

His
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Mails

POSTAL JOURNAL

Postal'
Clerks
Forum

AFFILIATION WITH LABOR

(By Arthur E. Crate, Toronto P.C.A.)

Much discussion has arisen among civil servants as to the advisability of their associations seeking affiliation with the Labor body in Canada; and the writer has been asked to show any advantages which have accrued or can accrue through such affiliation.

It will be understood that there are obvious reasons why this or any similar matter cannot be discussed with unrestrained frankness in a public journal; and some of the strongest and most convincing points must on this account be neglected. It is believed, however, that the matter offered in this article merits consideration.

It is often asked "What good did affiliation with Labor do the Letter Carriers of Canada?" In reply it may be stated that since affiliation the maximum pay of Letter Carriers has increased 110%. It is true they are no better off, in fact are probably worse off, owing to the diminished purchasing power of a dollar; but the point is that but for organization and affiliation they would never have received a cent more pay; for what Canadian government ever did anything for its employees except as the result of strong pressure? The claims of the Letter Carriers have from time to time been pressed upon the Government, not only by the Carriers themselves, but also by the leaders of the Labor party; and this fact, conjoined with a single brief but effective flourish of the last weapon ever employed by Labor, has resulted in the Letter Carriers having received a larger per cent. increase of pay than has been granted to any other civil service body. But they are still shamefully underpaid, and have still to recover from the effects of even smaller pay than that very recently accorded. Are they now satisfied with the tardy and meagre results of years of struggle for just treatment? The future will answer.

The Dominion Postal Clerks, who, in numbers and organization, are

perhaps the most powerful body of civil servants in Canada, have spent years in making peaceable, logical and reasonable representations to the Government, and have fared even worse than the Letter Carriers, as measured by percentages of increased pay. Their former classification has been so shot to pieces by the "classifiers that comparison is not easy. The former maximum pay for a Chief Clerk was \$2,200. Now, a Head Postal Clerk — there are very few of them in all Canada — may rise to the salary of \$2,760, if he live long enough. This represents an increase, after many years, of 25 per cent. A man in lower grades, if he live long enough, may reach an increased maximum ranging from 26 2-3 per cent. down to 7 per cent.

The absolute inadequacy of pay granted has finally resulted in driving this body of civil servants into taking out a charter with the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada.

The experience of the civil servants' organizations in Great Britain, France, the United States and several other countries has been exactly similar. Without organization and affiliation they reached — nowhere. Now they are fairly treated by their governments, and in Great Britain at least, have councils composed equally of representatives of the Government and of the men.

The experience of what was once known as the "Inside Service" at Ottawa is equally illuminative, but in the opposite direction. They would not associate themselves with organizations of working men. No! Not they. What did the classifiers do to their positions? 'Sh!

Consider the wages of outside trades and occupations associated with Labor unions. In a few years their pay has increased from 125 to 300 per cent. The street car men in Toronto for instance have won for themselves a scale of pay three times as great as that of a few years ago. Organized Labor again.

Now look at our parliamentarians. They are not Laborites. "They toil not, neither do they spin" — or do they, yarns or webs or something. Ten years ago their indemnity was \$1,500 per session, now it is \$4,000, an increase of 266%. Of course they have not joined any union. They don't need to.

There is nothing to lose and much to be gained. There are two outstanding lessons taught by the late war. They are "Preparedness" and "Alliances". By means of these Germany was very nearly successful. By the latter the "Allies" finally gained their victory.

It is fair now to ask with respect to affiliation "Why not?"

There is no obligation when affiliated, to participate in any trouble originated by some other body, nor should any be started by your own body except after a majority vote.

Once upon a time a certain body of misguided civil servants entered on a sympathetic strike with which they had no concern. They have since regretted doing so, and have caused their confreres throughout Canada to regret it also. It is hoped that no similar half-baked, unauthorized, unorganized, *one horse action* will again be undertaken by any body of Canadian civil servants. There is a better way.

DISORGANIZATION AND A REMEDY

It has become apparent even to the least initiated Federal civil servant, that the condition of organization for protective purposes is, to say the least, chaotic. From every hand we hear talk of "get together", while each employee, if organized at all, sticks vainly to the separatist form of organization. Separation is the antithesis of "get together". What civil servants need is one organization covering all employees of the Dominion government: One for all and all for one.