

Saskatchewan Labor's Realm

ENDORSED BY THE REGINA TRADES AND LABOR COUNCIL

Vol. 1, No. 22

REGINA, November 8, 1907

Annual Subscription \$1.00
Single Copy, Five Cents

THE SASKATCHEWAN LABOR'S REALM

A Weekly Labor and Social Reform Newspaper.

Justice, Truth, Fraternity. "Labor Omnia Vincit."

HUGH PEAT EDITOR.

Labor in the Cities

THE early closing down this year in the building trade owing to the stringency of the money market and the enormous increase of population due to the extensive programme of immigration prosecuted by the Government at the behest of the manufacturers and railroad contractors, who have been unable to carry out their pet schemes for rapidly acquired wealth without a superabundance of labor—that is cheap labor—the civic authorities in all the larger cities of the Dominion will have many an anxious time and be put to many strange expedients to provide the necessary employment to feed and clothe the poor and needy during the coming winter.

The result of the stereotyped cry for more workmen of the Masters' Associations is beginning to be felt in all its bitterness in the larger cities. At the recently opened labor bureau in Toronto no less a number than five hundred men and women names on the register as out of employment in three hours. The vast bulk of these were skilled mechanics, not laborers, and some of them testified to having been out of employment for several months. When such a state of affairs has obtained during the summer months it is an easy matter to conjecture as to the conditions of labor during the winter.

J. W. Bruce, president of the Builders' Trade Council in Toronto stated that the placing of the figures at between 2000 and 2000 would be a very conservative estimate of the unemployed in that city at the present time. He stated that the outlook for the winter was very bad indeed, and yet, in spite of the knowledge of the existence of these deplorable conditions, which obtain in like ratio in all the other larger cities, there is no let-up in the nightmare howl for more workmen from our well fed, carefully tended brothers of the modern Babylon.

Year after year the number of farm laborers and others flocking into the cities increases. The inspiring patriotic cry "Back to the land" falls on deaf ears. If the farmers are unable to keep their own sons on the land there is very little hope of the charms of country life appealing to the army of immigrants who are flocking to Canada each year, who have little if any experience of farm life and who have spent the greater part of their lives in the large cities of the old countries. It is a significant fact that the rural population in Ontario decreased during the years 1891-1901 to the extent of 50,000, and that out of 42 counties 22 showed a decrease. This population naturally gravitates to the larger cities where the remuneration per hour is more than that on the farm, and this, combined with the enormous immigration of the past few years, has produced a problem which will afford employment to the student of economics to solve, whilst the civic authorities, who are more nearly concerned, will have an arduous task to perform in keeping the records of their several cities up to the usual standard of excellence and freedom from poverty.

In spite of the apparent falling off in building operations this year as compared with last, and the general industrial depression owing to the tightness of the money market, we are still refreshed with the usual reiterations from the masters' associations that there is a dearth of skilled labor.

J. G. Merrick, secretary of the Employers' Association, says: "There is a demand to-day in our city for skilled labor; for machinists, plumbers, brass and iron workers, and wood workers. There is no use dodging the root principle.

What we are compelled to accept are men not well up in their trades or not accustomed to our modes of work. They are inefficient and slower, yet will not accept a wage lower than that paid to first-class men. It is the result of the union doctrine, which will not permit men to accept less. The men who are out of employment are those who are always on the ragged edge of employment. The labor union has lately opened a bureau assumedly to register the so-called unemployed. This is a farce, undertaken at this time of year, in the endeavor to give weight to their theory, that there is not enough work for the mechanics already here. Of course they can register a great many out of employment at this time, when the building contracts are almost completed, and the bulk of men engaged in outdoor occupations are being laid off. It is no great trick and no criterion. It will not deceive any one with knowledge of the facts or who puts himself upon enquiry. The number of alleged mechanics would be large."

"The very large proportion of those registered now as out of work are mechanics simply in their own imaginations. The best proof of which is that they are at present unemployed. Also, there is always in any large community a floating population of common labor out of employment. The men who come here—and I handle between 3000 and 4000 of them yearly, are porters, warehousemen, soldiers, retail clerks, office assistants, school teachers, commercial travelers and men of that class, and there are no places to fit them here, where the bright, quick Canadians from below are continually climbing into such positions."

Mr. Merrick states that the men they have to take are men not well up in their trades or not accustomed to our modes of work, that they are inefficient and slower, and therefore not worth the amount of money they ask for. If this is so it is exceedingly strange that he along with his fellows are busily employed in season and out of season endeavoring to induce these unfortunately incapable and unaccustomed-to-our-modes-of-employment men to emigrate from countries where their knowledge of their several trades secures to them an adequate recompense and assures an immunity from want to a country where they are held in poor esteem and where their presence is only required to swell the army of workers beyond a rational limit, so that an inevitable reduction of wages will follow in the wake of a superabundance of laborers. Like the rest of his illustrious class he attributes the whole of the trouble to the labor unions, which would be an excellent joke were it not for the issues at stake. The labor unions are avowedly opposed to the present unrestricted immigration to this country, though favoring and welcoming a rational immigration of first-class skilled mechanics. They know only too well the actual conditions of employment here, and if the standard of the immigrants from a mechanic's point of view is not up to high water mark the manufacturers have surely only got themselves to blame for not taking greater care in the selection of their men when luring them to this so-called workman's paradise. He states that the majority of the men are mechanics only in their own estimation and still at the same time endeavor to explain away the fact that five hundred unemployed registered their names in three hours at the labor bureau owing to the fact that many of the large building contracts had been completed. If, as he alleges, there is no place in Canada to fit the thousands of men who are

flocking to our shores each year in response to the glowing accounts of the country's resources spread broadcast throughout the older countries, why in the name of all that is honest and honorable do they persist in their shameful policy of misrepresentation? If the British system of training produces workmen who are not specialists in one particular branch of any industry, it is no fault of theirs, and if the new era of American industrialism requires, and has no use for other than specialists, then it is time to call a halt to the insane and discreditable policy of immigration instituted and operated for no other purpose than the overcrowding of the labor market, so that the wage earners can be compelled to work for any terms that the masters' association may feel prepared to pay.

WE have received many enquiries during the last few weeks regarding the Poll Tax by many of the Trades Unionists in the City. There seems to be a general impression among the workmen that the tax is unjust in so far as it entitles them to no special privileges and that it is being levied now at a very inopportune time because many of them are out of employment and are likely to remain so, especially in the building trade.

The tax is levied in accordance with sec. 352 of the City Charter which reads as follows:—

"A poll tax may be collected in the same manner as other municipal taxes; and a person appointed to collect the same may also demand the same from the employer of the person liable to pay the same and the employer shall deduct the same from the salary or wages which are then or shall first thereafter during the then current year become owing by him to the person liable to pay such poll tax and shall pay the same as soon as the amount of the tax is earned by his said employee to the person appointed to collect the same and in default may on summary conviction be ordered to pay the same together with costs and in default of payment to imprisonment not exceeding thirty days."

In the face of the above it would be foolish to refuse to pay the tax, or to endeavor to evade it. Just or unjust, benefit or no benefit it is law, and the only thing for the unionists of the City to do is to pay the tax as willingly and as readily as possible as no good purpose would be served by opposing it.

It will at any rate entitle them to police protection, and that in itself should appeal to all law-abiding citizens who desire protection from hooligans and slugs, the undesirable citizens, recently and so eloquently described as the scum of Europe. There is also the privilege of using the side-walks to take into consideration and since they are likely to be worn a great deal by the unemployed workmen before the snow comes it is quite easy to be seen that some compensation is forthcoming in return for the \$3 demanded.

Organised Labor After Jack Onward

At yesterday's regular meeting of Trades and Labor Council it was decided to nominate a candidate for the City Council, the choice falling upon Mr. Fred Gray of South Hill. Mr. Jas. Somerville announced that he would be unable to stand on account of his official connection with the Machinists. The members of the Trades Council

have been somewhat annoyed by opinions expressed in the Evening Times by a nominally Labor man, who signs himself "Jack Onward." In order to reveal, if possible, the identity of the correspondent the roll call was read, which showed conclusively that no one present was responsible in any way for Jack's utterances which appear in the Times' Labor column. In order to voice the opinions of the Council in an official manner a motion repudiating the correspondence was put and carried.

An effort will be made to increase the circulation of genuine labor journals among the workmen of the city.

Mr. Roller, representative of the locked-out garment workers from the Scotland Woolen Mills was present, and addressed the meeting. He received assurance of the local members' sympathy and support.—Moose Jaw News.

To the Editor "Labor's Realm."

Following is by request of Moose Jaw Trades Council:—

SCISSORS, PASTE AND ANONYMITY

The above is a poor combination to foster, uphold, or advance trade unionism.

A few months ago the Moose Jaw Evening Times commenced the publication of a column in its Saturday editions headed "The Labor World," conducted by Jack Onward (!). It was christened modestly in the editorial column—that is, in the place usually reserved in newspapers for original comment by the editor upon current events. The Evening Times has been delivered free to quite a number of houses in Moose Jaw since its first appearance (although \$5 per year subscription has been canvassed for) so many working men read it on that account. Discussion in various meetings revealed the fact that no member knew of fellow unionists writing or contributing to the column; but their interest in it was not sufficient, up to the present, to induce discovery of the author if possible.

At the last meeting of the Trades Council, however, some impatience was manifested at the character of matter which had recently appeared. Particular mention was made by delegates of a three-quarter column piece of patchwork dealing with Keir Hardie's tour of Bengal. It consisted of the most vitriolic and perverted abuse of his actions available, with a few sentences here and there that Jack Onward "didn't believe it." In a column alongside, "In the Public Eye" the same "esteemed correspondent" was congratulated upon his faith in Hardie. The latter's dispatches of denial followed. The Council learned that all of the clipped matter condemnatory and defensive of Mr. Hardie had prominently appeared in the Canadian press at least a week before. What motive Jack Onward could have (if a bona-fide unionist) in printing abuse of the veteran labor leader in order to say that he didn't believe it and receive congratulations for his faith, when he must have previously read the authoritative denials, was not understood, but conjectured. They felt that they could not allow an unknown writer to pretend to speak on behalf of organized labor in coming municipal, provincial and federal elections, without protest, and unanimously passed a resolution to the effect that "The Council repudiated, on behalf of organized labor in Moose Jaw, all connection with or responsibility for the opinions of 'Jack Onward' in the Saturday Evening Times, and considered that the aims and object of workingmen were not properly represented by that writer."