

The Tribune

THE OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE TORONTO DISTRICT LABOR COUNCIL

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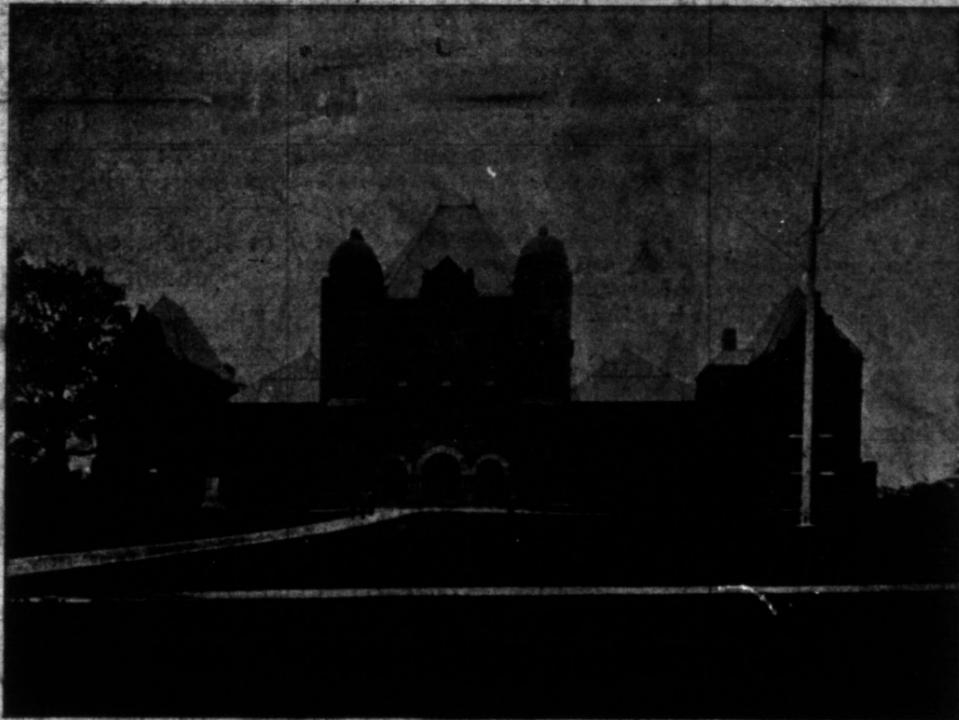
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RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT.

Of Labor Conditions as Seen by the
Editor of the American
Federationist.

By Samuel Gompers.

Sincerely, cordially, and with all vigor we greet the hosts of labor of America with the fraternal "Hail! All Hail Labor Day!

"May you, the toilers of our land, learn your full rights, have the understanding and the manhood to achieve them."

Upon the shoulders of the workers of our time rests the responsibility. To them is committed the mission by those who in the past have struggled for liberty, justice and right to carry on the great work where they have laid it down.

Within the past two decades much has been done by the workers in the fulfillment of this great duty. Organized labor within that period has immensely improved the material, moral and social condition of the workers. Increased wages have been secured and maintained; the workday has been shortened, resulting in better education, more books and better pictures; fore food, better clothing, better surroundings, brighter and better homes; more time and opportunity for the cultivation of the best that is within us; honorable labor alternating with healthy leisure with all that it implies; leisure to live, leisure to love, leisure to taste our freedom.

And withal, for the improvements which have come to the toilers in their work, in their homes, or in any other

field, they are indebted and under obligations to no one or to nothing but their own increased intelligence, character and grit, as manifest in their associated capacity in the trade union movement.

Much remains to be done for the present as well as the future, but the achievements of the trade union movement in the interests of the workers of America must prove to all an incentive to greater effort. To those whose impatience with what they regard as the slow growth, we commend a retrospective view into the conditions of the past.

A farmer who was plowing up his field looked ahead at the ground yet to be covered and became visibly disheartened. An observing friend standing near-by called his attention to the work already accomplished, and reminded him that by perseverance and persistence alone is achievement or success possible. So say we to our fellow workers.

It is true that conditions are not now what we have a right to expect and hope them to be, but look back and count with the time when the workers were veritable slaves, toiling long hours for pitifully low wages under awfully impoverishing conditions, when the employer was the master of all he surveyed and the worker toiled long without hope or aspiration for himself or his kind.

Much of the burdens of ages which were borne by the type of "The Man With the Hoe" has been lifted, and the bent form and the receding forehead have been changed to the upright attitude and a higher developed manhood, with a better life to-day and a better prospect for the days to come, and this has been accomplished under our modern industrial system through the numbers,

power, aggressiveness, intelligence and manhood of our trade union movement.

If there need be any proof as to the advanced position which the workmen of our country now proudly occupy as compared to the past, the absolute mastery of employers and the servility of the workmen of the past stand in strong contrast to the dignified and respectful position now attained and maintained by labor.

Organized labor, the trade union movement of America, has compelled public opinion to take a better and more comprehensive view of the rights of labor, and to consider and even commend the rational, natural movement of the workers for self-protection by associated effort in the trade union movement.

In our day all great questions are considered with a view to their economic and material influence upon the people, and this of necessity affects the working people most, inasmuch as they constitute so large a proportion of the people.

Our schools, colleges and universities now have classes in which the great labor problem in all its phases is investigated and discussed; it forms an important part of the curriculum of institutions of learning.

The inter-collegiate and club debates are now largely devoted to the great questions of and applying to organized labor.

Our newspapers and magazines devote columns in the presentation of "labor news" and dissertations on the rights and claims of organized labor. Many, ay, very many, of these are not always favorable to the position or contentions of organized labor, but it is a hopeful sign, brimful of opportunities and possibilities, when this most potent subject