

Labor News From Coast to Coast

"OUR OVERSEAS COLUMN"

No Affiliation as Yet

The last congress of the Norwegian trade unions, held in 1923, decided to hold a referendum of the members on the subject of affiliation with the Red International of Labour unions of Moscow. This referendum has now been held, and the majority proposal of the Executive Committee of the National Centre, not to affiliate with the R. I. L. U. but only to maintain friendly relations with it, has been adopted by 15,602 against 7,504 votes.

According to the resolution of the trade union congress this referendum should have been held before the 1st October, 1923. The delay was due to the fact that it was impossible to obtain from the R. I. L. U. information as to the number of affiliated national centres, the memberships, and the financial liabilities which would be entailed by affiliation with the R. I. L. U. etc. It was not until recently that the R. I. L. U. sent its reply to the Norwegian Executive's letter of August 23rd, 1923. It gave as the reason for the delay the unrest in Germany, which had absorbed the whole attention of the R. I. L. U. The number of members affiliated with the R. I. L. U. was given as 12 million. This 12 million however includes 3 millions from Italy, which has never been affiliated with the Red International, and 116,000 from Norway, the country which was at the moment making enquiries with a view to possible affiliation, although the Norwegian trade union centre numbers only 86,000 members. If these two items may be taken as a sample of the rest, the information given by the Red International of Labour Unions cannot be said to be very reliable.

Financial Position of Swiss T. U. Centre

According to its annual financial report, it has been estimated that the balance sheet of the centre would in 1923 show a deficit of 16,000 francs. This however was not the case, as there was an increase in the receipts.

The total income amounted to Frs. 173,646 and the total expenditure to Frs. 174,622. The funds of the Centre amounted at the end of the year to Frs. 97,825 against 110,443 in 1922. The strike fund was only slightly increased in 1923. The total funds available for all purposes at the end of the year were about Frs. 176,000.

Belgian Labor Minister Makes Promises

Techoffen, the new Belgian Minister of Labour, has recently given an interview in which he has made the following statements concerning his future policy. The Government, he declared, will endeavour to get the Bill of Old Age and Miners' pensions passed before the dissolution of Parliament. It will also devote special attention to the question of workers' insurance, the amendment of the Workmen's Compensation Act, and the improvement of vocational education. It will insist upon the observance of the Eight-Hours-Day Act and will shortly appoint a commission of inquiry to conduct an impartial investigation into the results of the eight hours day, both as regards production and as regards the moral and economic effects of the shorter working hours upon the workers. Industry and Labor will be jointly represented on the Commission, which will also be able to co-opt members of parliament and experts. There is also to be an immediate re-examination of the decree on unemployment issued by the late government. This decree constitutes a threat to the trade unions, inasmuch as it deprives them of a voice in the allocation of trade union benefit.

Czechoslovakian T. U. Movement

A meeting was held recently of the executives of the Czechoslovak Federation of Trade Unions. This meeting devoted its attention chiefly to question of organization. It was stated that the Federation now numbers 350,000 members, and that the membership in many of the unions is steadily rising. Various proposals were made with regard to the state contribution to unemployment benefit, the principle of which was established by law in 1921, but which is only now about to take concrete shape. One of these proposals was to the effect that the State should contribute a sum equal to that granted

by the organization, and that the State contribution should continue to son had exhausted his right to union benefit. As a bill regulating old age and disablement insurance will shortly come up for discussion in parliament, a proposal is to mate for the introduction of a uniform system of insurance for workers and civil servants alike. The Government was also requested to facilitate trade with Russia.

International Labor Office and 8-Hr. Day

The question of the eight-hour day came up for discussion at the recent meeting of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office, Margaret Bonfield, the representative of the British Government, declared that the MacDonald Cabinet has allotted a day in the near future for the discussion by parliament of the draft of ratification.

Jouhaux and Oudegeest drew the attention of the Governing Body to the promises made by Mussolini to ratify the conventions, and also to the situation created in Polish Upper Silesia by the lengthening of working hours in Germany. The German-Polish Convention of 1921 stipulates that the labour legislation of both the German and Polish parts of Upper Silesia shall correspond with that in force in Germany. But Germany has now resolved to lengthen working hours. Oudegeest severely criticised the German Government declaring the present state of things to be untenable. At the end of the session a declaration was made on behalf of the Labour Group in favour of the international application of the eight hours day and the 48 hours week.

Poland Establishes Eight-Hour Day

A recent declaration of the prime minister of Poland on the subject of ours of labour is of considerable interest to all who are following the movement of opinion in various countries with regard to the eight-hour day.

Poland as had by law an eight-hour day and a forty-six hour week in industry for the last four years. A suggestion that these limits should be extended, in view of present economic conditions in Poland, was put forward in the name of employers at the first meeting of the new economic council held recently in Warsaw. The prime minister, so far from giving any support to the proposal, declare his strong belief that the maintenance of the eight-hour day was essential to industrial progress.

The determination of the Polish government to preserve the present law intact requires special interest, first from the present industrial and economic difficulties of the country, and secondly, from the proximity of Germany. Further, the declaration of the prime minister is the more notable by reason of the fact that Poland has not yet ratified the Washington convention on hours of labor, and is therefore under no legal obligation to maintain the existing law unaltered.

Hungarian Trade Unions Threatened

At the recent national conference of the Executive Committee of the Socialist Party of Hungary discussed the attitude of Social Democracy to the proposals for the reconstruction of the national finance of Hungary, and resolved that the parliamentary group must spare no effort to combat these.

A further subject of discussion at this meeting was a recent threat of Count Bethlen, to put an end "to the terrorism practised by the trade unions." The general belief is that this threat means that Bethlen will strike at the trade unions if the Social Democrats oppose the reconstruction proposals in parliament. It was resolved to ignore the threat and to leave nothing undone to prevent or hamper an attempt on the part of Bethlen to consolidate and extend the dictatorship.

The Trade Unions and Immigration

Samuel Compers, the president of the American Federation of Labour, and John Quinn, the president of the American Legion (the association of ex-service men) have united to oppose unlimited immigration. Both point to the great dangers which will result, in case immigration is not either checked altogether, or restricted as much as possible. Immigration stands for the lowering of the standard of living of the American worker.

The immigration bill has obtained a great majority in the congress. It reduces the percentage of immigrants, which is based on the census of the year 1910, from 3 to 2 per cent, thus decreasing the number of immigrants from 357,000 to 169,000 per year.

News From the Various Trades

SALARIED EMPLOYEES

Germany—The National Union of Salaried Employees will hold its second ordinary congress at Cassel soon. The membership and financial position of the union are both satisfactory. Within the last year or two, the time and energy of the trade unions have been almost entirely absorbed in settling wages, but, thanks to the stabilization of the mark, the unions are now free to concentrate their energies on other work. The June Congress will deal both with internal organization and with economic questions.

MINERS

Great Britain—A. J. Cook has been elected General Secretary of the British Miners' Federation in the place of Frank Hodges, who has had to resign this post in consequence of his election as a member of parliament.

SHOP ASSISTANTS

Great Britain—A delegation of the National Union of Distributive and Allied Workers submitted to the Home Secretary recently proposals for a new Shops Act. The union advocates a maximum 48-hours week for shop assistants. It was pointed out that the assistants in co-operative stores enjoy a 44-hour week, and sometimes even a shorter one.

LEATHER WORKERS

France—The National Federation of Leatherworkers held its ordinary congress at Paris recently. It now comprises 71 unions and its membership is steadily though slowly rising. In spite of the fact that Frs. 79,318 has been paid out as strike pay, the funds of the federation amounted to 50,076 Frs. In 32 localities the leatherworkers succeeded last year in securing improved working conditions without a strike. Of the 16 strikes, 10 were successful. The federation places in the forefront of its programme the maintenance of the eight hours day, and the principle of paid holidays.

LEATHER WORKERS

Sweden—The Swedish Boot, Shoe and Leather Workers' Union raised its membership in 1923 from 8,278 to 9,064. The number of branches has also increased from 53 to 56. Unemployment among the members is decreasing, although it cannot be said that the normal standard of employment has yet been attained.

Normal Conditions In Postal Service

Congestion Caught Up With Toronto—Many New Men Paid Off

Toronto, Ont.—About twenty per cent. of the men who signed up to replace the postal workers during the strike have been paid off. The total number of strike-breakers taken on was 751, and up to last week approximately 150 of them had asked for their pay-checks. The regular posties got their pay-checks and compared to pre-strike pay, it was a slim check.

Postmaster Lemon reported that everything at the postal sub-stations had reached the normal stage and the mails were up-to-date. He also stated that normal conditions had been reached at terminal station "A," the postal headquarters. Due to three days of hard work by the postal staff the congestion of mail is reported to have been practically caught up with and the service again normal.

Wire Protest Over Decrease in Wages

Take Action in Co-operation With Other Western Organizations

Victoria, B.C.—It was decided at an executive meeting of the Victoria branch of the Dominion Postal Clerks' Association, in conference with the provincial president, D. McCulloch, to send a wire to Hon. Charles Stewart, acting Postmaster General, and Premier Mackenzie King and Hon. Arthur Meighen, protesting against the reduction in wages and stating that, although they had not gone on strike, they were supporting their Eastern associates.

The wire read as follows:

"The fact that Western postal workers have not joined the strike does not mean that the West is satisfied. Greatest dissatisfaction is growing in the West. The Victoria branch feels that Eastern associates have been forced into strike by the vacillation of government regarding our just demands. I am instructed by the branch to insist that no postal employee be paid less remuneration this year than last year, and that all striking employees be reinstated. Efficiency of service seriously affected by attitude of government."

"J. WHITE, Secretary."

"Victoria Branch D.P.C.A." This wire was sent in co-operation with all the other branches of Western Canada.

T. V. Powderly Dies

Terence V. Powderly, general master workman of the Knights of Labor, when that organization was at the heights of its power, died suddenly at his home in Washington, D.C.

He was born in Carbondale, Pa., in 1819. He was chosen chief of the K. of L. in 1879 and resigned as that organization was being supplanted by the newly-formed American Federation of Labor. In 1878, he was elected Mayor of Scranton and served 3 terms. In 1894, he was admitted to the bar.

Mr. Powderly was connected with the government since 1897. At the time of his death, he was chief of the division of information. He wrote several books on labor questions. The remains were interred in Washington.

The Trade Union Movement in Latvia

(Continued from page 1)

The centralization of the trade unions which were left in existence after the collapse of the Russian rule and the termination of the German occupation was effected at a conference held in 1920. From that date onwards a trade union congress had been held every year. At the Third Trade Union Congress, which was held in Riga, the capital, on the 9th and 10th of March, 1924, the following statement was made concerning the present situation of the trade unions: "13,000 workers (male and female) are organized in six national and fourteen local organizations. Of these, the Factory Workers' Union numbers 2,250 members; the Railwaymen's Union, 2,150; the Bookbinders' Union, 2,000; the Seafarers' Union, 1,000; the Post Office Employees' Union, 1,000; and the Stage Artists' Union 80. The

largest local organization is the Window Workers' Union, (chiefly consisting of dockers) which has 1,700 members.

The Agricultural Workers' Union, which is connected with the right wing of the Socialist Party, contains about two or three thousand members, but exact figures are not available. The Communist trade union say they have a membership of 4,500, but it seems very doubtful whether this figure is really reached. There are no clerical and no Fascist trade unions, but on the other hand there is a "yellow" movement.

The official organ of the Federation of Trade Unions is published every fortnight in the Lettish and Russian languages. In addition, the Bookbinders' Union issues a fortnightly and the Post Office Employees' Union a monthly magazine.

Thanks to the influence of the Socialist Party in the Government and the parliament, the trade unions have liberty of action. The Fascists give trouble from time to time.

There are no organizational relations between the trade unions and the Left Wing of the Socialist Party, although the are on friendly terms. As in all countries where the Labour Movement is not of long standing, comrades with especial capacity for propagandist and administrative work are compelled to hold office both in the party and in the trade union movement. Moreover, several trade union leaders belong to the parliamentary Labour Group.

Thanks to the strength of the political Labour Party, it has been found possible to make considerable progress in the domain of labour protection and insurance. The eight-hours-day is established by law. Nominally, young persons between the ages of 14 and 16 are only permitted to work 4 hours a day, and those between the ages of 16 and 18, 6 hours, but both these regulations are very frequently violated. Civil servants work 6 hours a day at present, but there is a movement on foot to extend their hours to 7. As to wages, they are, as in many other countries, lower than before the war, although the cost of living has risen.

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