

# The Industrial Conference and the Municipalities

At the Industrial Conference held recently in Ottawa the Union of Canadian Municipalities was represented by Mayor Bouchard, (St. Hyacinthe, P. Q.) Past President, Arthur Roberts, K. C. (Solicitor for Bridgewater, N. S.), Vice-President and Alderman Grant (Edmonton, Alta.), Third Vice-President. The following is taken from their several addresses. It may be pointed out that the Conference was made up of three groups—Capital—Labour—The Public. The municipal representatives were attached to the third group.

Ald. C. H. Grant (Edmonton:—The third group is peculiarly composed, but it seems to me that some members of that group who are representatives, should have something to say on this question. Some members here represent the Union of Municipalities and possibly represent the community at large more than most of the others. It is as a member of that group that I speak. I am not a capitalist; I am a labourer, though not an industrial labourer. I am an elected representative of the people in the city of Edmonton, being a member of the Edmonton City Council, and I feel that this is the one question that is the most productive of trouble to the community at large. It is the community that falls between the upper and the nether millstone when the forces of labour and capital clash. To that end we are greatly interested, probably as much interested as the parties immediately concerned, and we want to see that on this question some agreement is reached that will result in peace, and will prevent such disturbance of the peace as has occurred heretofore. But we want to see that in that agreement the interests of the community are fully protected.

Collective bargaining may be interpreted in many ways. No one disputes the right of men to join any organization. No one disputes the right of reasonable collective bargaining—the right of men to sell their labour through organization or however they may see fit. But on the other hand, should any one dispute the right of the employer to deal with organizations which have as their object the calling out of not only those immediately interested but all the economic workers of the community? We must see that in anything that is done along this line no condition such as that can arise.

Sir Robert Borden, in an address which he delivered in the House of Commons on the 27th of May, took, I think, the correct ground when he said:

"Now, one can easily see that what is called the right of collective bargaining, if interpreted in a certain way and carried to an extreme length, might have an unfortunate effect so far as the public interest is concerned. More than that, as is suggested in this public statement, it might have the effect of placing labour men and labour unions themselves in such a situation that they could not make their own bargains except when the approval of some body that might be situated thousands of miles away. Before the phrase "collective bargaining" is insisted upon, we ought to have, and we must have, an exact definition as to precisely what is intended by it and as to precisely what the results might be if that principle, so defined, should be adopted."

We do not want any system adopted which will result in the calling out of men as was done in Winnipeg and in Edmonton. Another safeguard which I think should be provided, is that policemen, firemen, and other servants of public safety should not be allowed to affiliate with any body that has the power to order them to go out, I think they ought to be prepared to sign a statement such as that which was read by Mr. Rigg. I think that under no condition should they recognize anything except their own right and strength. They are in a peculiar manner the guardians of the public safety, and certainly should not be allowed to strike in sympathy with any other organization.

I feel that this Conference will do considerable good. For you to meet together, shoulder to shoulder, and find that you are in unity, if nothing else, will accomplish. I believe a great good for the country.

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## Organization of Labour.

Mr. Arthur Roberts (Bridgewater, N. S.):—In the discussion on this question very little reference has been made to that large constituency known as the community. My colleague, Mr. Grant, referred briefly to it, and I felt

that I would be remiss in my duty if I failed, in my representative capacity, to endorse, even very briefly, the sentiments that he expressed.

The first subdivision of the subject which is before us, "Employees's right to organize," is, of all the subjects on the agenda, probably the one that more directly affects and has been the cause of the great concern to those whom the Hon. Mr. King termed the fourth party to industry, the community, which we were told by him is deserving in these days of much greater consideration than it ever has had in the past.

If there are any here who may be permitted the privilege and the right of speaking particularly for the community, I think it would be conceded that they are the delegates appointed by the Union of Canadian Municipalities, an organization representative of the municipal government of Canada, and one that stands for the cause of good citizenship, irrespective of class, race, or creed. Speaking for such a constituency, therefore, I think I am justified in emphasizing the sentiments that as municipal delegates we wish to place on the record at this time. Our message is to appeal to this Conference, to our friends on the right, and our friends on the left, to remember more than they have ever done in the past, this fourth party to industry. The right of labour to organize, and of all classes to organize, will be frankly admitted, provided the union is formed for legitimate purposes, and in its results and practical application does not trespass on or interfere with the rights and liberties of others. But events in Canada during the present year have made the public very apprehensive in this respect.

It is also very true to say that the profound sympathy and support of the public—the man on the street, the average citizen,—has always been with labour and its aspirations, and with all classes in their claim for equality—equality of rights, liberties, privileges, and opportunities: opportunity for proper conditions under which to labour; opportunity for education, opportunity for obtaining and enjoying real values in life; and, above all else, opportunity for the proper development of character. Any man in this country in this year of grace who would contend to the contrary is a survival of the dark ages, and is more fitted for the care of some institution for the protection of the feeble-minded, especially after the experience we have had in the last four years. The right to organize, when claimed and acted upon constitutionally and with a due regard to the rights of the community, is a matter beyond controversy, and in that same community labour will always find its best friend, in that higher type of citizen who originates and controls that great moral force, without which no victory can be permanent or of any benefit to any group in the community. Part of our message to our friends of organized labour is to remember that any victory they may get without recognizing that principle will be empty; that they must have the moral force behind any victory to make it of any permanent value, or to serve even their own business interests, to say nothing as to the best interests of Canada. If that limitation is not borne in mind by those who are responsible for the activities of labour, then the public will be forced very reluctantly to defend itself, as it has done on various occasions in the past, even in Canada. I make this reference not only in regard to organized labour, but in regard to our friends the employers, or capitalists, however you wish to term them.

I have advisedly termed our friends on the right organized labour, because I am sure they do not represent, in those contests, or in this Conference, all classes of workers. I venture to say the representatives of the municipal interests can claim for their constituents a very much larger body of workers than do even the ranks of organized labour. I refer to the large body of unorganized workers who are part of the general public which always has to suffer from industrial disturbances. It may be of interest to you to know, for instance, that I come from a county with from 40,000 to 50,000 people in which we have no labour union except such as are incidental to the railways that pass through the county, and, on the other hand, we have no millionaires. The people are all workers in one way or another, and they are blessed with a fair share of prosperity—and I cannot agree with the gentleman who so emphatically claimed the privilege of