

Editorial Page of The Canadian Labor Press

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A WEEKLY NEWS LETTER.

THE 8-HOUR WORKDAY IN GERMANY.

WRITERS for the public press quite frequently state that workers in Germany and other European countries are toiling ten, eleven and twelve hours a day. The facts are to the contrary, notwithstanding the declarations of these writers. The International Labor Office, which is composed of Government representatives and representatives of the employers and workers, in a recent official communication on the adoption of the shorter workday in European countries, stated that outside of Russia and Spain the eight-hour workday generally prevailed, and in most of the countries there was legislation dealing with the matter.

So far as Germany is concerned, the workers are toiling eight hours only, and the annual report of the Federation of Employers' Associations of Germany for 1920 contains the following details concerning the forty-eight-hour week in collective agreements:

"In most collective agreements, the 48 hour week is fixed without any special arrangement for Saturdays. When working hours are shorter on Saturdays, the hours lost on that day are almost always distributed over the other days of the week, without being reckoned as overtime.

"In the employers' association for the metal industry, especially in Southern Germany, out of 31 regional associations only 10 have a 64 hour week, the 2 hours lost on Saturday not being made up during the week.

"In the Berlin metal industry, working hours are 46 1/2 per week; in the film industry, hours are 46 per week; in the artificial honey industry, 45; in the Dresden cigarette industry, 45; in breweries in large towns, hours are from 45 to 47 1/2 per week; in the manufacturing group the textile industry is the only one in which working hours are less than 48 per week.

"The collective agreement of 22nd January, 1919 fixing hours of work in the textile industry at 46 per week has been denounced by the employers. Negotiations for the introduction of a 48 hour week are not yet at an end.

"A point which is very much discussed is whether preparatory and complementary work is to be included in the eight hour day. According to the results of an enquiry amongst employers, in most cases the collective agreements for the year 1920 allow this work to be done outside the eight hour day without reckoning it as overtime."

Our Governments are too anxious to grasp at any straw that offers itself in their anxiety to shelve the adoption of the eight-hour workday as contained in the Labor section of the Treaty of Versailles. The fact of the matter is that the Canadian manufacturers are not in favor of the law. Possibly the fact that the workers in some industries in the United States, and we might mention the steel industry, are working twelve hours a day, seven days a week is the goal sought. Canadian workers will not be tolerant until the eight-hour workday is enacted in this Dominion. The House of Commons has concluded its work for the present year, and there was not one mention of this democracy from an official source.

We have stated on many occasions that Canada is rapidly falling to the rear in the march of progress, and unless we arouse ourselves we will be among the most backward of the nations of the world insofar as advanced social and labor legislation is concerned.

CONGRESS HEAD IN THE WEST.

PRESIDENT TOM MOORE, of the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada, has spent the past month in Western Canada. He has been preaching the gospel of the International Trades Union movement. The Canadian Labor leader has been reaching the great producing masses through the Trades and Labor Councils in various industrial centres, and the employers through the medium of the Canadian Clubs. He has met some opposition from the One Big Union, but outside of Winnipeg the opposition has been very timid. The workers are rapidly learning that only by concentrated action through the International Trades Union movement can they hope for progress. Some tried the O. B. U. and found it wanting. The workers are drifting back to the great labor movement that has weathered the storm in periods of depression, as well as in periods of prosperity. Mr. Moore has pointed out the folly of the O. B. U. and of the National Catholic Union. He has made a great impression in Western Canada. Everywhere he has been well received, with the exception of the Winnipeg meeting, where the lovers of free speech refused to allow the President of the Trades and Labor Congress the right to express his opinions and the policy of the great labor movement of which he is the chief executive officer in Canada.

A LABOR DEPARTMENT FOR INDIA.

BOTH Houses of the Indian legislature have passed resolutions in favor of the Governor-in-Council giving effect to certain of the recommendations of the Washington Labor Conference of the League of Nations. It is reported that good progress is being made in state organization in connection with Labor problems. A cable from Bombay announces the definite establishment of a Labor Department, and the appointment as Labor Commissioner of Mr. Findlay Shirras, who has been Director of Statistics. Industrialism is more developed in Western India than in any other part of the country, and there has been much unrest in the last two or three years, particularly among the cotton operatives in Bombay, where the housing problem is so acute. The department now set up, after consultation with Mr. McLeod, of the Ministry of Labor, who went out to advise on the subject, exists partly for intelligence and partly to help in the settlement of disputes.

There is a "hitch" in the Home Rule Act. It probably means that one must wait for the...
"The Dictatorship of the Proletariat as an instrument of world revolution" is now admitted by the Communists themselves as an idle dream. — M. Fashman.

"We can never have any form of Socialism until the people want it, and the very noblest and most perfect form will end in failure if the people are unfit for it." — Robert Blatchford.

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POLITICS AND PEOPLE THROUGH THE TELESCOPE OF LABOR

By J. A. P. Hayden.
The fifth session of the Thirteenth Parliament of Canada has progressed. The end came on Saturday evening, an hour later than had been anticipated. But what is that in the life of a Government that has, during the entire session, enacted as little legislation as possible and throughout on no new adventures?
The haste of it all was due to the anxiety of our young and brilliant Premier, who was determined to get to England on a certain boat in June to attend the Imperial Conference of Prime Ministers in London, England.

No doubt you will ask: "Could the Prime Minister not go and the House remain in session?" Of course the Rt. Hon. Arthur Meighen could have gone but there was no assurance that the new National Liberal and Conservative, etc., etc., party would have remained intact. Throughout the entire session the young Prime Minister has been obliged to carry the debate for the Government. Many of his followers, travelled in directions which were not leading to the goal set by the National Liberal and Conservative party. The Prime Minister successfully led his following out of troubled waters. He has filled many pages of Hansard with arguments that will later be used in a campaign which will come in Spring when the Argarians are busy with their crops.

But legislation was nothing in the lives of this new party. So far as the workers of this country are concerned their legislative bills were cured in the opinion of the Government—and the Opposition—by the enactment of a Canadian Copyright Act and some slight amendments to the Immigration Act. This included the entire bill.

The employment policy was announced, nor was there any announcement of the Government's intentions regarding the draft convention adopted at the Washington and Genoa Conferences of the International Labor Office. The Government, in an official communication to the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada, some weeks ago, stated that an official announcement would be made to Parliament outlining the policy of the Government concerning the 'draft convention'.

We have attended almost every sitting of the House of Commons and we have not heard one word concerning the draft convention emanating from an official source. We have carefully reviewed the official records and these also contain no reference to the draft convention. It had been expected that the unsatisfactory manner in which the Department of Marine handled the work at the Toronto shipyards would have been aired in the House but not one word was uttered in criticism from the Opposition benches. The Liberal and Agrarian Opposition were approached by the representatives of the men but notwithstanding no criticism was voiced on behalf of labor.

The Prime Minister took an opportunity when the Pension Act Amendment was introduced to make some observations concerning the unemployment situation in Canada. He also referred to a national housing policy which had been adopted by the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada, the National Joint Conference Board of the Building Trades and Construction Industries, the National Industrial Conference of the Building and Construction Industries and many of the ex-soldiers' organizations, including the Great War Veterans' Association.

In speaking of housing the Prime Minister declared that a national housing policy was economically unsound. The Prime Minister has become adept at "passing the buck" and in announcing the housing policy of the Government he pushed the matter on to the shoulders of the municipalities. This has been the policy of the Government for the past few years.

If the Government's policy of housing is unchanged owing to changed conditions the policy of the Government in regard to unemployment is even more strikingly unchanged.

The Prime Minister, addressing the Windsor Convention of the Trades and Labor Congress stated that his sympathies were with the workers. No doubt the unemployed can not be termed workers according to the economics of the Prime Minister and he has no sympathy for the great army of unemployed. His remarks are worthy of note.

COSTS AND PRODUCTION IN THE BUILDING INDUSTRY

Last week we published the findings of the committee on "Existing conditions in the Building and Construction Industries" which was unanimously adopted by the National Industrial Conference of the Building and Construction Industries which recently met at Ottawa. There has been much misunderstanding concerning the findings of the committee and for that reason we decided to publish the entire report of the various committees. The following is the report of the committee on "Costs and Production":
Many of the arguments advanced by the editorial writers who are unjustly engaged in attacking labor, are refuted in the report, which follows:
(a) Existing Building Contract.
Resolved that this Conference agrees that the cost of a building is divided in general under three headings:
(1) Direct labor costs on the contract.
(2) Materials delivered on the contract.
(3) Contractors overhead and profit.

Making a total of 100%.
Item (a)—The direct labor on the job needs no analysis other than that it represents the wage paid to the building trades mechanics.
Item (b)—The materials delivered on the job is further subdivided into the cost of freight, manufacturers and distributors, profit and overhead, and Government royalties and taxes in the relative importance, as compared to the relative importance of the cost of the building trades mechanics. We are further agreed that these costs are influenced in great measure by too much purchasing through numerous retailers.

Item (c)—The contractors overhead and profit, covers the contractor's office labor, maintains his plant, meets his fixed charges and supplies necessary to today exist in the pre-war efficiency.

Moved by J. B. Carewell.
Seconded by J. F. Marsh.
Resolved that this Conference agrees that the following features if properly understood will tend strongly to increase efficiency and reduce costs:
(a) Standard practice in the design of all buildings especially in the establishment of sizes and the working out of details, also the standardization of general conditions, and the specifications of stock materials and shapes wherever possible.

This is especially true in the construction of small houses.
(b) Constant, steady, and interested supervision on the part of the management and the construction superintendent.
(c) Employment of properly skilled workmen, properly educated, and the possession of organizing ability by the general superintendent to insure the steady flow of the materials, and the supply of labor to the job.

(d) The extension as far as possible of the early commencement of construction.
(e) By the steady maximum output of the individual workman.
This Conference further agrees that the efficiency of the building trades workman, although it has been generally assumed to be constant, is today what it is, the pre-war efficiency.

Moved by J. B. Carewell.
Seconded by J. F. Marsh.
Resolved that this Conference recognizes that the greatest efficiency per hour of the workman is attained in the eight hour day.
Employer's Qualification.
We realize that it would be difficult to make universal the eight hour day, and we would not look favorably upon any legislation governing hours of labor in the Building Trades.
Employer's Qualification.
We believe that legislation should be immediately enacted which would establish the eight hour day for the

showing, as they do, that the Prime Minister of this country has turned a deaf ear on the vast army of producers who are deprived of a livelihood through no fault of their own.
The Prime Minister said:
"That we have unemployment in this country today is doubtless true; that we have unemployment above the average in this country, and too far above the average, is doubtless true; and that there is suffering as a result no one can deny. But we cannot keep out of mind this fact: that under conditions of deflation, which necessarily follow any period of inflation, under conditions of returning to lower levels of values, there is bound to be, and always has been, unemployment. Today it is a world-wide condition, by no means confined to this country, nor do I think there is any country in the world where the per capita unemployment is less than in Canada today. Certainly there was no country where it was anything like so small, proportionately to population, as it was in Canada last winter. In Great Britain at this time, the percentage of unemployment far exceeds ours; it must be at least three or four times what it is here. In the United States it has exceeded ours, and if it does not exceed it now, it at least is equal to it. Consequently, by comparison, we have no reason to feel that conditions in this country in that regard are worse than anywhere else. Indeed, I think they are better than they are in any other industrial country in the world."
Now the question comes as to what should be done as regards this problem. The Government adopted the course last winter of insisting on local responsibility as regards unemployment. We had been compelled during the war, and indeed, up to last winter, more or less to insist on that principle, but we thought the time had come to restore it; and consequently, against very great, indeed, against what one might almost call violent pressure, the Government did insist upon that principle once again. We decided on this course; that we would assist general unemployment only where the municipality primarily assumed the burden, put in organization,

trees throughout Canada and adjacent U. S. points where a dispute has been reached by mutual agreement or arbitration; and
Whereas the chief deterring factor, which prevents a real substantial reduction in cost of living is undoubtedly high rent; and
Whereas it is realized by us that only the building of many thousands of dwellings can alleviate Canada's deplorable housing shortage; and
Whereas we are as an industry to a slight degree responsible for this situation; and
Whereas it has been conclusively shown in this Conference that building material prices have already been substantially reduced;

Therefore be it resolved by this Conference, acting as individual builders and workers, and not in our capacity as officers of any particular organization, and with the full realization that each locality must of necessity deal with its own peculiar situation, as follows:
That in our best judgment a moderate and reasonable adjustment of wages should be agreed upon without further delay in such large centres, where an abnormally high peak has been reached and where no settlement has been accepted, and that such agreement should be fixed upon for a period of twelve months, and that failing mutual agreement, voluntary arbitration should be entered into.

In conclusion, your General Committee feels that this Conference will tend to stabilize conditions by preventing an undue and abnormal drop in wages, and remove strikes, strife and distrust, and that a new post-war normal will more speedily be determined.

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