

# Labor News From Coast to Coast

## “OUR OVERSEAS COLUMN”

### Caucasus 95% Organized

Moscow.—The trade unions of the Caucasus at their annual session, held this week, report that 95 per cent. of all industrial and office workers are organized, and 50 per cent. are working under collective agreements. The trade unions have in all 220,000 members, of whom 163,000 are in industry, 50,000 in transport, and the rest in office employment. Fifteen per cent. are women; the small number accounted for by the fact that the main industries are oil and manganese mining, while the main population is Mohammedan.

### The Sufferings of the Saar District

(I. F. T. U.) The “Ruhr Nemesis,” which is the name given by the “Sunday Times” to the fall of the franc, has unfortunately not been limited to France, but has affected the Saar District also, where it is felt more acutely than ever in France herself. This German district, which was handed over to the League of Nations for 15 years, is for the second time going through the miseries of currency depreciation. Having drunk to the dregs the bitter cup of the inflation of the mark, in common with its German fatherland, it is now suffering from the agonies of the franc depreciation, since it has changed its currency in the meantime.

By the depreciation of the franc all the holders of French money and all the owners of such capital, as according to law must be invested in securities paying rate of interest in francs, (as for instance trust-money and the capital of the various funds for old age and sickness insurance etc.) have lost more than our-fifths of the value of their investments. In the case of cash, and also in the case of investments in French government stock—the insurance funds of the mines under French management must be so invested—this loss on the rate of exchange means gain for the French Government.

The Saar Territory is now compelled to import nearly all its foodstuffs, and therefore the depreciation of the currency causes a great increase in the cost of living of the great bulk of the population. Perpetual wage conflicts are the natural result and the chief interest of the whole of the working population of the Saar Territory (workers, salaried employees, and civil servants) is thus centred upon these struggles.

Let us consider the typical position of the miners, who constitute the bulk of the workers. Their employer is the French State, to whom, by the Treaty of Versailles, the Saar mines were allotted as compensation for the destruction of the mines of Northern France. It was pointed out in the Senate on February 12th last that the output of the Saar mines during the past year had been extremely satisfactory. Moreover, there is always a ready sale for the coal. On the other hand, Le Troquer, the French Minister, has admitted that the rise in prices has been greater in the Saar Territory than in France. In spite of this, however, the miners' wages are still 75 per cent. behind the depreciation of the franc and the consequent rise in the cost of living. Precisely the same thing has happened in the case of the salaried employees and civil servants. We know that poverty and bitterness go hand in hand; and there can be little doubt that the most violent conflicts will break out unless these crying abuses are remedied.

If those who are primarily responsible remain inactive, it is the business of the League of Nations and the International Labor Office to take up this question, and to see that the German workers of the Saar District are not also victimized by the present mischievous Ruhr policy.

### From the Communist T. U. Movement

Bucharin, the president of the International of Communist Youth, has sent in a petition to the Communist International asking for increased financial aid for the Communist Youth Movement, as the Young Communist Associations of both Europe and Asia are in financial difficulties as a result of losses in membership. According to Bucharin's statement, there was up to January 1st, 1924, a decline in membership—in Norway of 44 per cent., in Germany of 27 per cent., in Finland of 40 per cent., and in France of 22 per cent. In Roumania the membership was 1,398, as compared with 4,020 in the previous year. In Japan membership has declined 50 per cent., while in China the total membership is now only about 500.

### Anniversary of Norwegian Fed'n. of T.U.

On the 30th of March, the Norwegian Federation of Trade Unions celebrated its 25th anniversary. The Federation was founded at a congress held at Easter time in 1899. In the first few years of its existence it had many difficulties to contend with, and the number of affiliated organizations and members was very small. It has only achieved its present position after many a fierce conflict, but it can now look back upon much good and successful work. The date of its jubilee coincides, however, with a time of bitter economic conflict, which is unequalled in its history. For the last five weeks some 70,000 workers have been involved in either strikes or lock-outs, and all attempts at settlements have hitherto failed.

### Workers' Holidays in Various Countries

Before the war very few workers except civil servants and municipal employees could claim paid holidays. Since the war, however, there has been a great extension of the custom. In some countries, such as Finland, Austria, Russia and Poland, there are statutory regulations providing for paid holidays annually for all workers. The following is a survey of the present position in the various countries with regard to this question:

**Finland**—The Collective Agreement Act grants every worker, who has worked for one year consecutively with the same employer, the right to an annual paid holiday of 7 working days. Those who have worked for half a year obtain 4 working days. No agreements may be made limiting these rights.

**Austria**—The Workers' Holiday Act provides for holidays for certain classes of workers. These may claim 1 week after one year's consecutive work, and 2 weeks after 5 years' employment.

**Russia**—All persons working for wages, who have worked for at least five and a half months consecutively in the same situation, are entitled to a holiday of at least two weeks; young persons under 18 can claim 1 month. Persons employed in trades injurious to health or in dangerous trades are entitled to an additional holiday of at least two weeks. In the case of seasonal workers, a six per cent. increase of wage (12 per cent. in trade injurious to health) is to be granted in lieu of holiday.

**Poland**—According to the Act of July 1st, 1922, all persons working for wages are to receive eight working days of paid holidays after one year's employment by the same concern; workers with three years' employment receive fifteen days. Young persons under 15 years of age and apprentices in small concerns or in handicrafts receive after one year's employment an annual holiday of fifteen consecutive days. Non-manual workers in trade, industry or offices are entitled to two weeks' holiday after six months' employment by the same concern and to four weeks' holiday after one year's employment.

In most other industrial countries a large number of collective agreements contain clauses providing for paid holidays. Thus, 72 per cent. of all the collective agreements in force in Germany on the 31st of December, 1921, contained clauses providing for holidays for 85 per cent. of all the workers affected by these agreements. The average length of the holiday was in 50 per cent. of the agreements three days and in 41 per cent. from three to six days.

**Great Britain**—According to the reports received by the Ministry of Labor, clauses providing for paid holidays have been inserted in over 100 collective agreements. In most agreements it is provided that wages shall be paid for all the statutory days of holiday, and that each worker is entitled to an annual holiday with full pay. The length of the holiday is usually from two to twelve days. As a rule, from six to twelve months' work with one employer is sufficient to warrant a paid holiday. In some cases compensation is granted to workers who leave a post before their holiday is due.

**Italy**—A paid holiday is granted in most of the chief branches of industry. The length of the holiday ranges from six days in the chemical, metal and textile industries to twelve or fifteen days in gas and electricity works and in the printing trade. In most cases the workers can claim a holiday after one year's employment.

**Yugo-Slavia**—The report of a factory inspector shows that the number of collective agreements providing for holidays is now increasing. The trades especially favored in this respect are printing and municipal

work. Thus, the printing operatives of Belgrade District have up to fifteen days holiday with full wages, while those of Sarajevo District can claim a paid holiday of four days after one year's employment, and fourteen days after five years' employment. In this District the municipal employees obtain fourteen days' holiday after one year of service, and this rises to four weeks after ten years of service.

**Position of Polish Working Class**  
The press service of the L.F.T.U. has received the following communications from the Polish trade unions on the present position of the working class of that country:

“For two months our whole economic life has been subordinated to the policy of balancing our national budget and stabilizing our rate of exchange. The decrees issued for this purpose and still more, the refusal to continue the state credits which have up till now been granted for industrial purposes have given rise to great industrial depression, and an enormous amount of unemployment. The industrialists are anxious to utilize this depression for the purpose of lengthening the working hours, their pretext being the necessity of defending themselves against the competition of German industry. Especially strong pressure is being exerted in Polish Upper Silesia, where the Polish law establishing the 46-hour week is not in force, and working hours are regulated by the German Decree of 1918, which in Germany itself has now been superseded. Hitherto we have managed to stand out against the employers' attack. These schemes of the industrialists have encountered energetic opposition from the workers, and even from the Government. Thus the Prime Minister has openly declared that he has every intention of remaining true to his promise, and that he does not intend to countenance any encroachments upon the achievements of the working classes. Notwithstanding this, we feel ourselves threatened, especially in Upper Silesia, by the danger that our working hours will be lengthened after the German model. If that were once to happen in Upper Silesia, no law could save the rest of us in the other parts of Poland.”

**Working Hours in Great Britain**  
An enquiry has recently been instituted by the British Trade Union Congress on the working hours of members of the affiliated organizations. The results show that three and a half million workers have a 48-hour week, and 800,000 a 42-hour week. Of the fifteen million British workers, some ten to twelve millions work 48 hours a week or less.

**An Attack on the Eight-Hour Day**  
Luxemburg employers are following the examples set in other countries, such as Germany, Austria, etc., and trying to make their new wage agreements conditional upon the consent of the workers to the lengthening of working hours. This course has been advised by the president of the Federation of Industrialists, and a large metal-working concern has already succeeded, by the application of considerable pressure, in enforcing what it calls a “temporary” suspension of the eight-hour-day. On this occasion the Government lent its aid to the employers. The Luxemburg Federation of Trade Unions has discussed the question and passed a resolution “to spare no effort to repel this attack on the vital interests of the workers.”

**Mines Kill 234 in April**  
Washington.—Fatal coal mine accidents are continuing at a rate largely in excess of a year ago, according to April reports received by the U.S. Bureau of Mines. As pointed out in numerous reports these deaths result from accidents which are largely preventable. The number of miners killed in April was 234, bringing the total for the first four months of the year to 993.

The fatality rate per million tons of coal was nearly double that of April, 1923, being 6.44 as compared with 3.71. The 10-year average for April was 4.94. The fatality rate for the first four months was 5.06 per million tons as compared with 4.68 a year ago.

The number of fatalities due to major disasters usually caused by explosions of gas and coal dust shows a marked increase, totalling 384 for the four months as compared with 140 in 1923. Failure of operators to rock-dust gassy mines and the tardy introductions of permissible explosives are largely to blame.

### Shipworkers Lose Long Struggle

**Bosses Force Nine-Hour Day**  
Hamburg, Germany.—After fighting a heroic battle of more than four months, the workers in the ship building industry along the German water front have had to bow to the inevitable and resume work under practically the old conditions.

These terms provide a 9-hour day instead of the 8-hour struggled for, and the bosses refuse to take all the men back on the grounds that there is not enough work for all who were employed when the strike started in January. This means they will not take back the leaders. A slight increase in wages is granted.

Optimists point out that while technically the bosses secured a victory yet the next months will show the workers have given the bosses the scare of their lives by holding out so long. The 8-hour day, they point out, still holds in principle, even though the 9-hour day has been temporarily installed. The vote to return to work came chiefly from the unorganized men.

### Coke Plant May Be Opened in St. John

St. John, N.E.—That St. John is to be preferred to Montreal as the place to establish a large \$200,000 coke industry was the statement of Charles Cansell, deputy minister, Department of Mines and chairman of the Federal Fuel Board, who passed through the city enroute from Halifax to Ottawa.

Because of St. John's position on the coast, and the fact that the harbor is open the year around, permitting of the importation of coal by steamer during the whole of the 12 months, this city was to be preferred to Montreal.

The establishment of a coke industry here on the scale planned, he said, would mean the stabilization of the mining industry in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, and would, beyond a doubt, result in the working of the mines in these provinces 365 days every year.

As chairman of the Federal Fuel Board, he was interested in the proposition, because it would mean a step towards the solution of the fuel problems of the Dominion.

### Montreal Labor Opposes Hanging Use of Lash Also Condemned by Trades Council

Montreal, Que. Organized labor in Montreal went on record recently as opposing capital punishment and the lash, when the Trades and Labor Council supported the Point St. Charles Lodge, International Association of Machinists, which transmitted a copy of a letter it had sent to Hon. E. J. McMurray, the solicitor general, commending him for recently suspending the lash sentence imposed on Raoul Beauchamp, hold-up man and bank robber.

### Ottawa Electric Co. Employees' Contract

Ottawa.—By an almost unanimous vote, union employees of the Ottawa Electric Company at a mass meeting held recently voted to accept the company's offer of a two-year contract with the maximum wages for the first year at 49c hourly and 50c for the second year. The minimum rates will be 44c and 45c. The former rates were from 43c to 48c per hour.

The two-year agreement will be signed within a few weeks, and is retroactive from May 1st.

### Jefferson Again Heads the Typos

Ottawa, Ont.—Mr. James W. Jefferson, of “The Journal” mechanical department, was re-elected president of the Ottawa Typographical Union, No. 162, at the election of officers held recently. Mr. Jefferson defeated his opponent, Mr. M. B. Rowan 196 to 83 votes. Captain J. A. P. Haydon was elected corresponding secretary and chairman of executive committee. Messrs. E. Dorion, Joseph Turner, D. W. Riley, and Walter Robertson, executive committee. The recording secretary, Mr. Martin O'Brien had previously been elected by acclamation. Others elected were delegates to the annual convention of the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada: Messrs. L. Molson and Geo. McCann; Delegate to the I. T. U. Messrs. P. Draper, and A. Reny (acclamation); delegates to the Ontario Conference, Messrs. F. Preece and W. Robinson (acclamation) sergeant at arms, J. K. Pearce.

### Unions Protest the Action of the Council

#### Locomotive Engineers and Machinists' Union Ask for Reconsideration of Decision Regarding Fire Fighters

Moose Jaw Sask.—Letters have been received and will be placed before the City Council from Division No. 510, Locomotive Engineers of Moose Jaw from joining any union against the action of the City Council in regard to the city fire fighters.

The Locomotive Engineers' Union condemns the action of the City Council in prohibiting the fire fighters of Moose Jaw from joining any union or affiliating with the International Association of Fire Fighters, and asks the Council to reconsider the decision reached in the matter. The letter asks that the fire fighters be given their just rights as free-born British citizens.

**Stock Salesmen Not Authorized**  
R. Thomas, Ont.—It is unofficially reported that the two men, representing themselves to be authorized agents for a railroad brotherhood, and who have induced some 20 persons to invest sums amounting to \$20,000 in supposed securities of the organization, are all bogus representatives. One of the investors, not having received his certificates, communicated with the organization headquarters and learns that the two men who had operated in the city for the last two months were not authorized salesmen. The chamber of commerce officials will investigate the report at once.

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### DEPARTMENT OF LABOUR SPADINA CRESCENT, TORONTO

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### Workers Returning to the Farms

#### Seek Jobs in Canada While Work May Be Secured

Unfavorable industrial conditions in the United States, particularly Detroit, is having a beneficial effect on the Western Ontario farm labor problem it became known recently.

A prominent agriculturist, whose work takes him all over Western Ontario reports that a number of young men who left their homes and farm jobs near Glencoe have come back from Detroit and were glad to get back their old positions.

“I talked to some of these boys and they all said work was mighty scarce on the other side, and they thought the best thing they could do was to bustle back to Canada, and farm work while the going was good,” declared the farm expert.

I found similar conditions in Bruce County. The young men are leaving the cities and flocking back to the land. I also find that farmers are not so anxious to hire help at wages beyond \$35 a month and board. In fact a number won't pay more than \$25 or \$30. They explain that they can't tell what they are going to get for their crops, and if they take a chance on hiring several men at high wages they will be out of pocket in the fall.

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