlement of grievances workers feel they have."

"The so-called 'optional plan' which Mr. Kennedy is doing his best to have adopted by building employers of this country is nothing different from the 'American plan' being vigorously pressed in the United States. The organization for which he is acting is a central committee of large employers in that country. They have their paid agents travelling through the United States and Canada trying to induce employers to adopt the plan in order to destroy the trades unions and the principle of collective bargaining. The evidence recently submitted before the Legislative Committee in New York relative to the building trades where representatives of the steel trust openly boasted that they would not supply structural steel to any employer employing union men, and that they would not supply around buildings to see that their conditions were complied with throws a little light on the 'American optional plan' campaign which is now being so earnestly pressed by certain interests."

"Mr. Kennedy comes from Detroit and it would be advisable for Ottawa contractors to study conditions there before accepting his advice on how to run their businesses."

"For a number of years there has been guerrilla warfare between the unions and the employers in Detroit with the result that each side has taken advantage of every opportunity to improve its own condition. Last year common laborers were being paid from \$1 to \$1.25 per hour in Detroit and officers of tradesmen in production, while Ottawa acting under an agreement had a stabilized agreement for the benefit of all concerned."

"The optional plan of employment, as proposed in Hamilton, does not allow an employer to enter into an agreement with any organization to use its members only, so that he may have any reductions in wages which he desires. Clause 4 of the agreement says: 'closed shop conditions which exist in large American cities will not be tolerated here,' while clause 4 pledges the association to back any employer, morally and financially, in living up to the obligation called for."

"Another part of the plan provides that the secretary of the association shall be advised of the employers' requirements of labor and his office shall then become a sort of clearing house for all classes of labor required by members. Wherever this plan has been adopted it has always meant the institution of the 'black list' under which any employer who incurs the displeasure of an employer will find it impossible to find employment from any other employer so long as he has to depend upon the good offices of the association secretary for his employment."

"Mr. Kennedy might as well have stripped his arguments of all camouflage and stated openly that he was here to secure the assistance of the Ottawa employers in the building trades in the campaign for the destruction of labor unions and the institution of the individual contract instead of collective bargaining."

"The wage decreases being instituted by many firms and threatened by others, are absolutely unwarranted. The last figures from the Canadian Labor Department show that the cost of living in Canada is still 109 per cent. above the level of 1914, while wages have not doubled in that period. This means that the standard of living of the workers, even at the present wage level, is lower than in 1914, and any reductions in wages will simply mean a further decrease. Even should material decreases in the cost of living take place in the near future, wage reduction will still be unwarranted as, with the improved production of machinery in the past seven years, workers are surely entitled to a little higher standard than previously."

"Assertions as to decreased production, assertions carelessly made, are not borne out by the facts. Only last week Mr. Wickert, one of the largest contractors in Toronto, declared through the Toronto newspapers that he was getting as high production from his bricklayers in Detroit as at any time during the long number of years he had been in business. Enquiries by the Department of Labor show that the majority of employers coincide with this statement, and therefore give assertions that workers are less efficient than formerly as without foundation."

"The worker is not master of his own product. Inefficient management, obsolete machinery, inferior materials, all have a vital effect upon the quantity any worker can produce. It is high time a halt was called to this continual harping on the present prices being due to the inefficiency of the worker and the high wages he is demanding."

"A prominent local contractor said in discussing wage possibilities of the spring that he did not expect there would be any reduction. The likelihood is that production will be increased as it has been for several months past. You may say that we are getting better production from our men and are satisfied. This means, in a way, a wage cut which we shall pass on to the public. To that extent building costs may be lower but not anything approaching the 25 per cent. mentioned by a speaker at Thursday evening's meeting. After all contractors said that the money paid to a man in the small town, it is the production of which the man is capable that really counts."

At the regular meeting of the Ottawa Allied Trades and Labor Association the matter was also discussed and many delegates took part in the discussion. President J. A. P. Haydon said:

"The Optional Plan of Employment is designed to take the democracy out of industry and put autocracy back in again. The Optional Plan of Employment is simply the open, or non-union shop. This means that there will be no trade unions and no collective bargaining in the building industry here. Democracy has been placed upon a false footing in the Ottawa building industry and because of that the 'open-shoppers' are endeavoring to destroy that democracy and with it the trade unions. There is more behind the movement than appears on the surface."

Business Agent M. Kavanagh, of the District Council of Carpenters, told of the harmony existing in Ottawa due to the democracy that prevailed in the building industry. He said:

"There has been no strike in Ottawa in two years after the agreement has been signed, a record unequalled by any city in America. The supply men and not the contractors are to blame for all the trouble. The contractors in Ottawa are 'white men.'"

Business Agent W. P. Jennings, of the Ottawa Street Railway Employees, said:

"Americanism as exemplified across the line, means an open shop, and it seems strange that Kennedy was imported here at this time to try to inject Americanism in the workers of Ottawa, a city that has done so well under a system of collective bargaining."

Mr. Wm. MacDowell, of the Bookbinders' Union,

POLITICS AND PEOPLE THROUGH THE TELESCOPE OF LABOR

House of Commons, Ottawa, Feb. 19, 1921. The first week of the 75th session of the thirteenth Parliament of Canada was marked by many outstanding features. The speech from the throne, not unlike its predecessors, in vague indeed, and while it states that the Government has under advisement unemployment insurance and democratic measures will be actually brought before the House in a tangible form. Both of these measures have been sought by the organized Labor Movement of this country for a good many years. On Tuesday the leader of the Opposition, or rather the leader of the Liberal party, Hon. W. Mackenzie King, introduced an amendment to the speech from the throne which is, in effect, a lack of confidence in the Government. Whether the Liberals are anxious for an election at this time it is hard to determine, but all of the addresses under the Liberal banner, with the exception of Mr. L. J. Gauthier, St. Hyacinthe-Rouville, would indicate that this was the case. However, the amendment of Mr. King does not make this point clear. The debate on the speech from the throne allows the members to speak on everything under the sun and much valuable information is given the people of Canada. The League of Nations occupied almost two afternoons and points more clearly than anything else the important part Canada is playing in international affairs. Labor is most vitally interested in the League of Nations and the International Labor Organization which forms a part of it. Sir George Foster was the first speaker on the League of Nations, and he was very enthusiastic about the future of that

organization. Hon. N. W. Rowell, K.C., on Friday had much to say about the great international body. He made it clear that the League of Nations was not organized for the purpose of making peace, but that its function was to conserve the peace of the world. Its primary object was to prevent wars by substituting some thing else to settle international disputes. One of the greatest features of the League of Nations was that it abolished almost entirely secret treaties. Its business was done in the open and, while the public were not admitted to its councils, each delegate was responsible to the country he represented and had to report the league's affairs to responsible government. Another important declaration of the League of Nations was that the delegates, in casting their vote, did so in the name of the government they represented and was binding on the government in whose name the vote was cast. "It was of first importance to Europe and humanity itself, that Europe get back to peace and real cooperation," said Hon. Mr. Rowell. "The Russian situation must be cleared up in some way. It can only be cleared up by the Russian people themselves. Mr. Rowell expressed the hope that the recent trade agreement entered into by the Russian Government and the Russian Soviet Government will be restored and made it quite clear that Russia and Russia alone, can clear up the Russian situation. The question of international control of raw materials was one in which Canada was most vitally interested. It is, perhaps, worthy of note that Vice-president H. J. Halford, of the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada, before the International Federation of

was also quite outspoken on the question and concluded his address as follows:

"Give no credence to hired speakers, who endeavor to throw dust in the eyes of the worker, and who seek to make the employe the chattel slave he used to be."

Monday's Journal has something to say on the question and, strange to say, it endorses the sentiments of Labor, as the following extracts would seem to indicate:

"Some unwarranted allegations against labor unionism were made by the president of the Building Employers' Association of Detroit, whose opinion seems to be that engaging organized employes to engage in battle against labor organizations."

"Some of the strongest of the labor unions are the most loyal to their promises and undertakings with employers. Neither has selfishness increased as unionism has grown in power; organized labor is as concerned with the general welfare of the country as ever. Instead of being the weakest link in the 'social chain' it has shown itself in a number of instances to be a strong force for good. It would seem to be Mr. Kennedy's mission to align employers in a war against unionism. It is not a worthy mission. It is not likely to succeed."

Having taken all of these facts into consideration we are convinced that in Ottawa, at least, there will be no quarrel between the International trades unions of the building industry and the Association of Building and Construction Industries. The Ottawa Building Trades Council is just as anxious to continue harmonious relationship with the organized employes as at any time in the history of the building industry in Ottawa. If there is any break in this relationship the onus must rest with the organized employers.

THE PRINTERS' 44-HOUR WEEK.

FROM press despatches it would appear that the employing printers of Ontario and Quebec intend to violate their solemn pledge and oppose the introduction of the 44-hour week in the printing industry. At Montreal on Saturday, according to the press despatches, the most important and influential body of Canadian employing printers that has ever been called together, decided to absolutely oppose any reduction in the present work week of printers. The meeting also decided in this connection that a contingency fund be created in every local printing centre equal to three months' pay roll and overhead for each plant and that a committee be created in each centre to collect and handle the fund.

The existing agreements in many of the printing establishments in Ontario and Quebec expire in June of this year. By an agreement, signed by the International Joint Conference Council, the 44-hour week is to be put into effect on May 1, 1921, in all printing establishments in the United States and Canada. The International Joint Conference Council is composed of the following: Employers—Closed Shop Branch United Typothetae of America, Printers' League of America, International Association of Employing Electrotypers; Employes: International Typographical Union, International Printing Pressmen and Assistants' Union, International Brotherhood of Bookbinders, International Stereotypers' and Electrotypers' Union. Canadian printers are members of the United Typothetae and many of them are members of other employers' organizations represented on the Conference Council.

At the last meeting of the Joint Conference Council, held in December, 1920, the following resolution was unanimously adopted:

"That this Joint Conference Council considers that all members of its constituent bodies are morally bound to adopt and put into effect the forty-four hour week on May 1, 1921."

In view of these circumstances does it not seem in all justice and fairness the forty-four hour week should be inaugurated in Ontario and Quebec at that time?

The International Typographical Union at all times believes in conciliation and arbitration, but on the question of hours of labor the time for such action is past as the employers and the employes have settled this matter. There is nothing else to do but carry out the agreement so loyally entered into by both parties. However, if there should be a struggle the International Typographical Union is in a much better position than it was at the time the forty-eight hour week was inaugurated.

EFFICIENCY OF LABOR.

ONE has heard a lot about the inefficiency of Labor from the press and other sources but these statements are not borne out by facts. The Labor Department recently conducted an investigation, and out of four thousand questionnaires to employers 63 per cent. reported that their workers were normally efficient. This percentage will compare favorably with the efficiency of any organization. Many of the larger trade unions conduct schools for the benefit of their membership. The International Typographical Union have enrolled seventeen hundred journeymen and apprentices in the I.T.U. Lessons in Printing.

Officials of the Second Construction Company who are building the addition to the King Edward Hotel at Toronto recently declared that while it was difficult to actually compare present efficiency with 1914, they do know that they are getting favorable results from their men.

And still the anti-unionists and "open-shoppers" say that trade unions discourage ambition and proficiency among their members.

LOW WAGES BAD ADVERTISING.

THAT low wage standards are detrimental to Canada is one of the startling declarations of the Montreal Gazette, a newspaper that, day in and day out for the past decade, has discredited Labor in its every movement. The Montreal Gazette's machinery must have slipped a cog, for in its issue of Friday last it says: "Canada is getting a poor advertisement from such repeated declarations that the people living therein cannot make enough to provide for themselves and their families." But isn't it quite true that many workers in this great Canada have been denied the right to earn enough to provide for themselves and their families by the closing down of industries? From October 15 to the end of December 2,000 workmen, according to the Minister of Labor, went home each night and had no work to go to in the morning. The Minister of Labor states that this condition of affairs is still in evidence. Unfortunately we have in Canada thousands of workmen who are quite anxious to work but there is no work to be had, and yet the Gazette says: "Canada is getting poor advertising from such actions on the part of many employers in this country."

WHITLEYISM IN BRITAIN

An English correspondent in a recent article in The Civilian made mention of the progress which has been made in the establishment and development of Whitley Councils in the British Civil Service, and referred particularly to the Admiralty Council as the most prominent of the bodies forming together the National Council. In this article it is proposed to set forth as briefly as may be the constitution of the Admiralty Administrative Whitley Council which has been the model for most of the other similar bodies in the Civil Service of the United Kingdom. The objects of the Council are defined as under: To secure, by means of regular discussion between official representatives of the Admiralty and representatives of Staff Associations or groups of Staff Associations having members employed on the administrative and clerical staffs of the Admiralty Establishments the greatest measure of co-operation in all matters affecting the efficiency of the Admiralty Service and the well-being of those employed therein; to provide machinery for dealing with grievances and generally to bring together the experience and different points of view of the various members of the administrative and clerical staffs of Admiralty Establishments. Among the more specific functions of the Council are mentioned: (a) Provision of the best means for utilizing the ideas, ability and experience of the Staff. (b) Means for securing to the staff a greater share in and responsibility for the determination and observance of the conditions under which their duties are carried out. (c) Determination of the general principles governing conditions of

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