

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.

On Tuesday evening the long talked of mass meeting of workingmen was held in the St. Lawrence Hall. For a long time past there has been a felt necessity amongst many of the workingmen that an opportunity should be afforded for a public expression of sentiment upon the various public questions that were before them, and were of such importance to them as a class. The measures that had been proposed, though ostensibly made to appear in their interest, were not such as were satisfactory to the operatives as a whole, and hence the necessity that existed for an opportunity of recording their opinions. To what an extent these feelings predominate amongst the workingmen, the mass meeting gave a practical demonstration. At the time the chairman took his seat the hall was filled to its fullest extent, and throughout the entire discussions the feeling of the meeting was unanimous. The length of the programme kept the meeting to rather a late hour, but to the last the interest was well sustained. The presence on the platform of delegates from our sister cities of Ottawa and Hamilton, gave a marked tone to the meeting, and showed conclusively that it was no mere local gathering, and that in the action taken on Tuesday night the workingmen were a unit.

The Chair was taken by Mr. John Dance, of the Ironmoulders' Union, Toronto, and the following delegates occupied seats on the platform:—D. Robertson, Stonecutters Union, Ottawa; D. J. O'Donoghue, Typographical Union, Ottawa; F. Walters, Moulder's Union, Hamilton; R. Ingledew, Amalgamated Carpenters and Joiners, Hamilton; R. Parker, Canada Labor Unity, Hamilton. There were also present Messrs Leversley, A. Lloyd, A. Mowat, A. McClinchy, J. E. Winnett, J. C. Shields, D. Chambers, J. Hewitt, A. Scott, A. McCormack, A. Smith, J. S. Williams, etc., etc.

The Chairman, in opening the proceedings, said they had met for the purpose of discussing various measures which had been introduced into the Local Legislature, materially affecting the interests of the working classes. He begged that each speaker might be accorded a fair and patient hearing on the question that would come up for consideration. He had pleasure in calling upon Mr. Donald Robertson, of the Stonecutters' Union, Ottawa, to move the first resolution.

THE LIEN LAW.

Mr. Donald Robertson, who on rising to address the meeting, was received with considerable applause, moved:

That this meeting, while acknowledging the spirit which prompted the introduction of the Mechanics' Lien Law into the Legislature of Ontario, begs to record their judgment that the bill, as it now stands, utterly fails in its provisions to protect skilled and other labor; and further, that what we require is a general lien law applicable to all classes of labor covering from one day's wages upward and to be collected in a summary legal manner.

In introducing the motion, he said that he had no doubt that the Hon. Mr. Crooks, in devising the Mechanics' Lien Law desired to benefit the mechanics of this Province, any he could therefore have no objection to amend it. He (Mr. Robertson) contended that it utterly failed to protect the mechanics, inasmuch as they were debarred from taking a lien against the work upon which their labor had been expended. Even if the claim were over \$50, as set forth in the bill, it could only be collected when the work was done at the request of the owner himself. Another objection against the bill was, that as it stood, it only provided redress for persons employed on the erection of buildings, and for persons furnishing materials for the same. He considered this most unfair, as all trades were entitled to the same protection, and the poor but honest laborer had as much right to have justice done him as the most skilled artisan in the land. In the second section he found that the names of the owners of property must be recorded. This was right enough, but he would like to see an additional clause defining who were the owners of church property, or any property

vested in a committee, for the purposes of the Act. Numerous instances had occurred in Ohio where there was a difference of opinion among lawyers as to who were the actual proprietors of such property under these circumstances. He trusted that before the bill passed a third reading steps would be taken to impress upon the Hon. Mr. Crooks the great dissatisfaction of the workingmen with the measure. If they were to have a lien law let them have one of use, under the provisions of which a mechanic could take a direct lien against the building of property, and not be compelled to proceed in a round-about way that in 99 cases out of 100 would not enable them to recover a single cent. In conclusion, he said that if the bill were altered to allow the mechanic to make direct claim against the building, it would be a deal better, but if passed in its present state it would be a direct insult to the intelligence of the workingmen of Ontario. (Applause.)

Mr. O'Donoghue, in seconding the resolution, said he could not but look upon the bill as it then stood as a sugar-coated pill—very sweet on the outside, but bitter indeed in the middle. It had been said by some that the measure had been introduced in order to gain their suffrages. This was possible, but he thought the time had arrived when the workingmen should have something to say in regard to the planning of laws affecting their interests. There was no doubt that when the election times came round, they would be patted on the backs by all parties, and that was an acknowledgment they were worth something in the market. They should now understand their value as a marketable article. (Applause.) The workingmen wanted no class legislation, but they wanted justice, and they must have it. He would like to see the workingmen represented in Parliament. The city of Hamilton had returned a workingman to Parliament, and there was no reason why Toronto should not do the same. It was the only way to obtain justice, as the nominees of capitalists were sent to the House pledged to a certain policy. He had read in the papers that the framer of the bill had stated that he could not extend its provisions, as it would not suit his constituents. Who were his constituents? Not one class alone, but every class, and if that gentleman were honest to the people he would not be prevented from doing justice to the whole community. The measure was totally inadequate to meet the wants of the working class. How many workingmen were there who could afford to let their wages run up to the amount of \$50. Why, they would starve before that time. What was wanted was a bill that would cover them for each week's wages—for a single day's if necessary (applause), and a summary way of collecting it even as a landlord could collect his rent. He could assure them that if no adequate measure could be obtained in the Legislature, their fellow workmen at the capital would leave no stone unturned to obtain one for the Dominion. Mr. O'Donoghue, on taking his seat was loudly applauded.

The resolution was then put and carried unanimously.

EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES.

Mr. R. Parker, of the Canada Labor Unity, Hamilton, moved the following resolution:

Whereas certain bills have been introduced into the legislature of this Province affecting the existing relations between employer and employee, and rushed through with careless haste, without in any sense whatever consulting one of the parties thereto, and whereas the present construction of the Arbitration Act, and the act for the workmen to participate in profit are in no way calculated to improve the present condition of the laborer in this Province. Be it resolved that since these acts have met the existing wants of the toilers of this country, the workmen cannot be parties to such measures in their present construction.

Mr. Parker in the course of his remarks said that if the Legislature wished to benefit the country, it would have to turn its attention towards developing the natural resources of the Province. The agricultural produce raised in the country was for the most part exported, and what was

wanted was a manufacturing people to consume it. This could only be obtained by protecting the interests of the workingman, and what had the Government done towards this end? They had given them the Lien Law and the Master and Servant Act. He then proceeded to read several portions of the last mentioned Act, and attracted attention to that part of it relative to the formation of a Board to which disputes between employers and their servants could be referred. The Act said in regard to the memorandum to be signed in such cases, "and no defect in the form of said memorandum or in the filing and registration thereof, shall invalidate the efficacy of any of the proceedings to be taken under the provisions of this Act." So that if no workman's hand was attached to the instrument it made no difference. Again, nothing in the Act authorized the Board of Arbitration to establish the price at which workingmen were to be paid. Thus power was taken away from the Board to settle the only difference that was likely to arise between masters and servants. The resolution said that those acts did not satisfy the wants of the toilers of our country. And did any one ever consider what those words "our country" embraced? He then, at great length, dwelt upon the vast extent of territory and the resources of the country, stating that within its area it contained all the elements that could possibly be desired for the building up of a great nation. In the east its maritime provinces contained vast beds of coal, that only required the miners' operations to bring to light, that would be sufficient to carry on the manufacturing interests of the country, and the west could furnish all the ores and metals that could be needed, while the vast belt in the North-West Territory could furnish homes for millions. The agricultural resources of the country were beyond comparison. All that was needed was, that the resources of the country should be developed, that wise laws should be enacted for the protection and encouragement of population, and not such apologies of legislation as they had spoken of to-night. After further remarks he concluded by saying that for practical purposes the bill was not worth the paper it was written upon.

Mr. E. Winnett, of the Coachmakers' Union, Toronto, seconded the motion in an able and comprehensive manner; and the resolution when put was unanimously carried.

CONVICT LABOR.

Mr. Andrew Scott, Toronto Amalgamated Engineers, moved:

That, whereas in the proper disposal of Convict Labor in this and other countries, great difficulties are frequently experienced in which the interests of the citizens are invariably involved, and inasmuch as the question, has been brought directly home to the people of this Province by the recent contract said to be entered into by the Ontario Government and the Canada Car Company, whereby the said company has secured the prison labor virtually for the period of fifteen years, this meeting unhesitatingly declares such a transaction by the Ontario Cabinet, with its consulting the representatives of the people, to be a gross injustice and calculated seriously to injure those tradesmen whose labor will be taken out of their hands by the convicts they are taxed to support, and will ultimately prove prejudicial to all classes of skilled labor, both directly and indirectly. This meeting further views with grave suspicions the results of contract system, the leading tendencies of which are the aggrandizement of the pockets of a few speculators at the expense of the people, and the corruption and demoralization of the convicts. A hearty public expression of entire disapproval with the whole course taken by the Ontario Ministry in its dealings with this important public question is hereby given.

Mr. Scott at some considerable length commented very severely upon the character of the contract said to have been entered into by the Ontario Government with the Canada Car Company, and characterized the system of convict contracts as most pernicious to the country.

Mr. McClinchy seconded the resolution, which was carried.

THE FRANCHISE.

Mr. Walters, of the Ironmoulders' Union of Hamilton, moved:

Resolved, that we the workingmen of this city in mass meeting assembled, do view with approval the general principles involved in the

steps now being taken by the Ontario Parliament in introducing measures to extend the franchise and the adoption of the ballot system of voting, but would recommend the exchanging of that clause in the franchise bill which places a direct tax upon the scanty income of the laborer, as a basis of such extension of the franchise.

Mr. Walters alluded to the pleasure that it afforded him to represent the Iron Moulders' Union of Hamilton upon a Toronto platform, and believed that a more frequent interchange of sentiment among the different branches of industry would tend to fasten more securely the bands that bind together men of union principles, and also tend to promote a closer feeling of brotherhood among men. He then proceeded to speak to the resolution he had submitted. It was with peculiar pleasure that he had read it, because it gave him an opportunity of saying that workmen knew when they received a good measure and could appreciate it accordingly. The previous speakers, in their resolutions and remarks had taken exception to, and in fact, strongly denounced the action of the Ontario Government, in as far as the measures spoken of did not at all represent what their titles would lead one to believe the provisions of those measures, and that while professing to be measures in the interest of the working classes, were so only in name, in practical working they would operate directly against those interests. But the resolution he had submitted would convince all that workingmen were not mere grumblers, taking exception to whatever was proposed; but this would show that when a really good measure was introduced they knew it, and were ready to receive it and appreciate it. The measure proposing the extension of the franchise was emphatically a true reform; affording, as its provisions would, the opportunities for so many young men of intelligence of taking part in a practical way in the politics of the country—a privilege from which they had hitherto been denied. He then after a somewhat length dwelling upon the advantage of an extension of the franchise, resumed his seat amid loud applause.

Mr. Hewitt of this city, in seconding the resolution said that considering the hour, the amount of business, and those from a distance who wished to be heard on this great question of labor, he would merely come forward to show that he favored the resolution; and while he endorsed the principle involved in the extension of the franchise, he could not but raise his voice in unionism with the sentiments of the resolution against the basis of such extension, namely—a tax upon the scanty pittance of the laborer. An income-tax is, at best, a very unjust and imperfect way of securing a revenue; but it is most mean in its workings when it strikes at the petty 200, 300 or 400 dollars of the laborer whose toil has been already burdened by providing indirectly the whole running expenses of the State, and supplying in the same manner the luxurious wants of the very many expensive, useless, non-producing families in our midst. After dwelling at some length on man's right to govern himself, he concluded by saying that the only just, equitable basis for the franchise was intelligence, morality, and worth; and that all those who are neither paupers nor criminals are violently deprived of their natural rights under the present system.

Mr. Ingledew, of the Amalgamated Carpenters of Hamilton also supported this resolution in an able and argumentative speech, in the course of which he said that it had long been his ambition to feel himself in the land of his forefathers a free man and a citizen; and as the measure proposed was of a character to reach the intelligence and worth of the community, he flattered himself that the day was not far distant when he should feel himself a citizen of some country. He addressed the sentiments of the last speaker with regard to the income-tax, and also with regard to the proper basis of a franchise. He felt that the present half measures that it has been the duty of this meeting to condemn to-night, would never have come before the people in their present form, if intelligence, worth, and manhood was the basis of

government, instead of money. He further said that newspaper oracles would be more careful of the feeling of the masses than they now are. The labor of the country would not be insulted ever and anon by fulsome articles written by the biggest goose-quill on the staff of the great *Globe* and retain its political pre-eminence. Progress and reform is the order of the day, and he hoped that the sentiment expressed in the Legislature by Mr. Clarke, of Wellington would have due influence upon the legislation of the country, that nothing short of universal suffrage could be a reform measure. The gentleman resumed his seat amid great applause.

MUNICIPAL ASSESSMENT ACT.

Mr. J. S. Williams, Toronto Typographical Union, moved:

Resolved that this meeting cannot view without grave apprehension, some of the proposed amendments to the Municipal and Assessment Act, and would recommend that the City Council give its earnest attention to the removal of 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.

The Speaker said that owing to the lateness of the hour, he could only refer to some of the objectionable clauses of the proposed amendments to the Municipal Law. The fourth clause proposed that the election of Mayor should be decided by ballot, under the direction of the City Clerk. One of the city journals in commenting on this clause made an attack on the ballot system in that it allowed a man's hands to be greased, and then he could laugh at the people behind the cloak of secrecy afforded by the ballot; but it was not upon these grounds he raised his objections, but he contended that the office of Mayor should be conferred direct from the hands of the people. He had no sympathy with the invocations that had been made against the system of ballot, in that its secrecy afforded opportunities for dishonest practices. His experience of human nature led him to believe that an individual who would so far forget his manhood as to allow his hands to be greased in any such connection, would reap no advantage from the secrecy of the ballot, but would just as readily command his price by selling himself to the highest bidder. He also alluded to exception that had been taken to the election of Mayor by the people on the ground that the people could be more readily bought. The same paper strangely asserted that though the people might be independent enough to vote for Alderman, yet were not sufficiently independent to be entrusted with the election of a Mayor. The 7th clause provided that authority be asked to permit the Council to provide for gratuities to officers, after twenty-five years continuous service in the corporation employ, payable out of the funds of the city. He considered this a most pernicious proposition. A man received an engagement in connection with the corporation. For twenty-five years he renders continuous service, engaged seven or eight hours each day, in the laborious work of paring his finger nails, or making a few entries on a book, or more laborious still, in watching an unfortunate understrapper lest the public purse should suffer from the poor man's idleness. By that time his feeble frame is so exhausted that he cannot stand the dreadful pressure a day longer, and he is to be shelved on gratuities of out the public funds! (Applause.) He (the speaker) protested against this foisting of worn-out officers upon the heavily taxed rate-payers. In the ninth clause it was provided that the term of office of Aldermen be extended for three years, instead of one year, and that the whole Council go out every three years. He thought that such an enactment would tend to the organization of rings. In another clause the proposal was made to tax each person upon the whole of his income, and the franchise was thrown in as a sop to pacify the rate-payers. The tax hitherto levied upon any amount in excess of \$300 was burdensome enough, but the proposition to tax the whole of a man's income was an iniquity not to be tolerated. Was it to be expected that the poor working man,

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