

Ontario Workman.

THE EQUALIZATION OF ALL ELEMENTS OF SOCIETY IN THE SOCIAL SCALE SHOULD BE THE TRUE AIM OF CIVILIZATION.

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MASS MEETING OF WORKINGMEN IN HAMILTON.

A Mass Meeting of the workingmen of Hamilton, in accordance with a call previously issued, was held, under the auspices of the Canada Labor Unity, in the Mechanics' Hall, on Friday evening last. It was announced the chair would be taken at half past seven, but it was eight o'clock before all was in readiness, at which time the hall was pretty well filled, about 500 or 600 being present.

Mr. Frederick Walters was called to the chair; and upon the platform were Messrs. Thos. McGregor, Angus McLeod, Silas Bond, Robert Parker, Bethewel Durrant, Joseph Nevill, Thomas Roy, Ralph Ingledew, Wm. Hibbertson, Henry Ellender, Joseph Hurley, James Paton and John Mowat. Mr. Williams of Toronto subsequently arrived.

Mr. Walters, in opening the proceedings, said he felt proud to be placed in the position to which he had been called. His sympathies were always and altogether with the workingmen. They were as much interested in the passage of good laws as any other class, since they were as much affected by the laws as any other class. And it was just as proper for workingmen to meet together to consider how existing or proposed legislation might affect them as for any other class. (Applause.) He trusted his hearers would show that they were united for the principles advocated by the speakers who would address them. He told the story of the man in the backwoods who, when the bear entered his house, left his wife to fight the battle and cried in the safe place in the loft to which he had climbed, "Hit him again Peggy! Hit him harder! Hit him more over the head!" (Laughter.) Some workingmen were like this; they would engage in no benefit of the workingmen, but content themselves with shouting from some safe place to those who were taking the brunt of the battle, "Hit him harder! Hit him more over the head!" (Applause and laughter.) Those present were not of this class, but showed that they were ready and willing to stand by those who were fighting the workingmen's battle. He would now introduce the first speaker and mover of the first resolution, Mr. Robert Parker, for whom he asked a patient hearing.

Mr. Robert Parker regretted that in consequence of the absence of a gentleman who was expected to be present, but who had not yet arrived, he was compelled to take the stand first to-night. He held in his hand a resolution which he proposed to move. It related to certain bills passed by the Legislature of Ontario; the Lien law and the Arbitration law. He came here as a workman, and as one of a class whose interests were largely affected by these bills, with such intelligence as he possessed to discuss and pass an opinion upon the merits of these laws. The resolution he had to move was as follows:

Resolved—That while we accept the Lien law as amended, we regret that the mode of collecting has not been simplified; and further, that while a bill has been passed in the Legislature to facilitate the adjustment of disputes between masters and workmen, we regret that that bill has not been simplified to meet the wants of the workingmen, and we think that practically the bill will be a failure.

In support of the resolution Mr. Parker, speaking first on the Lien Law, said that the necessity for such a law had long been felt by the workingmen of many parts of this country. Contractors and sub-contractors in many instances have taken large contracts on which they employed large numbers of men, and when they obtained the work of these men they had drawn the money on the contract and decamped, leaving the men minus their pay. The object of this bill was to provide the workmen with a security that they would get their pay by making the product of their work liable for it. It would also compel contractors to be careful that in taking contracts they made sure they got enough to be able to pay all the men's wages. In addition to this it would do away with the

system of having men of straw as contractors' sureties, so that even if the contractor cleared out there would still be some person from whom the men could get their pay. But the great trouble heretofore had been that so long as the work done was not liable for the wages of the workmen, they had no security, and were completely at the mercy of any dishonest contractor who might take a notion to clear away, or employer, who, after the work was well under way, sold out. Many instances could be pointed to where the workingmen had suffered in this way. He (Mr. Parker) then proceeded to criticize the provisions of the bill. The bill as originally introduced placed the sum for which a lien could be held at \$50. This would practically cut off the workingmen from any benefit. The workingmen felt they knew what they needed, and when they called a mass meeting at Toronto and dissented from this clause, the Government struck out the limitation clause altogether. This was well enough, but the machinery of the bill was not as simple as the workingmen required if they were to derive any benefit from the law. What the workingmen want is a law as simple as that by which a landlord collects his rent. So long as they were taxed for the support of the courts of the country he felt that what they wanted was that they should be able to lodge their claim for wages in the nearest court, and the amount should be forthcoming at once, and without cost to themselves. While the workingmen accepted the bill, they wanted its machinery simplified.

In reference to the Arbitration Bill, he thought it might be called, "Much ado about nothing." After reading the preamble to the bill, and coming to that portion of the enacting clause which says, "Therefore Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent," etc. Mr. Parker humorously remarked that Her Majesty had reigned a good many years, and had seen many embryo statesmen spring up to give her advice; but he thought she had sense enough generally to form a just estimate of the "advice" they gave her. Indeed, it might not be amiss for the workingmen to advise Her Majesty not to pay any attention to such men. In criticizing the provisions of the Bill, Mr. Parker stated that it constituted a court against the decision of which there was no appeal. If such court was to be so infallible that there need be no appeal against its decisions, every care should be taken to see that it was properly constituted. He then showed by comparing different clauses of the bill that it was impossible that such results could be reached. Then again the principal, indeed the only cause of dispute between masters and workmen—the question of wages—was excluded from the jurisdiction of the court to be constituted by the bill, so that in fact the workingmen would be no better off than they were heretofore. The existing courts of the country were sufficient to settle all other causes of dispute. After showing the loop in manner in which the bill had been drawn up, he (the speaker) contended that it would have the effect of cutting up the working classes into castes the same as those of India. It sapped the liberty of the workingmen. The court it proposes to constitute is a one-sided affair, a majority being in favor of the masters. In fact the bill fails altogether in accomplishing the object it proposes. The present Ontario Government pretended to be very careful of the way in which it spent the money of the country; but the speaker thought that spending it in passing such a bill, at the rate of \$6 a day for each member, and then in printing before and after it was passed was a most reprehensible act. When they sent men to legislate for them at the rate of \$6 a day, they wanted \$6 worth of work done—the very best possible work that could be done for the money, and not such trash as the bills to which the resolution he now moved had reference.

Before the chairman had time to call upon the gentleman appointed to second the resolution, Mr. Jas. Paton, unexpectedly

sprang to the front of the platform, and commenced to read what he called an amendment, which was written upon three or four sheets of foolscap. His appearance seemed to be a preconcerted signal for a state of agitation as violent as it was un-called for; because it was utterly impossible for any one who was even within three feet of the person who was gesticulating, to understand one sentence that was spoken, so great was the hubbub. This continued for some time, for Mr. Paton, with a perseverance worthy of a better cause, persisted in struggling to the end of the manuscript. What the full nature of the supposed amendment was, it was impossible to conjecture; but the *Globe* of Saturday rescued the valuable document from oblivion, and so to give our readers an idea of the relevancy of the amendment, we subjoin it as follows:—

Be it resolved in amendment that we, the workingmen of the city of Hamilton, in mass meeting assembled, in order to stand square and fair before the public, that the Committee be requested by this mass-meeting forthwith to bring from their hiding-place the flags and emblems that shone so conspicuously in the public procession on the 15th day of May, 1872, in the city of Hamilton, in order to be sold by public auction to the highest bidder and converted into lawful money, and so pay James Ryan his wages and other liabilities and debts incurred by the nine hour league. Whereas, be it known to all whom it may concern, that we, the workingmen of the city of Hamilton, in mass-meeting assembled, regret exceedingly that Mr. James Ryan, employed by the nine hour league, has not yet received his wages, amounting to \$129.20; and that when he completed his mission he appeared before his employers and gave in his report, which was well received, and acknowledged by all to be the greatest piece of work ever performed in such a short time by any workman in this or any other country; and that furthermore, his employers, or the committee of the said nine-hour league, with a daring and unscrupulous hand committed an outrage on this poor workman never before known amongst trades unions or labor reforms, to reduce his wages to \$80, and promising to pay him in one month from that date, which promise has not yet been fulfilled, setting the Divine law at defiance, which says the laborer is worthy of his hire.

After a considerable amount of cross firing had been indulged in, Mr. Paton finally left the platform, and order was sufficiently restored to resume the business of the meeting, and Mr. Roy, of the Moulders' Union, in some well chosen and timely remarks seconded the resolution submitted by Mr. Parker.

Mr. O'Callaghan then came forward in a considerable state of agitation, and the disturbance again commenced. After some time the chairman succeeded in procuring that gentleman a hearing, who begged to differ from the first speaker, who, he said, had denounced the Lien Law, and he (Mr. O'Callaghan) thought it a step in the right direction. This remark was received with derisive cheers, because in reality they were but an echo to Mr. Parker's words. He also defended the arbitration law, contending that it gave workmen the means of collecting wages amounting to sums of over \$100 without rendering it necessary to employ lawyers at great expense to prosecute their claims in the county court or Court of Queen's Bench.

After Mr. O'Callaghan had resumed his seat, the chairman was about to put the resolution to the meeting when Mr. John Mowat said he desired to offer an amendment as follows:—

Resolved—That we, the workingmen of the city of Hamilton in mass meeting assembled, do recognize the action taken by the Government of Ontario in amending the Lien Law as desired by our fellow-workingmen of Toronto, at their meeting, and that we acknowledge the passing of said Act as a benefit to the mechanics, contractors, etc., of this our favored country, and that we are highly satisfied with the mode of its working.

The mover made but few remarks in its support. A gentleman in the audience, whose name did not transpire, seconded the amendment.

The chairman, after reading the original resolution and the amendment, called for a vote on the latter, which was declared lost. A vote was then taken on the original resolution, and the chairman declared it carried.

The chairman then said that in consequence of the non-arrival of the gentleman who was to move the next resolution on

the programme, relative to Convict Labor, he would call upon Mr. Williams, delegate from the Toronto Trades' Assembly, to move the resolution in reference to the municipal and Assessment Amendments. Mr. Williams then came forward, and read the resolution as follows:—

Resolved—That this meeting cannot view without grave apprehension, some of the proposed amendments to the Municipal and Assessment Act, and would recommend attention to those clauses which, it is believed, will bear with undue pressure upon the operative classes, and will prove detrimental to the best interests of the community.

Before proceeding to the discussion of this subject he wished to say a few words respecting the association under whose auspices this meeting had been called. It was a source of pride and pleasure to him to be sent to represent his Toronto brethren at so large and influential a meeting. He wished to felicitate the originators of the association upon the expressive title they had adopted for it—"The Canadian Labor Unity." The very mention of the name was peculiarly suggestive of harmony and brotherhood; and he trusted the time would speedily come when its branches would be established far and wide; and that not only in our sister cities, but when from city to town, and from town to village they would be found to exist, so that wherever a workman's lot in Canada might be cast, he would not only meet with the grasp from the hand of brother, but he would be greeted with the mystic signs of this freemasonry among workingmen. Though this idea might be considered somewhat advanced, he did not consider it Utopian, and, at any rate, it was a consummation devoutly to be wished. (Hear, hear.) He knew there were many who would bitterly oppose such a spread of Unionism, and would pretend to see in it all kinds of dangers against the public weal; but why should not they, who had realized the benefits of Unionism, desire to see its spread. There was nothing in its principles of which they need to feel ashamed. Trade Unionists had no sympathy with the dreaded Internationals, nor did they subscribe to the doctrines of Communism—what they desired, simply and solely, was to receive a "fair day's pay for a fair day's work." (Applause.) Some would say that such wide-spread unionism would be subversive of order, and tend to produce agitation, and would argue that the placing of so much power in the hands of the masses would operate against the best interests of society. He admitted it might operate against the private interests of many who were now receiving far more than their share of the productions of the country, and that ought to be more equally distributed amongst the producers; but that it would operate against the public weal he was not prepared to admit, because, in his opinion, nothing would tend to contribute so much to the progress and prosperity of any country as a well-paid and contented operative population. History taught them that sometimes people who had had stricken from them the shackles of a galling bondage, had for a time abused, rather than used, the liberties conferred upon them, and those who desired to keep them down pointed with the finger of scorn, and said, "These are the acts of men whom you deemed worthy of liberty!" But such judgments were too hastily pronounced, and those who uttered them forgot that such acts were but the miserable legacy bequeathed them by years of oppression. But even these cases were rather the exception than the rule, and he referred to the present state of affairs in the Mother Country. He spoke of that wonderful movement among that hitherto neglected and oppressed class—the English agricultural laborer. But no acts of retaliation had been committed by them, nor had the dark, midnight sky been illuminated by the glare from the torch of the incendiary; but under the leadership of men of the stamp of that prince among leaders—Joseph Arch—they were rapidly acquiring a position that a man would have been deemed a mad enthusiast had he prophesied it but a few years ago. (Applause.) He then spoke of the

grand future that awaited the workingmen of this country, and urged upon those who were associated with the Labor Unity to be true to its principles, and in so doing they would help to usher in the good time coming; but if they were not true, then some other instrumentality would be used, for

In patience, long enduring wrong,
The weak may strive against the strong,
But the day shall yet appear
When the might with the right and the truth shall be,
And come what may to stand in the way,
That day the world shall see.

(Applause.) Mr. Williams then went on to review some of the features in the amendments proposed to the Municipal law which he considered objectionable. The first was with reference to the election of the mayors of cities by the council. Mayors used to be elected by the people, and it was generally believed that principle would be restored, but it was found that the proposition was to have the election still in the hands of the council. A Toronto paper had said that this was right; it would secure the election of better men, because the people could be more easily bought.

(A voice—"That's a lie!") Mr. Williams said the word was a very expressive Saxon word which sometimes conveyed a great truth. (Laughter.) These were gross libels upon the workingman, whose hands were as clean as those of any other class of men. (Applause.) Then another proposition was to grant to city councils the power to give gratuities to city officers after twenty-five years' continuous service.

For some time the interruption had been rather annoying to the speaker, and at this point became so great that Mr. Williams declined to proceed any further with his remarks, stating that the subject he was discussing did not seem sufficiently interesting to them to engage their attention.

Mr. Ellender seconded the resolution without remark.

The Chairman was proceeding to put the resolution, but calls being made for Mr. Williams to finish his remarks, he came forward and said he would not speak at length, but would simply indicate what he considered the objectionable features in these proposed amendments to the Municipal Law. It was to be noted that these had not yet been passed; they were only recommended for passage; therefore, it was of importance if workingmen objected to them or any of them that they should make those objections known before the objectionable features became crystallized upon the statute book. The first objection was to the election of Mayor by the Council; the second to the foisting of civic officers upon the pension list because they had had a good situation at a fat salary for twenty-five years; the third was the proposition to tax every dollar a workman might earn. It was also proposed to extend the term of aldermen to three years instead of one, and this, he considered, very objectionable, as affording facilities for the formation of "rings." These were the points he intended speaking upon, but for the reasons given he did not consider it advisable to occupy their time.

Mr. O'Callaghan said before that resolution was put he wanted Mr. Williams to take back his expression that the workingmen of Hamilton were without intelligence.

Mr. Williams said he had used no such language; he had said they were not sufficiently interested in his (the speaker's) remarks.

After some bickering, during which Mr. O'Callaghan so far forgot himself as to talk of ramming his fist down the throat of the speaker, he finally acknowledged that he was behind the scenes when the words were spoken, and that he might have been mistaken.

Before the motion was put, however, Mr. Williams, in order to settle any doubts that might exist in the minds of any present, said that he had not the slightest cause for making so absurd a remark as had been attributed to him.

The motion was then carried.

(CONCLUDED ON EIGHTH PAGE.)